EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION
INTERDISC. FINE ARTS
School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Department of Cinema and Media Arts
FA / PANF 1800 6.0 SECTION A
THE BIOLOGY OF STORY
FALL 2019 / WINTER 2020

Last Modified Date: 09/26/2019

COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

How do writers, filmmakers, and other creators go about finding and shaping the stories they tell? In what ways are the patterns of story woven into our lives, our society, our world? Or are we and our world woven by the patterns of story? Biology of Story is a 24-week, largely asynchronous, fully online course. Proceeding from the practical insights of those who tell stories in many forms, the course will also explore the growing use of narrative in a wide range of fields towards rethinking social and institutional assumptions and releasing human potential. Open to non-majors. Ranging across multiple Creative Arts (Film Television, Interactive Transmedia, Oral Literature Folklore, Literature Creative Writing), Humanities (Native Studies, Education, Religious Studies, Psychology, Journalism, Peace Conflict Studies) and Sciences (Life Sciences, Cosmology, Health Medicine), the course will follow the thread of story as it informs, and is informed by, each discipline. A range of learning activities will involve students in individual and group work equally demanding of analytical rigour, creative imagination, and personal reflection; while building first-year University skills at research, writing, and informed discussion. Key insights from the cultural knowledge of First Nations and other indigenous peoples, traditionally rooted in story, will frame the course's epistemological approach.

INSTRUCTOR(S)

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Section / Format / Term</th>
<th>Contact Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appleton, Genevieve</td>
<td>Sec. A / ONLN / Y</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wave@yorku.ca">wave@yorku.ca</a></td>
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SPECIAL FEATURES

Course Director: Geneviève Appleton (wave@yorku.ca)
Teaching Assistant: Alison Humphrey (ahum@yorku.ca)
Course Designer/Video Lecturer: Amnon Buchbinder (not teaching this year)
Course Consultation Hours: Online, by appointment.
How do writers, filmmakers, and other creators go about finding and shaping the stories they tell? In what ways is “Story” – the formal properties that all stories partake of – a pattern woven into our brain, our lives, our society, our world? Or are we and our world woven by the pattern of Story?

Biology of Story is a 24-week, asynchronous, fully online course. Proceeding from the practical insights of those who create and tell stories in many forms, while seeking to attain a mile-high perspective on its vast subject, the course sets out an emerging and expansive new theory of Story, treating Story as a pattern that unites art and life.

This theory emerges partly from the growing use of narrative in a wide range of fields towards rethinking social and institutional assumptions and releasing human potential. It has been and continues to be developed through a process of research-creation, i.e. academic research that is rooted in the creative process as a source of knowledge. Taking a phenomenological approach, this theory of Story is rooted in familiar experiences that occur in living and working with stories in our lives and art. The course invites students not merely to absorb or even simply to learn the ideas being presented, but to test them against their own experience, to converse with and to challenge – as well as to be challenged by – them.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

The year-long course is divided into three parts. The first part, running the length of the first term, seeks to answer the question of what Story is, and in particular how Story works with us. This exploration will be framed by an understanding – based on insights drawn from both art and science – that Story has played, and continues to play, a central role in the evolutionary processes of human cognition and connection.

After an orientation in week one, in weeks two and three we’ll introduce the course’s approach and some of its central ideas, and show how Story is rooted in indigenous ideas about the world and our relationship to it. Then in weeks four, five and six we’ll examine Story as a pattern through its inherent process, structure, and values; weeks seven through ten will proceed to explore imagination, inspiration and experience as key dynamics of Story. In the final two weeks of the first term we will look at the biological principles of self-organization and inter-dependence as fundamental to the design of Story.

The course’s second part, at the beginning of the winter term, will explore Anti-Story, narratives in art and life that lack specific living attributes of Story, and that as a result work against the values of Story.

In the course’s third part, beginning in Week 17, students will conduct independent work to examine Story and Anti-Story in the practical realm, looking at the role played by narrative in a range of fields, in the arts (e.g. Literature, Film & Television, Interactive & Transmedia, etc.) and life (e.g. Health, Religion, Family, Journalism, and the Sciences). Student projects will synthesize course insights with investigation of real-world practice and in so doing expand on the course’s knowledge base.

Key insights from the cultural knowledge of First Nations and other indigenous peoples, traditionally rooted in story, will frame the course’s epistemological approach.

Please see the course Moodle for all resources, including required materials and bibliographic references.

There is no required text for this course, however students are required to review a range of materials assigned through the Moodle. Insure that you check the course materials promptly each week as a new “class” becomes available on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. so you are fully aware of the week’s requirements. To achieve satisfactory results in the course students should expect to spend 8 – 9 hours weekly on the course, spreading the time over your weekly calendar to be able to participate fully in online conversations. There are weekly Comprehension Quizzes, and weekly requirements for participating in Conversation Activities, not included in the deadlines below.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: All opening and due dates refer to 9:30 a.m..
Specific deadlines for assignments will be posted on Moodle.

| Week 1: Introduction. | Opens: September 5 |
| Week 2: The World is Made of Stories | Opens: September 12 |
**List of Learning Outcomes and Examples of**

**Learning Materials:** The course’s key learning materials are threefold:
1. an extremely condensed filmed lecture illustrated with a wide range of moving image materials;
2. illustrated video interviews with noted story practitioners and thinkers from a wide range of fields, also created for the course;
3. transcripts of the above video materials, extensively footnoted and connected to other sources, including the course Wiki.

**Learning Activities** will aim to involve students in work balancing analytical rigour, creative imagination, and personal reflection; while building University skills at research, writing, and informed discussion. Learning activities fall into four areas:
- Comprehension Activities: a weekly quiz, testing comprehension of concepts from the learning materials.
- Conversation Activities: Forum discussions, a StoryBank where students post and review personal stories on assigned themes, and a course Wiki to which students may add topics and materials.
- Assignment Activities: three assignments integrating concepts explored in the learning materials.
- Final Project: the focus of activity in the course’s last third.

Through these activities, students will not only be consolidating and proving their own learning process, but potentially adding to the course’s knowledge base and making lasting contributions to the ongoing Biology
Learning Workflow. As an online course, exceptional flexibility is provided to students in how they structure their learning activities. At the same time, there is a greater than normal demand for students to take attentive responsibility in order to stay on top of the course’s ongoing workflow. See note below re: Course Expectations.

Learning Outcomes. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Relate indigenous cultural perspective on narrative to contemporary practices.
- Demonstrate understanding of the basic formal properties of story.
- Discern the role of narrative in constructing systems of belief.
- Critically view formulaic narratives in popular culture.
- Demonstrate imaginative engagement with a range of academic and creative disciplines.
- Illustrate patterns of Story in their own personal experience.
- Recognize sources of personal inspiration and gain awareness of creative impulses.
- Listen thoughtfully to and analyze the stories of others.
- Identify narrative components of widely disparate fields of practice.

In a less quantitative sense, the course hopes to offer students the opportunity to achieve the following:

- A deepened sense of wonder about the magic of Story.
- Expanded awareness of imaginative processes.
- Greater access to their own sources of inspiration.
- Respect for diverse ways of knowing.
- Questioning of normative educational and ideological assumptions.

Course Expectations. Students are required and expected to check in regularly with the course via Moodle. In addition to undertaking the weekly learning activities, students are expected to pay particular attention to the following:

- Reviewing the following documents and referring to them when necessary:
  - Learning Activity Instructions
  - Technical Guidance and Learning Support
  - Making sure Course Announcements are being received by email, and reading all announcements promptly upon receipt.
  - Seeking clarifications when required about course operations, learning activities, and expectations by posting in the Administrative Forum.

GRADED ASSESSMENT

Sept. 17, 2019 Note: the quizzes will no longer be graded, and their 20% has been re-distributed to the assignments as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversation Activities</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments (3 x 10% each)</td>
<td>30% (previously 20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>45% (previously 35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Faculty grades distribution profiles.

Last date to drop this course without receiving a grade: February 3, 2020

Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the
assignment. Assignments are to be handed in electronically via the course Moodle site.

**Lateness Penalty:** Assignments are required to be submitted on time. Conversation Activities must be posted by their due date to be counted. Any Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized as follows:

- up to 24 hours late: 10% reduction in grade
- 25 - 48 hours late: 25% reduction in grade
- 49 – 72 hours late: 50% reduction in grade

Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter).

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

*Academic Honesty*

Plagiarism is a serious issue. It is damaging to yourself as a writer and a student, as well as being grounds for severe academic penalties, as indicated in the undergraduate catalogue:

[http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/students.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/students.htm)

The Instructor requires that each class member has taken the tutorial associated with Academic Honesty.

**IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information:

- Academic Integrity Website [http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity).
- Accessibility/Disability Services – course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, learning and psychiatric disabilities: [www.yorku.ca/cds](http://www.yorku.ca/cds).
- Religious Observance Accommodation [https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regobs](https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regobs).

Please note that this information is subject to periodic update. For the most current information, please go to the CCAS webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents): [http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm).

**Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.**

[http://www.moodle.yorku.ca](http://www.moodle.yorku.ca)