EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

FILM AND VIDEO

School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Department of Cinema and Media Arts

FA / FILM 1800 6.0 SECTION A
THE BIOLOGY OF STORY
FALL 2020 / WINTER 2021

Last Modified Date: 08/25/2020

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)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Section / Format / Term</th>
<th>Contact Email</th>
<th>Contact Phone</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:  Morgan Fics  morganficsTA@hotmail.com
Course Description: This is a fully online, asynchronous course, with new weeks released Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. There will be no in-class interactions or activities on campus.

Technical requirements for taking the course: You should have access to a computer with a stable Internet connection. If you wish to participate in live Zoom office hours (by appointment) with your Teaching Assistant or Course Director, you will also need a webcam and microphone. To determine if your Internet speed is capable of Zoom meetings, there are online tests, such as in the following link: https://myspeedcheck.net/speedtest/zoom-internet.

Detailed Course Description

How do writers, filmmakers, and other creators go about finding and shaping the stories they tell? In what ways is “Story” – the formal properties of which all stories partake – a pattern woven into our brain, our lives, our society, our world? Or are we and our reality woven by the pattern of Story?

A 24-week, asynchronous, fully online course, The Biology of Story is founded upon the practical insights of those who create and tell stories in many forms, setting out an emerging and expansive new theory that sees Story as a pattern uniting art and life. This theory emerges partly from the growing use of narrative in a wide range of fields and moves toward the rethinking of social and institutional assumptions to release human potential.

The Biology of Story course was and continues to be developed through a process of “research-creation”: academic research 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 while living and working with stories. The course invites students not merely to absorb or learn the ideas being presented, but to test them against their own experience, converse with and challenge as well as to be challenged by them.

In addition, our hope is to correct what we see as a faulty metaphor: that of Story as a kind of machine, or rational construction, and replace it with the metaphor of Story as a living being whose aim is to help us evolve.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

This yearlong course is divided into three parts. The first, in the fall term, seeks to answer the question of what Story is, how we work with it, and how it 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. Key insights from the cultural knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, traditionally rooted in story, will frame the course’s epistemological approach.

Week 1 serves as an orientation. In Weeks 2 and 3, after introducing some of the course’s central concepts, we’ll show how Story is rooted in Indigenous perceptions of the world and our relationship to it. Weeks 4, 5 and 6 will examine Story as a pattern through its inherent process, structure, and values. In Weeks 7 through 10, we’ll explore imagination, inspiration and experience as key components of Story. In the final two weeks of the first term, we’ll look at the biological properties of self-organization and inter-dependence as essential dynamics of Story.

The course’s second part, Weeks 13 through 16 at the beginning of the winter term, will explain anti-story: narratives in art and life that lack the specific living attributes of Story, and, as a result, work against its values.

In the course’s third part, Weeks 17-24, 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. Psychology, Medicine, Family & Community, 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. There will be both academic and creative options for the two final projects.

The course Moodle will contain 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. Ensure that you check the Moodle course promptly each week: new lecture and conversation activities become available on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.

To achieve satisfactory results in the course, students should expect to spend 8 – 9 hours weekly on their work, spreading the time out over the week to participate fully in the conversation activities.

**Class Schedule**

- *All week beginnings and deadlines are at 9:30 a.m. on the date specified.*
- *If changed due to unforeseen circumstances, dates posted on Moodle will supersede those below.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>September 10-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The World is Made of Stories</td>
<td>September 17-23</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Connected to Stories of Place</td>
<td>September 24-30</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The Process of Story</td>
<td>October 1-7</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The Structure of Story</td>
<td>October 8-21*</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>The Values of Story</td>
<td>October 22-28</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The Habitat of Story</td>
<td>October 29-Nov. 4</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Belief in Story</td>
<td>November 5-11</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>The Source of Story</td>
<td>November 12-18</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>The Roots of Story</td>
<td>November 19-25</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>How Stories Grow</td>
<td>November 26-December 2</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>How Stories Connect</td>
<td>December 3-9</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Story Vs. Anti-Story</td>
<td>January 14-20</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Formula Narratives</td>
<td>January 21-27</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Fundamentalist Narratives</td>
<td>January 28-February 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The New Story</td>
<td>February 4-10</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Final Project Intro</td>
<td>February 11-24*</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Final Project Research</td>
<td>February 25-March 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Final Project Research</td>
<td>March 4-10</td>
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<td>Weeks 20-22</td>
<td>Final Project Drafts</td>
<td>March 11-31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 23-24</td>
<td>Final Project Revisions</td>
<td>April 1-13</td>
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*spans over two weeks due to the semester break

**LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF**

**Learning Materials:** The course’s weekly key learning materials are threefold:

a. a condensed filmed lecture illustrated with a wide range of moving image materials;

b. illustrated video interviews with noted story practitioners and thinkers from a wide range of fields from the Biology of Story interactive documentary;

c. transcripts of the above video materials, extensively footnoted and connected to other sources, including the course glossary.

**Learning Activities** aim to involve students in work while balancing analytical rigour, creative imagination, personal reflection and building university-level skills in research, writing, and informed discussion.

Learning activities fall into three areas:
• Comprehension Activities: A weekly quiz testing understanding of concepts from the learning materials. A passing grade required to unlock the next week’s lecture materials and graded conversation activities. Students may take this quiz as many times as necessary to pass.

• Conversation Activities: Weekly forum discussions and a StoryBank where students post and review personal stories on assigned themes, as well as an Administrative forum where students post questions. Students who participate fully in the forums tend to do much better in the assignments because through the conversations they deepen their understanding of the course concepts.

• Assignments: Academic and creative end-of-term projects integrating concepts explored in the learning materials.

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 of Story i-Doc.

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
• engage imaginatively 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
• understand narrative components of widely disparate fields of practice
• critically identify formulaic, fundamentalist, and propagandistic narratives

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

• 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 daily with the course via Moodle.

In addition to undertaking the weekly learning activities, students are expected to pay particular and prompt attention to the following:

• Learning Activity Instructions
• Technical Guidance and Learning Support
• Course Announcements

…and to seek clarifications when required, well ahead of deadlines, about course operations, learning activities, assignments and expectations by posting in the Administrative Forum.

GRADED ASSESSMENT

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Term Conversation Activities</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Term Conversation Activities</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall Term Assignment</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Faculty grades distribution profiles.

**Assignment Submission:** Assignments are to be submitted electronically via the course Moodle site. Submission details will be indicated on Moodle, and students must familiarize themselves with and adhere to them.

**Lateness Penalty:** Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments/projects for this course must be received on the due date and time specified on Moodle; if received later, they will be penalized as follows:

- 1 day (up to 24 hours) late: 20% reduction in grade
- 2 days (25-48 hours) late: 40% reduction in grade
- 3 days (49-72 hours) late: 60% reduction in grade
- 4 days (73-96 hours) late: 80% reduction in grade
- 5+ days (97+ hours) late: 100% reduction in grade

Conversation Activities will close at 9:30 am on the due date and will not be graded if they are submitted after that time unless the student has an official accommodation.

Exceptions to the lateness penalty for reasons such as illness, professional obligations or the death of a loved one may be considered by the Course Director, but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note or official accommodation letter, etc.)

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

All non-personal questions must be posted in the Administration Forum on Moodle. Please check first if other students have posted the same question to avoid redundancy.

Personal questions should be emailed to your Teaching Assistant, or Course Director if your TA cannot resolve it. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, please email again.

To contact us, please refer to the emails at the top of this document, or the Contact Information section of our Moodle course.

**Do not use the Moodle messaging service as its notifications can easily be missed.**

Individual Zoom meetings with your TA or Course Director can be arranged by appointment at a mutually-convenient time. Please send your request by email with as much notice as possible.

**Computing Information, Resources and Help for Students:**

- Computing for Students Website: https://student.computing.yorku.ca/
- Student Guide to eLearning at York University: http://elearning-guide.apps01.yorku.ca/
- Learning Skills Services: https://lss.info.yorku.ca/online-learning/

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism is damaging to yourself as a writer and a student, unfair to your fellow students, and grounds for severe academic penalties, as indicated in the undergraduate catalogue: http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/students.htm

The Instructor requires that each class member take the tutorial associated with Academic Honesty and familiarize themselves with the university’s Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures: https://sosc.laps.yorku.ca/students/academic-honesty/

To promote academic integrity in this course, the Turnitin tool will be used to review students’ written assignments and forum posts submitted on Moodle for textual similarity and the detection of possible
plagiarism. Student work thus submitted will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used only for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin service are described on the Turnitin.com website. Students who wish to opt out of Turnitin must write to the Course Director within the first week of the course to make alternative arrangements for assignment submission and/or assessment, including assessment of academic honesty.

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

Moodle @ York University