

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT BOULDER
Spring 2014

SOCY 4131-001
Advanced Topics in Sociology: The Sociology of Narrative
T/R 11-12:15
ECCR 200

Professor Leslie Irvine irvinel@colorado.edu KTCH 223 Office hours: W 2-3:30; R 9:30-10:30	Teaching Assistant: Laurent Cilia Laurent.cilia@colorado.edu KTCH 414 Office hours: M 1-2; W 12-1
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Our own existence cannot be separated from the accounts we give of ourselves. It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories that we tell about ourselves. It makes very little difference whether these stories are true or false; fiction as well as verifiable history provides us with an identity.

Paul Ricoeur (1991:156)*

Narrative, or stories of various sorts, constitutes a basic aspect of human interaction. We begin to understand narrative as soon as we learn language, and throughout our lives, narrative is the primary way we know about our world, including our selves. Because we construct narratives from available cultural materials, the sociological analysis of narratives can shed light on the influence of social structure and historical and institutional context. This course examines various types of narratives, from the spoken form of interviews and political speeches, to the written version in diaries, to the visual form of film and photography. We will emphasize personal narratives, or first-person, retrospective accounts of individual lives over time. In addition, we will investigate some of the narrative elements in the sociological research literature, revealing how stories provide the basis for disciplinary authority. You will gain an understanding of narrative not only through course readings, but also through analyses of narrative data in a project of your own.

I have divided the course into three parts. Part One, "The Basics," takes us through Week 4 of the semester. Here, we will examine issues central to the scholarly consideration of narrative. We first investigate the question of what "narrative" means and why sociologists should care about it. We will also gain a sense of how the sociology of narrative differs from narrative sociology, as well as how the two can happily coexist. We will also consider the question of narrative "truth." Then, in the second part of the course, "Conducting Narrative Research," we examine various analytic strategies. This takes us into Week 9. During this part of the course, you will begin to analyze some type of narrative data. In the final part of the course, which I have called "Selves and Stories," we will read about and discuss the narrative construction of identity. We will examine how narrative data offers insight into meaning, emotion, and desire that other kinds of sociological and historical data cannot provide. Narrative logic allows us to see the relationship between an individual, as a subject, and social structure, cultural practices, and historical context.

The goals of the course are:

- (1) to become familiar with how sociologists have approached narrative,
- (2) to develop skills for analyzing narrative, and
- (3) to impart a critical awareness of how narrative constructs the social world and gives meaning to human experience.

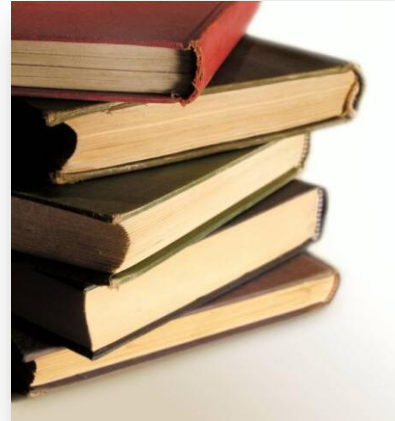
* *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. Tr. by K. Blamey & J. B. Thompson.
Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

BOOKS TO OBTAIN (Additional required readings posted on D2L)

Eakin, Paul John. 2008. *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.
ISBN: 9780801474781

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. 1991. *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*. New York: Vintage Books.
ISBN: 9780679733768

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 2007. *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE.
ISBN: 9780761929987



NOTE: If circumstances make purchasing books a hardship, please see me as early in the semester as possible to arrange for loaner copies.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

To evaluate your mastery of the course goals, I will assess your progress along these criteria:

- Facilitating discussion: 10 points
 - Responsive writing: 18 points (after dropping lowest two grades)
 - Homework: 24 points
 - Assignments: 23 points
 - Final paper/project: 100 points
- Total points=175



I will assign final grades using the CU Grade Scale:

A: 94-100%	B: 84-86%	C: 73-76%	D: 64-66%
A-: 90-93%	B-: 80-83%	C-: 70-72%	D-: 60-63%
B+: 87-89%	C+: 77-79%	D+: 67-69%	F: 59% or less

Facilitating discussion: Once during the semester, each member of the class will lead the class in considering a concept, question, or problem from the reading to direct our attention to particularly significant ideas. You will have ten minutes of class time (although I will not end a good discussion just because ten minutes have elapsed). We will schedule these during the second week of class. Note that these are *not* presentations; rather, your role is to facilitate discussion of that day's readings.

Responsive writing: Throughout the semester, you will do short writing exercises during class. Sometimes you will respond to a question about the reading material. Other times, you might compose one or two questions about the day's topic. I will collect most, but not all of these exercises for credit. They are designed to help you to take responsibility for your own learning and participate as an active learner, even

when you are not being graded. We will use these to review material when most of the class shows evidence of confusion and misconception and I will use them to work with individual students who show lack of mastery. When collected, I will grade these on a scale of 0 to 3:

- 0: You did not submit a response or your response indicates no grasp of the material
- 1: Your response indicates only a superficial understanding of the material
- 2: Your response demonstrates a partial understanding of the material
- 3: Your response demonstrates a solid understanding of the material

I will drop your two lowest grades. We will have one ungraded, practice exercise early in the semester. If you have a documented medical or legal excuse for missing an exercise, see me for an alternate assignment (and provide documentation). If you miss an exercise because you arrived late for class or left early, you cannot make it up.

Homework and Assignments: *Homework* consists of short, low-stakes tasks related to the reading; *assignments* are more involved, designed to give you experience in different aspects of narrative collection, transcription, and/or analysis. See the “Course Policies” section on late homework and assignments.

You will have homework due on four occasions throughout the semester. **Note: You must submit homework using the D2L Dropbox; submit all other work in class.** I will review homework before class and use it to gauge your grasp of the material.

We will discuss the assignments in class and I will post guidelines on D2L. I have listed the due dates on the schedule in this syllabus.

Assignment 1: Analyze an aspect of narrative in a sociological journal article that does not explicitly address narrative (or one from your major, if not sociology). You may use an article assigned for another class.

Assignment 2: Short interview analysis

Final paper/project: You will use ideas from the course to analyze narrative data of your choosing. We will discuss this throughout the semester. You will work on the paper or project in segments, with their own due dates. The final paper/project will be the combined, revised segments, along with any additional aspects required to create a coherent analysis.

COURSE POLICIES

I expect professional behavior from students in a 4000-level course. Please familiarize yourself with the policies and deadlines contained in this syllabus so that you understand the expectations for this class. Unprofessional behavior such as absenteeism, tardiness, careless work, and poor communication skills will affect your grade negatively.

You must keep current with the course. If you miss a class, please do not ask me if you missed anything important. First contact a classmate for notes, then arrange to see Laurent or me for additional clarification of the material if needed.

If an event scheduled prior to the start of the semester (such as travel to a wedding, family reunion, or conference) will cause you to miss a class or a deadline, you must notify me by **January 30** to discuss alternate grading options. I will not consider options for anyone who waits longer than this to contact me.

Keep up with the reading. I understand that you have other classes and other demands on your time, but you must plan to complete all reading assignments by the dates listed on the syllabus. We will not “go over” each reading in class, but I will hold you accountable for all content assigned. In some cases, we will discuss the material in considerable detail, but more often, the reading will provide a platform for considering related issues.

Please be courteous in class and respect everyone in the learning environment. Arrive on time. Refrain from sleeping, holding conversations, reading newspapers, or doing work for other classes.

I have a “Zero Tolerance” policy for texting. Just don’t do it. Turn the ringer on your phone off—not to “vibrate”—and **put your phone away**, not in your lap, and not under the desk. Do not push me on this. If you text or engage in other distracting, disrespectful behaviors during class, I will ask you to leave.



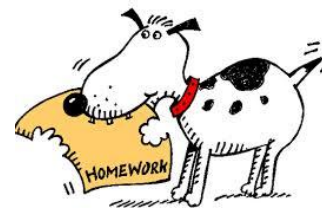
You may use laptops, tablets, or other mobile devices to take notes, but please have paper and pen/pencil available in every class, too. I will designate a laptop-free zone in the classroom during the first week of the semester (usually the last few rows, depending on seating capacity). If you notice another student doing off-task work during class, please notify Laurent or me and we will address the situation without identifying you.

Please inform me immediately if you have a health problem or a disability that necessitates leaving the room during class.

On email: Check D2L and your CU email account regularly for announcements relevant to the class. Consistent with University policy, Laurent and I will conduct course-related communication only through official “colorado.edu” email accounts. Do not expect us to respond to messages from hotmail, gmail, or other email servers. We will read and respond to email sent from this class Monday through Thursday, 9-5, and Friday 9-12.

On late homework and assignments: If you do not submit your homework on time, you cannot use Dropbox. Submit it in class that day for half credit. If you miss that “window,” you will receive no credit. I will consider exceptions for documented medical or legal circumstances that prevent you from submitting homework on time.

You must submit all assignments in class. Assignments turned in after the class period in which they are due but *before* the end of the same day will have their final overall grades **lowered by 5 points**. Assignments turned in after the due date will have their final overall grades **lowered by 10 points** for each day they are late. Assignments turned in **two or more days** after the due date (including non-class days and weekends) will receive **no points**.



Exceptions to the late policy: If you are absent the day an assignment is due because of documented medical or legal circumstances, you must e-mail me a copy before the beginning of class that day so I know you finished the assignment on time. You must then turn in a paper copy of the assignment, along with a copy of your documentation, at the next class period.

If you become concerned about your grade in this course, see Laurent or me as soon as possible to discuss strategies for improvement. Do not wait until the end of the semester. *I repeat:* Do not wait until the end of the semester.

If you receive an incorrect grade or one that you consider unfair and you would like it reconsidered, please submit 1) your graded assignment, and 2) a typed memo, no more than one page in length, explaining why you believe the grade you received does not accurately reflect the quality of your work, given the requirements of the assignment. Submit this request to Laurent or me within one week of receiving the grade. One of us will inform you of the decision within a week of receiving these items. Please note that if you ask to have your work reevaluated, your new grade may be lower than the original.

Make back-up copies of **all** your written work. Keep copies of all graded course work until you receive your final grade. In the case of an incorrect or missing grade, the responsibility to provide graded work to request a change lies entirely with you.

COURSE SCHEDULE



...and probably will do so. Offering this as a “Topics” course will allow me to see whether I might want to propose it as a regular course, with its own title and catalog number. Because this semester is somewhat experimental, we have some freedom to assess and adjust. For example, I have left time for three in-class workshop sessions, in which I would like you to discuss progress and pitfalls in your research. I will check in with the class after a few weeks to see if you think this is a good idea, or if you would prefer to have

fewer or no workshops and instead incorporate other topics into the class (in which case, I would revise the schedule).

Notes on the readings:

- Don’t confuse “Maynes et al.” (1/16, 2/11, & 4/1) with “Maines” (1/23).
- Denotes video or other online content linked to D2L
- I would very much like to discuss the books by Eakin and Ulrich in more of a book club style, where we have all read the whole books by a specified date. I will talk with you about whether and how we can do that. The sections of those books I have listed below are therefore tentative.
- For your reference, I have posted full bibliographic citations for all articles listed here on D2L.

Date	Topic/What to read	What’s due (or nearly due)
Jan 14	Introduction to the course and to one another	<i>Not a thing, but start reading!</i>
PART 1	THE BASICS	
	<i>What is narrative and why should sociologists care?</i>	
Jan 16	Riessman (chap 1); Maynes et al.(1)	<i>Consider potential interviewee</i>
Jan 21	Poletta et al.; Polkinghorne (1: only thru p. 22)	Homework 1
	<i>Sociology of narrative/narrative sociology: examples</i>	
Jan 23	Maines; Polkinghorne (2)	
Jan 28	Somers	Final project, stage 1
Jan 30	Irvine(1)	Assignment #1
	<i>Narrative truth</i>	
Feb 4	Riessman (chap 7); Bauman	<i>Arrange interview</i>
Feb 6	Zussman	

PART 2	CONDUCTING NARRATIVE RESEARCH	
	<i>Methodologies</i>	
Feb 11	Riessman (chap 2); Maynes et al.(2)	Homework 2
Feb 13	Workshop 1	Final project, stage 2
	<i>Thematic analysis</i>	
Feb 18	Riessman, chap 3; Frank (1)	Conduct interview
	<i>Structural analysis</i>	
Feb 20	Riessman, chap 4; Irvine (2)	Transcribe interview
	<i>Dialogic/Performance analysis</i>	
Feb 25	Riessman, chap 5; Frank (2)	
Feb 27	King; *MLK; *JFK *Sheryl Sandberg	Assignment #2 (final)
	<i>Visual analysis</i>	
Mar 4	Riessman, chap 6	
Mar 6	Riley; add'l rdng TBD	
Mar 11	Workshop 2	Final project, stage 3
PART 3	SELVES AND STORIES	
	<i>Forms of telling (about) lives</i>	
Mar 13	Eakin, chap 1	Homework 3
Mar 18	Eakin, chap 2-3	
Mar 20	Eakin, chap 4	
Mar 25	Spring Break	
Mar 27	No classes	
Apr 1	Maynes et al (3); *Rowlandson; Intro through "Fourth Remove"	
Apr 3	Ulrich, Introduction & epilogue	
Apr 8	Ulrich, through p. 101	Homework 4
Apr 10	Ulrich, through p. 203	
Apr 15	Ulrich, through 345	
Apr 17	Workshop 3	Final project, stage 4
	<i>The Subversive Power of Stories</i>	
Apr 22	Ewick & Silbey	
Apr 24	Ronai & Cross	
	<i>Narrative and the Body/Embodiment</i>	
Apr 29	Sarbin	
May 1	Mason-Schrock; Kosut	
May 5		Final projects due: 4:30 p.m

RELEVANT CU POLICIES

Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services within the first two weeks of class so that I can address your needs. Disability Services determines accommodations based on *documented* disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions: Injuries, Surgeries, and Illnesses guidelines under Quick Links at Disability Services website and discuss your needs with me.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty members have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity, and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

Academic Integrity

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). For other information on the Honor Code, see <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode>

Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please notify me early in the semester if religious observance will cause you to miss a class, test, or assignment. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Discrimination and Harassment

The University of Colorado at Boulder policies on Discrimination and Harassment Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff, and faculty (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>). Any student who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. For information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment, see <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>