

Narrative
Department of Sociology (920:512)
Fall 2008
Rutgers University
Syllabus

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Course Overview:

Narratives are the stories we tell one another. Narratives order and connect events into meaningful patterns. They occur in a seemingly endless variety of forms including personal accounts, recorded histories, political campaigns, cultural myths, and course descriptions to cite a few examples. An emerging field of study within sociology, narrative scholarship crosscuts and intersects with every other research area in the discipline, and simultaneously transcends the traditional oppositional split between the humanities and the social sciences. The course makes the argument that all narratives are socially constructed and thus are an important source of knowledge of larger social processes and structures.

The readings begin with a discussion about how best to define narratives. Are narratives and stories synonymous, or are there systematic differences between the two concepts? What characteristics best define different narrative forms and narratives in general? Do narratives invariably represent a chronological sequence of events? Are all narratives also accounts or explanations? What do narratives allow scholars to understand about the self and about identity? We also consider the circumstances that shape the telling of narratives. Are there occasions, for example, that are more likely to produce and/or reproduce the telling of stories, and some stories rather than others? Are there conditions that are more likely to generate silences? In what ways are narratives shaped by the conditions of their production; how do narrative production, communication, and circulation respond to socio-historical requirements and audience needs? How do repetition and emphasis, omission and silence, translation and transferability operate to define the narratives we write, tell, depict, read, see and hear? And what can the structure of a narrative—its order and disruption, its beginning and ending tell us? Finally, how can we best analyze narratives given our interests in comparison, generalization and applicability, and the analytic tools available to us? Are there limitations that narratives impose on researchers?

This seminar enables participants to develop the necessary theoretical, substantive and methodological tools to analyze narratives of interest. The readings open with questions of conceptualization and epistemology, and then turn to a rich mix of theoretical and methodological issues often using empirical cases as evidence. The later weeks will concentrate on narrative analyses in several substantive fields of interest including political and trauma narratives, and which will also reference seminar participants' research interests.

The syllabus lists required reading and optional resources for further exploration. I expect regular attendance and active engagement with the ideas and materials in the course. Each week students should come to class with a one- to two-page analytic overview of the assigned readings, which they will post on

the course website the day prior to our meeting and be prepared to discuss in the seminar. These informal papers should highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the materials read, identify points of confusion, questions meriting further discussion, and ideas in conflict or contradiction with one another. Carefully considered weekly papers and thoughtful participation in seminar discussions are important elements of the seminar's success.

The final paper, based on original research, enables students to select a group of narratives and analyze the context of their creation and distribution, patterns of meaning, and contributions to understanding larger social, cultural and political formations. Research papers are due without exception on Wednesday, December 10th and intermediate deadlines for work in progress are noted below in the weekly schedule. Final grades will rely on a composite evaluation of your weekly written and oral contributions, and your final paper. Though weekly work and the research paper are of equal value, if either facet of the work is less substantial than the other, I reserve the right to adjust this percentage in determining final grades in students' favor.

Except under the most extreme circumstances, I will not give incomplete grades. Instead the work completed during the term will be the basis of the evaluation. All work for this course must adhere to the specific practices and ethos of the University's policy on academic integrity, which should be read in its entirety at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml> . This requirement includes the practice of not using written work for this seminar completed in other venues without explicit permission of the instructor.

Required Readings

Two books are available for purchase at the Livingston Campus Bookstore. All other readings are available on the Sakai website for our seminar.

Maynes, Mary Jo, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett. 2008. *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.

Polletta, Francesca. 2006. *It Was Like Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

September 3 Course Introduction

September 10 Foundational Issues I

Benjamin, Walter. 1955. "The Storyteller," Pp. 83-109 in *Illuminations*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Maines, David. 1993. "Narrative's Moment and Sociology's Phenomena: Toward a Narrative Sociology," *Sociology Quarterly*, 34: 17-38.

Kreiwirth, Martin. 2000. "Merely Telling Stories? Narrative Knowledge in the Human Sciences."

Poetics Today 21:293-318.

Orbuch, Terri L. 1997. "People's Accounts Count: The Sociology of Accounts." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:455-78.

Scott, Joan. 1991. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry* 17:773-97. [optional]

Bruner, Jerome. 1991. "The Narrative Construction of Reality." *Critical Inquiry* 18:1-21 [optional]

Rudel, Thomas K. and Judith M. Gerson. 1999. "Postmodernism, Institutional Change, and Academic Workers: A Sociology of Knowledge." *Social Science Quarterly* 80:213-28. [optional]

September 17 Foundational Issues II

Mills, C. Wright. 1940. "Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motives." *American Sociological Review* 5:904-13.

White, Hayden. 1980. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." *Critical Inquiry* 7:5-27.

Brockmeier, Jens and Rom Harré. 1997. "Narrative: Problems and Promises of an Alternative Paradigm." *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 30:263-83.

Jacobs, Ronald N. and Sarah Sobieraj. 2007. "Narrative and Legitimacy: U.S. Congressional Debates about the Nonprofit Sector." *Sociological Theory* 25:1-32.

Benhabib, Seyla. 1990. "Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative," *Social Research* 57: 167-96. [optional]

September 24 Disciplining Narratives

Tilly, Charles. 2002. "The Trouble with Stories." Pp. 25-42 in *Stories, Identities, and Political Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Reed, Isaac. 2008. "Justifying Sociological Knowledge: From Realism to Interpretation." *Sociological Theory* 26:101-29.

Reed, John Shelton. 1989. "On Narrative and Sociology." *Social Forces* 68:1-14.

Calhoun, Craig. 1998. "Explanation in Historical Sociology: Narrative, General Theory, and Historically-Specific Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 104: 846-71.

Gubrium, Jaber F. and James A. Holstein. 1999. "At the Border of Narrative and Ethnography." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28:561-73.

Gubrium, Jaber F. and James A. Holstein. 1998. "Narrative Practice and the Coherence of Personal Stories." *The Sociological Quarterly* 39:163-87.

Gotham, Kevin Fox and William Staples. 1996. "Narrative Analysis and the New Historical Sociology." *Sociological Quarterly* 37:481-501. [optional]

Berger, Ronald J. and Richard Quinney. eds. 2004. *Storytelling Sociology: Narrative as Sociological Inquiry*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. [optional]

White, Hayden. 1974. "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact." Pp. 81-7 in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. [optional]

Josselson, Ruthellen. 2006. "Narrative Research and the Challenge of Accumulating Knowledge." *Narrative Inquiry* 16:3-10. [optional]

Polkinghorne, Donald. 1988. *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. Pp. 11-22, 157-184. [optional]

Harré, Rom. 1990. "Some Narrative Conventions of Scientific Discourse." Pp. 5-22 in Christopher Nash, ed. *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature*. London and New York: Routledge. [optional]

McCloskey, Donald N. 1990. "Storytelling in Economics." Pp. 5-22 in Christopher Nash, ed. *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature*. London and New York: Routledge. [optional]

October 1 Personal Narratives

Maynes, Mary Jo, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett. 2008. *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.

Fischer, Wolfram and Martina Goblirsch. 2006. "Biographical Structuring: Narrating and Reconstructing the Self in Research and Professional Practice." *Narrative Inquiry* 16:28-36.

Bertaux, Daniel and Martin Kohli. 1984. "The Life Story Approach: A Continental View." *Annual Review of Sociology* 10:215-37.

Gergen, Kenneth J. and Mary M. Gergen. 1983. "Narratives of the Self." in Theodore R. Sarbin and Karl E. Scheibe, eds. *Studies in Social Identity*. New York : Praeger. [optional]

Heimer, Carol A. 2001. "Cases and Biographies: An Essay on Routinization and the Nature of Comparison." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:27-76. [optional]

October 8 Collective Identities

Loeske, Donileen R. 2007. "The Study of Identity as Cultural, Institutional, Organizational and Personal Narratives: Theoretical and Empirical Integrations." *Sociological Quarterly* 48:661-88.

Somers, Margaret R. 1992. "Narrativity, Narrative Identity, and Social Action: Rethinking English Working-Class Formation." *Social Science History* 16: 591-630.

Somers, Margaret R. 1994. "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach." *Theory and Society* 23:605-49.

Smith, Tammy. 2006. "Narrative Boundaries and the Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict and Conciliation." *Poetics* 35:22-46.

Kraus, Wolfgang. 2006. "The Narrative Negotiation of Identity and Belonging." *Narrative Inquiry* 16:103-11.

Sewell, William. 1992. "Introduction: Narratives and Social Identities," *Social Science History* 16 (3): 479-87. [optional]

Hankiss, Agnes. 1981. "Ontologies of the Self: On the Mythological Rearranging of One's Life History." Pp. 203-09 in Daniel Bertaux, ed. *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications. [optional]

Bruner, Jerome. 1987. "Life as Narrative." *Social Research* 54:11-32. [optional]

October 15 Narrative Study of Social Movements

Polletta, Francesca. 2006. *It Was Like Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Suzanna M. Crage. 2006. "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth." *American Sociological Review* 71:724-51.

Stokes, Randall and John P. Hewitt. 1976. "Aligning Actions." *American Sociological Review* 41:838-49.

Bearman, Peter S. and Katherine Stovel. 2000. "Becoming a Nazi: A Model for Narrative Networks," *Poetics* 27: 69-90. [optional]

Jameson, Fredric. 1981. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. [optional]

October 22 Methodological Issues I

Labov, William and Joshua Waletzky. 1967. "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience." Pp. 12-44 in June Helm (ed.), *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Labov, William. 2006. "Narrative Pre-Construction." *Narrative Inquiry* 16:37-45.

Zussman, Robert. 2000. "Autobiographical Occasions: Introduction to the Special Issue." *Qualitative Sociology* 23:5-8.

Franzosi, Roberto. 1998. "Narrative Analysis—Why (and How) Sociologists Should Be Interested in Narrative." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24:517-54.

Abell, Peter. 2004. "Narrative Explanation: An Alternative to Variable-Centered Explanation?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:287-310.

Abbott, Andrew 2007. "Against Narrative: A Preface to Lyrical Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 25: 67-99.

Czarniawska, Barbara. 2004. "The Uses of Narrative in Social Science Research." Pp. 649-66 in Melissa Hardy and Alan Bryman, eds. *Handbook of Data Analysis*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. [optional]

October 29 Methodological Issues II

Griffin, Larry J. 1993. "Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 98:1094-1133.

Philaretou, Andreas G. and Katherine R. Allen. 2006. "Researching Sensitive Topics through Autoethnographic Means." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 14:65-78.

Clark, Mary Marshall. 2005. "Resisting Attrition in Stories of Trauma." *Narrative* 13:294-98

Brownlie, Siobhan. 2006. "Narrative Theory and Retranslation Theory." *Across Languages and Cultures* 7: 145-70.

Chase, Susan. 1995. "Taking Narrative Seriously: Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies." Pp. 1-26 in Amia Lieblich and Ruthellen Josselson eds. *The Narrative Study of Lives*. vol. 3. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Atkinson, Paul and Sara Delamont. 2006. "Rescuing Narrative from Qualitative Research." *Narrative Inquiry* 16:164-72.

Passerini, Luisa. 1992. "A Memory for Women's History: Problems of Method and Interpretation," *Social Science History* 16 (4), 669-94. [optional]

Mishler, Elliot G. 1986. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [optional]

Ricoeur, Paul. 1980. "Narrative Time." *Critical Inquiry* 7:169-90. [optional]

Cerulo, Karen. 2000. "The Rest of the Story: Sociocultural Patterns of Elaboration." *Poetics* 28:21-45. [optional]

Darby, David. 2001. "Form and Context: An Essay in the History of Narratology." *Poetics Today* 22: [optional]

Roth, Paul. 1989. "How Narratives Explain." *Social Research* 56:449-78. [optional]

Discussion of Paper Topics—Post one-page descriptions of projects for discussion in class by October 27. Be as specific as possible and include citations to a few key reference works. If you remain undecided about your focus, provisionally I will accept ideas for two possible projects.

November 5 Trauma Narratives

Langer, Lawrence L. 2006. "Hearing the Holocaust." *Poetics Today* 27:297-309.

Schiff, Brian, Chaim Noy, and Bertran J. Cohler. 2001. "Collected Stories in the Life Narratives of Holocaust Survivors." *Narrative Inquiry* 11:159-94.

Kushner, Tony 2006. "Holocaust Testimony, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation." *Poetics Today* 27: 275-95.

Wertsch, James V. "2008. "Collective Memory and Narrative Templates." *Social Research* 75:137-56.

Kraft, Robert N. 2006. "Archival Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Oral Testimony." *Poetics Today* 27: 311-30.

Browning, Christopher R. 2003. *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*. Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press. [optional]

November 12 and 19 Workshop Presentations of Works in Progress

Please email all class members with a preliminary and partial draft of your project. Include questions and issues you want your colleagues to consider when reading your work. Are you looking for sources and need suggestions? Are you encountering problems not easily resolved? Now is the time to seek advice without penalty or prejudice. Statements should be emailed at least two days prior to your presentation.

December 3 Narrative Consequences

Whooley, Owen. 2008. "The Political Work of Narratives: A Dialogic Analysis of Two Slave Narrative." *Narrative Inquiry* 16:295-318.

Norrick, Neal R. "2008. "Negotiating the Reception of Stories in Conversation: Teller Strategies for Modulating Response." *Narrative Inquiry* 18:131-51.

Jacobs, Ronald. 1996. "Producing the News, Producing the Crisis: Narrativity, Television and News Work." *Media, Culture and Society* 18:373-97.

Glassner, Barry. 2004. "Narrative Techniques of Fear Mongering." *Social Research* 71:819-26.

December 10 Concluding Thoughts

Frank, Arthur W. 1995. *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [pages to be assigned]

Tufte, Edward R. 1997. *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press. [pages to be assigned]

Tufte, Edward R. 2003. *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press.

Gordon, Avery F. 1997. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [pages to be assigned]

Additional Resources

Clandinin, D. Jean. ed. 2006. *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Clandinin, D.J. and M. Connelly. 1999. *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Elliott, Jane. 2005. *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Andrews, Molly, Corinne Squire and Maria Tamboukou eds. 2008. *Doing Narrative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 2008. *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ellis, Carolyn. 2004. *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Narrative about Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, MD: Alta Mira Press.

Zussman, Robert. 1996. "Autobiographical Occasions." *Contemporary Sociology* 25:143-8.

Daiute, Colette and Cynthia Lightfoot, eds. 2003. *Narrative Analysis: Studying the Development of Individuals in Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lieblich, Amia, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach and Tamar Zilber. 1998. *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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