

Psychology 335: Narrative Identity

Spring, 2017; MW, 12:45-2:15pm; Sharpless 416

Instructor Information

- Jennifer Lilgendahl
- Office: KINSC S422
- Office hours: TBA and by appt.
- Contact info: jlilgend@haverford.edu

Course Description

This course is an in-depth examination of the field of narrative identity, which takes as its guiding assumption that identity is constructed through our attempts to find meaning in past experiences and narrate our lives. Course readings will draw from both quantitative and qualitative traditions and from several fields of psychology (developmental, personality, cultural, and clinical). Topics to be addressed include the development of narrative identity from childhood to old age, how cultural, historical, and social-structural forces shape narrative identity, and the role of narrative transformation in therapeutic processes, self-growth, and social change.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course – all readings will be available on Moodle and include both journal articles of original studies and review/theoretical articles. It is important to note that as a 300-level, this course will be very reading intensive and will require your active engagement with the readings. An important part of your participation will be to complete readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss and evaluate their methods, results, and broader implications.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course include an individual presentation, a midterm paper, a final paper, and class participation. A brief description of each of these components is provided below.

- Class participation / discussion questions = 20%
- Individual presentation = 15%
- Midterm take-home exam = 25%
- Final project (Life Story Interview / research proposal) = 40%

Class Participation

As a 300-level, seminar-style course, this course will rely heavily on active student participation in the classroom. Although class will contain some lecture in order to provide necessary background for various topics, my intention is to be in “discussion mode” the majority of the time. Class time will involve a variety of different types of activities, from traditional discussion, to small group discussion, to in-class exercises and demonstrations. In particular, we will spend a fair amount of time analyzing narratives and discussing them. An important part of your grade (20%) will be based on the extent to which you attend and *actively participate* in all of these activities. Your participation grade will also be assessed in terms of the effort you put into writing discussion questions you will be periodically asked to write for class (class will be broken down into groups and rotate for discussion questions). I may also periodically ask you to do some sort of informal “homework” assignment, such as engage in a self-reflection, interview a friend, find an article that addresses a particular topic, complete a questionnaire, etc. These types of activities will not be formally graded, but they will be used as a basis for in-class discussion. Your treatment of these informal assignments will be reflected in your participation grade.

Individual Presentation

Over the course of the semester, each student will be responsible for giving one 15-minute presentation. This presentation will involve a creative integration of memoir/narrative material and the research literature. More details will be provided in class.

Midterm Exam

The first major class assignment will involve a midterm exam taking place in the week before Spring Break. I am still in the process of formulating this midterm, but I am envisioning an open-book, open-note exam in which you use course material to analyze a set of narratives I provide.

Final Project

The culminating project for this course will involve conducting your own Life Story Interview (with a person whom you choose), analyzing it using the literature on narrative identity, and developing a research proposal based on your observations from the interview. This is a big project, and one that we will develop for several weeks in the second half of the semester. This first part of the project will involve choosing a topic and picking a person whose life/identity somehow speaks to that topic and adapting the Life Story Interview (i.e., adding/editing questions) to address your interests. The second part of the project will involve conducting the interview and transcribing it, and discussing your narrative material with both myself and your classmates. The final part of the project will be writing your formal analysis of the interview and identifying literature that speaks to your interpretations and ideas.

Class Policies

- Attendance: Good attendance is expected in this course and will obviously influence your class participation grade. In general, I will not penalize you for the occasional missed class (e.g., 1 or 2); however, it is best to email me to let me know ahead of time if you are going to miss class because you are sick or have some kind of conflict. In addition, you are responsible for announcements made in class.
- Space of mutual respect and sensitivity: Given the nature of this course, we will sometimes be sharing personal information with one another and we will regularly be reading the stories of real people. I want to emphasize from the start that we aim to create a respectful and sensitive space where we listen closely and with empathy to one another and that we welcome a variety of different perspectives and viewpoints. Additionally, while I have not included narratives of severe trauma on the syllabus, an important aspect of narrative identity is how people narrate very difficult events in their lives. Thus, I want to provide at the outset a general trigger warning that some life stories and personal narratives may contain material that could be upsetting or difficult for individual students. Please feel free to talk to me about any concerns you have throughout the course of the semester. Communication is key to a healthy classroom!
- Late work: My policies regarding turning in work late are as follows: For the midterm exam, you will receive a 0 if it is not received by the deadline (5 pm on Thursday, 3/2). If you foresee a major conflict, you must let me know well ahead of time (and definitely prior to the exam being distributed on 2/27) and alternatives arrangements may potentially be made (at my discretion). Because the final project is due at the very end of the term, late papers will only be accepted if formal arrangements have been made through your Dean.
- Plagiarism/academic dishonesty: It goes without saying that any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If I suspect any such behavior may be occurring, I am obligated to report such suspicions to the Haverford Honor Council. It is very important, particularly in the age of the internet, to educate yourself on what constitutes plagiarism. A detailed discussion is available on p. 86 of the Haverford Student Guide

(<http://www.haverford.edu/deans/files/studentsGuide1011.pdf>), and I am available to talk at any time if you have any questions or concerns about this very important issue.

- **Permissions:** All of the materials made available to you in this course, including the syllabus, handouts, and PowerPoint slides, should not be shared with anyone or posted anywhere without my permission. Also, lectures and discussions should not be recorded without my permission.
- **Accommodating student needs/disabilities:** Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of the impact of a disability are encouraged to meet with me privately early in the semester. Students should also contact Sherrie Borowsky Deegan, Access Coordinator, Access and Disability Services (sborowsky@haverford.edu, 610-896-1324) to verify their eligibility for reasonable accommodations as soon as possible. Early contact will help to avoid unnecessary inconvenience and delays.

COURSE SCHEDULE

| Wk | Date | Topics / Activities | Readings |
|----|------|---|--|
| 1 | 1/18 | Introductory Overview | |
| 2 | 1/23 | Theoretical Perspectives and Conceptual Foundations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruner (1987). Life as narrative • McAdams (2001). The psychology of life stories • McLean et al (2007). Selves creating stories creating selves |
| 2 | 1/25 | Narrative methodology I: Narrative prompts and quantitative coding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adler et al (in press). Research methods for studying narrative identity: A primer • McAdams (1994). Chapter from <i>Stories we live by – Life Story Interview</i> |
| 3 | 1/30 | Narrative methodology II: Qualitative approaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schwab & Syed (2015). Qualitative inquiry and emerging adulthood |
| 3 | 2/1 | Emergence of the narrative self in early childhood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fivush (2011). Development of autobiographical memory • Wang & Fivush (2005). Mother-child conversations of emotionally salient events |
| 4 | 2/6 | Early adolescent development: Patterns and processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habermas & de Silveira (2008). The development of global coherence in life narratives across adolescence • McLean & Jennings (2012). Teens telling tales |
| 4 | 2/8 | Later adolescence and emerging adulthood: Identity exploration and commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vo-Jutabha et al (2009). A qualitative analysis of Vietnamese adolescent identity exploration • Syed & Azmitia (2010). A narrative approach to ethnic identity in emerging adulthood • Cox & McAdams (2012). The transforming self: Service narratives and identity change in emerging adulthood |
| 5 | 2/13 | Adulthood I: Age comparisons, generativity, stability and change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasupathi & Mansour (2006). Autobiographical reasoning in narratives • McAdams & Guo (2015). Narrating the generative life • Dunlop et al (2016). The autobiographical author through time |
| 5 | 2/15 | Adulthood II: Disruptions, growth, and maturity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pals (2006). Constructing the “springboard effect” Lilgendahl & McAdams (2013). Constructing stories of self-growth King et al (2000). Stories of Life Transition |

| | | | |
|-------|-----------|---|--|
| 6 | 2/20 | Scrutinizing the relationship between narrative identity and well-being: Issues of generalizability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Adler et al (2016). The incremental validity of narrative identity in predicting well-being •Reese et al (2016). Telling the tale and living well: Adolescent narrative identity, personality traits, and well-being across cultures •Sales, Merrill, & Fivush (2013). Does making meaning make it better? Narrative meaning making and well-being in at-risk African-American adolescent females |
| 6 | 2/22 | Narrative identity and mental illness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Raffard et al (2010). Narrative identity in schizophrenia •Singer, J. A. (2001). Living in the amber cloud: A life story analysis of a heroin addict •Adler et al (2012). The distinguishing features of narrative identity in adults with features of borderline personality disorder |
| 7 | 2/27 | The role of narrative in therapeutic processes <i>Midterm distributed</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Adler, J. M. (2012). Living into the story •Dunlop & Tracy (2013). Sobering stories •Singer & Bonalume (2010). Autobiographical memory narratives in psychotherapy: A coding system applied to the case of Cynthia |
| 7 | 3/1 | No class – time to work on midterm (<i>midterm due by 5 pm on 3/2</i>) | |
| | | Spring Break | |
| 8 | 3/13 | Intimate relationships, narrative co-construction and “we” stories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Singer (2004). A Love Story: Self-Defining Memories in Couples Therapy •Stueve & Pleck (2001). 'Parenting voices': Solo parent identity and co-parent identities in married parents' narratives of meaningful parenting experiences •Frost (2013). The narrative construction of intimacy and affect in relationships stories |
| 8 | 3/15 | Theoretical and conceptual perspectives on culture, power, history, marginality, and narrative identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •McLean & Syed (2016). Personal, master, and alternative narratives: An integrative framework for understanding identity development in context •Fivush (2004). Voice and silence: A feminist model of autobiographical memory |
| 9 | 3/20-3/22 | Master narratives, gender, and sexuality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hammack & Cohler (2011). Narrative, identity, and the politics of exclusion: Social change and the gay and lesbian life course •Faulkner & Hecht (2011). The negotiation of closetable identities: A narrative analysis of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered queer Jewish identity |
| 10 | 3/27-3/29 | Narratives of duality and conflict –bicultural identities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Garrett, M. T. (1996). “Two people”: An American Indian narrative of bicultural identity •Hammack (2010). Narrating hyphenated selves: Intergroup contact and configurations of identity among young Palestinian citizens of Israel |
| 11 | 4/3-4/5 | Socio-historical/geo-political contexts, collective memory, and narrative identity | TBA |
| 12-14 | 4/10-4/26 | Applied topics, TBA (e.g., physical health, education, | TBA |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| | | prison/rehabilitation, PTSD in war veterans, adoptive identity, etc.) | |
| | | <i>Final projects due at end of finals period (different dates for seniors and non-seniors)</i> | |