**CPLSX3144**

**Stories and Storytelling:**

**An Introduction to Narrative**

Fall 2020

TR 4:10-5:25

Classroom TBA

Professor Emily Sun

Milbank 320D

Phone: 212-854-5321

Office hours: TBA, in person when possible, otherwise by Zoom fall 2020

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**Course Description**

Human beings, it has often been claimed, are storytelling animals. We use stories to express our desires, organize our experience, give meaning and order to our lives, explore the ways our lives connect and interact with the lives of others, and make sense of events that elude immediate comprehension. As the literary and cultural theorist Roland Barthes states, “All classes, all human groups have their narratives…narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.”

This course offers an introduction to forms and functions of narrative with focus on three modes: detection, confession, and judgment. What is distinctive and fascinating about the texts we will study is how they themselves foreground and reflect on how stories are told and thus perform the task of teaching us how to analyze them. The texts come in various media and genres, across fiction and non-fiction, including short stories, novellas, a novel, a play, poems, films, a psychoanalytic case history, and philosophical autobiography. We will study such techniques as point of view, ways of organizing plot, the manipulation of time, first- and third-person narrative, unreliable narration, hidden and embedded narratives. Topics include the writing of the self; the nature of memory; the experience of time; the relationship between fact, fantasy, and fiction; and the search for truth.

All readings will be in English or in English in translation. Students able to read the texts in the original languages should speak to me about doing so.

**Learning Outcomes**

* This course emphasizes skills of close reading. It aims to train students to identify techniques, structures, and forms of narrative and thus become more alert and active readers and writers capable of using textual evidence in sophisticated ways to pursue and open up lines of critical inquiry.
* By bringing together texts from a range of historical periods, cultures, and disciplines as well as a variety of media and genres, the course hones students’ ability to discern common structures and patterns and to put texts from different media and disciplines in dialogue with one another.
* By crossing the divide between fiction and non-fiction, this course prepares students to work with narrative structures not just in literary texts but to analyze the various sorts of narratives they encounter and live with in different fields, disciplines, and discourses.

**Required Texts**

The following texts are required and will be available for purchase at Book Culture (on W112th St. between Broadway and Amsterdam).

1. *Arabian Nights*, trans. Husain Haddawy, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (W. W. Norton) ISBN-13: 978-0393331660\*
2. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford World’s Classics) ISBN-13: 978-0199537822\*
3. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) ISBN-13: 978-0156453806\*
4. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Dover Thrift) ISBN-13: 978-0486272665
5. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries* (Signet Classics) ISBN-13: 978-0451467652
6. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, trans. Constance Garnett (Independently published) ISBN-13: 978-1676763277\*
7. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (Vintage) ISBN-13: 978-0679732761
8. Sigmund Freud, *Three Case Histories*, trans. James and Alix Strachey (Touchstone) ISBN-13: 978-0684829456\*
9. Herman Melville, *Bartleby and Benito Cereno* (Dover Thrift) ISBN-13: 978-1717593405
10. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, trans. David Grene (University of Chicago Press) ISBN-13: 978-0226768687\*

Where asterisked, the texts are **required** in the **exact translations and editions** specified above. There are, however, a couple of exceptions to this course requirement.

* If you are able to read the texts in their original languages, you should feel free to do so in any well-established edition published by a reputable press.
* You should feel free to use other editions of the texts originally written in English.

The Barnard College librarians are also ready to help you get access to the course texts as well as guide you to the invaluable resources of the Columbia University Library system–one of the world’s great resources for scholarship that is yours to use.

All other readings will be available as pdfs on Courseworks.

**Course Requirements**

1. **Attendance and Participation**. Your regular and punctual presence in this course, whether in-person or on Zoom, shows respect for our common work of learning. It ensures that you will learn the most effectively, both from the instructor and from conversation with your peers. If you live in a vastly different time zone, we will discuss other ways you can engage interactively in the course.
2. **Preparation and Active Reading**. You will have read the assigned material carefully by the day it is scheduled for discussion. Be prepared to share your questions and ideas.
3. **Reading texts in hard copy and taking notes with pen and paper.** The disciplined, rigorous, and creative study of literature depends on your paying close attention to textual details. Having hard copies of the texts makes it easier for you to discover large-scale textual patterns and zoom in on small details.

The covid pandemic has led us to spend more time online and on screens. Whether you come to class in-person or on Zoom, you will find that using a pen and paper notepad for note-taking will help you focus your attention and think more clearly.

4. **Assignments**. Three essays (5 pages each) and a take-home final exam. I will provide prompts for the papers a week and a half to two weeks before the deadlines. If your paper is late, one third of a letter grade will be deducted from it each day it is late.

I will assign periodic reading responses. The reading responses should be brief (around 1-2 pages) and are aimed to facilitate focused reflection on the reading and to catalyze class discussions. In some cases, I will give you specific instructions. The schedule for the responses will depend on the size of the class: students will be divided into groups that rotate in posting responses. These responses are to be posted in the Discussion Forum section on Courseworks the evening before the class meeting in which we will discuss the reading.

Depending on the size of the class, each student will also be expected to lead a discussion during the semester. The student (or students) leading discussion will share with the class the evening before specific questions they would like the class to think about. Students should come to class the next day prepared to discuss these questions and their implications for the text as a whole.

**Course Evaluation**

Class participation: 15%

Reading responses and discussion leading: 15%

Paper One: 15%

Paper Two: 20%

Paper Three: 20%

Take-home final exam: 15%

**Academic Integrity**

You are required to uphold the Barnard College Honor Code, established 1912 and updated 2016, which details the codes governing plagiarism and standards of academic integrity. For the text of the Honor Code, go to https:/barnard.edu/honor-code. Any failure to uphold these standards of academic integrity will carry severe consequences.

Please note that the Addendum to the Honor Code for 2020-2021 includes relevant language for the proper use of electronic class material: “We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources.” This means that any recorded class content–from lectures, labs, seminars, office hours, and discussion groups–is the intellectual property of your professor and your fellow students, and should not be distributed or shared outside of class.

**Accommodation of Disability**

Students with a documented disability may be eligible for academic accommodations. If you have a documented disability, please let me know as early as possible in the semester so that the proper arrangements can be made. Please note that you are required to register in advance with the Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS). (For more information, go to: barnard.edu/disabilityservices.)

**Schedule**

T 9/8 Introduction

**Unit I: Detection**

Th 9/10 Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes* stories: “The Adventure of the Speckled Band,” “The Musgrave Ritual,” “Scandal in Bohemia.” Abbott, “Story and Narrative Discourse.” Brooks, from *Reading for the Plot*.

T 9/15 Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes* stories: “The Five Orange Pips,” “The Red-Headed League,” “The Red-Headed League,” “The Adventure of the Dancing Men,” “The Final Problem,” “The Adventure of the Empty House.”

Th 9/17 Borges, “Death and the Compass,” “The Garden of Forking Paths.”

Recommended: Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, “Doubles and Counterparts: Patterns of Interchangeability in Borges’ ‘The Garden of Forking Paths.’”

T 9/22 Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*. Aristotle, from *Poetics*. Freud, from *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Th 9/24 Melville, *Benito Cereno*

T 9/29 “Memento,” dir. Christopher Nolan

**Unit II: Confession**

Th 10/1 Augustine, *Confessions*, Bks. 1-2

T 10/6 Augustine, *Confessions*, Bks. 6, 8, from Bk. 9, from Bk. 11

Recommended: Paul Ricoeur, from *Time and Narrative*

Th 10/8 Freud, *The Wolfman*

**Paper One due**

T 10/13 Freud, *The Wolfman*

Recommended: Peter Brooks, “Fictions of the Wolfman: Freud and Narrative”

Th 10/15 Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (both 1798 and 1817 versions)

T 10/20 Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*

Th 10/22 Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*

T 10/27 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Th 10/29 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

T 11/3 ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY

Th 11/5 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

T 11/10 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Th 11/12 Ellison, *Invisible Man*

**Unit III: Judgment**

T 11/17 “Rashomon,” dir. Kurosawa

**Paper Two due**

Th 11/19 Kafka, “The Judgment”

T 11/24 *The Arabian Nights*, “Foreword,” “Prologue: The Story of King Shahrayar and Shahrazad, His Vizier’s Daughter,” “The Tale of the Ox and the Donkey,” “The Tale of the Merchant and His Wife,” “The Story of the Merchant and the Demon,” “The First Old Man’s Tale,” “The Second Old Man’s Tale,” “The Story of the Fisherman and the Demon.”

Th 11/26 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

T 12/1 *The Arabian Nights*, “The Story of the Hunchback.”

Recommended: Todorov, from *The Poetics of Prose*. Nadaff, from *Arabesque: Narrative Structure and the Aesthetics of Repetition in the 1001 Nights*

Th 12/3 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

T 12/8 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Th 12/10 Conclusion

**F 12/11 Paper Three due**

Take-home final exam to be scheduled