

M381INT
Oral Traditions: Uses of Storytelling and Folklore in Ministry
Meadville Lombard Theological School

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Course Description: Course will look at the resources available from a variety of folk traditions and how these resources can be used in ministry. We will discuss culturally appropriate uses of such resources as well as explore the ethical and spiritual content often hidden below the surface of the stories. We will explore the worldview shaped by these traditions and how to use these resources in developing ecologically sustainable and just understandings of reality. Students will have ample opportunity to explore their storytelling style while learning and practicing a variety of skills within a safe, supportive environment.

During class we will rely on the knowledge and experience of participants' lives as well as from their engagement with the assigned material to provide the primary content for the class. The instructor will facilitate the discussion as well as share his knowledge and experience. Mornings will be small and larger group discussions with some short lectures. Afternoons will be clinic time in pre-arranged story circles. Students will have a chance to practice their storytelling skills and learn new tales from each other.

Required Texts and Readings:

The Implied Spider by Wendy Doniger

Please focus your reading on chapters 1, 3 and 5

The Truth about Stories by Thomas King

Tell me a Tale by Joseph Bruchac

Spinning Gold Out of Straw: How Stories Heal by Diane Rooks

Read at least: chapters 1,2,4,6 & 11. Feel free to read any additional chapters whose headings appeal to you.

Wisdom of the Last Farmer by David Mas Masumoto

Read at least the following: Parts 1 and 2 read all. Part 3: read 1 chapter of your choice. Part 4: read chapters 20 and 21. Part 5: read chapter 23 and one chapter of your choice.

Book of folktales of your choice from your cultural/ancestral background

Articles in the Course Reader

Bettelheim *The Uses of Enchantment*, "Why Were Fairy Tales Outlawed?" p. 116 through "On the Telling of Fairy Stories" p. 158

Orality and Literacy by Walter Ong, Chapters 1 and 3

Alasdair MacIntyre "Virtues, Unity of Human Life and Tradition"

In *Why Narrative?* Edited by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones

David E. Nye, "Technology, Nature, and American Origin Stories," *Environmental History* January 2003

"The Universe Story" by Patricia Gordon found at http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/patricia_gordon.htm

Carol Lee Sanchez, "New World Tribal Communities: An Alternative Approach for Recreating Egalitarian Societies" in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality* edited by Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ

John R. Stilgoe, *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places*, Chapters 1 & 7

Learning Objectives:

Help students access, understand and utilize resources from folk traditions in various aspects of ministry including preaching, teaching and pastoral care. Develop skills and confidence in the art of storytelling and the practice of oral traditions.

Explore the theological possibilities for folk narratives, the way they may speak to modern audiences and show possible paths toward a holistic understanding of humanity and nature.

Increase students' awareness of cultural sensitivity and appropriate use of resources from other cultures, while providing opportunities to explore the rich diversity of human experience and inspiring them to connect with their own ancestral backgrounds.

Assignments and Course Requirements by class period:

Tuesday

Read *Tell me a Tale* by Joseph Bruchac and review the exercises at the end of each chapter. Complete at least one exercise that you find helpful for each chapter.

Assignment: Keep a journal describing your reaction to the exercises.

Read the following:

Bettelheim *The Uses of Enchantment*, "Why were Fairy Tales Outlawed?" p. 116 through "On the Telling of Fairy Stories" p. 158 (Reader)

The Implied Spider Wendy Doniger Focus your reading on chapters 1, 3 and 5.

Assignment: write a three page reflection describing how these sources affected your understanding of folklore/mythology and/or storytelling

Afternoon: Ethics of Telling Tales

Assignment: Based on your reading of Doniger, be prepared to discuss these questions:

Why might it be an issue to 'borrow' stories?

What is our responsibility to the original teller of a tale?

Can we make use of resources outside of our own traditions?

If yes, do we need an ethical guideline?

(This is for discussion only, no write up needs to be turned in)

Story Telling Workshop

Evening: Telling our first tale

Assignment: learn a folktale which speaks to you from outside of your own ancestral heritage. Be prepared to share the story

Wednesday Morning

Read the following:

The Truth about Stories Thomas King

Orality and Literacy by Walter Ong, Chapters 1 and 3

Alasdair MacIntyre "Virtues, Unity of Human Life and Tradition"

In *Why Narrative?* Edited by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones

Assignment: write a three page reflection on how the understanding of story and narrative might impact your ministry, use illustrations from each of the three sources.

Afternoon

Assignment: Read a book of folktales from part of your ancestral heritage. Learn one story of interest to you. Be prepared to share a story from this book on Wednesday.

Thursday

Read the following:

David Mas Masumoto *Wisdom of the Last Farmer*

Read at least the following: Parts 1 and 2, read all. Part 3: read 1 chapter of your choice. Part 4: read chapters 20 and 21. Part 5: read chapter 23 and one chapter of your choice.

John Stilgoe, *Outside Lies Magic* (reader)

David E. Nye, "Technology, Nature, and American Origin Stories," *Environmental History* January 2003 (reader)

Carol Lee Sanchez, "New World Tribal Communities: An Alternative Approach for Recreating Egalitarian Societies" in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality* edited by Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (reader)

Assignment: Write a three page reflection on what these readings reveal about how stories shape the way we view the world while considering the following questions: Which authors did you resonate with? Which ones presented a different view in their stories? How do their experiences inform their stories?

Afternoon

Report back from lunch-time walk

Preparation: Review "The Universe Story" by Patricia Gordon (http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/patricia_gordon.htm)

Visit <http://www.thegreatstory.org/parables.html> and choose one of the parables to share (these may be done as teams within your group).

Assignment: Think of an instance from your life that you could make into a story. Be prepared to share that as a story.

Friday

Reading the Following:

Spinning Gold out of Straw: How Stories Heal by Diane Rooks

Read at least: chapters 1,2,4,6 & 11, additional chapters that appeal to you.

Assignment: Write a two page reflection on how this source affected your understanding of story and ministry, especially pastoral care.

Afternoon: Story Telling Festival

Assignment: Tell one story that you learned during the week, either on your own or as part of a team.

Final Project: Create a worship service, educational program or other project that utilizes folktales and storytelling as its central component. Meet with the instructor during the week to get approval for your project. Project must be completed and the written description to the instructor by April 1. If you have a project that will fall outside of this deadline please talk to the instructor.

Assessment/Grading:

Attendance and participation in classes will be foundational in learning this material. Please plan to attend all class periods and have reading and writing preparation completed before the required class time.

Grading for this class will be PASS/FAIL.

Since this is a split credit course, assignments due during the class will be graded by February 25, 2011 (Fall Term deadline). The final project will be graded by June 3, 2011 (Spring Term deadline).

Course Calendar:

Monday **No Class**

Tuesday

AM: Why Folk Tales? Why Storytelling?
 Theory and Ethics of Folklore

PM: Basics of Storytelling

Evening: Telling your First Story

Wednesday

AM: The Power of Narrative

PM: Stories from Your Cultural Background

Thursday

AM: Creating Our Path: Use of Stories in Constructing a Worldview
 Stories Everyone Should Know

PM: Stories from Science and our Own Experiences

Friday

AM: Stories and Ministry: Teaching, Preaching and Pastoral Care
 Telling Stories as a Team

PM: Storytelling Festival