

CONF 704
Narrative Approaches to Peace and Conflict Resolution
Spring 2023
Thursday 7:20-10:00
Synchronous Online
Solon Simmons



Life's but a walking shadow, a poor
player
That struts and frets his hour upon the
stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Macbeth Act 5, Scene 5

Philip Henslowe: Mr. Fennyman,
allow me to explain about the
theatre business. The natural
condition is one of insurmountable
obstacles on the road to imminent
disaster.

Hugh Fennyman: So what do we
do?

Philip Henslowe: Nothing.
Strangely enough, it all turns out
well.

Hugh Fennyman: How?

Philip Henslowe: I don't know. It's
a mystery.

Shakespeare in Love

Course Overview

This course provides participants with the analytic tools needed to conduct their own research on conflict and conflict resolution, using a narrative perspective. We explore the foundations of narrative inquiry and learn how all accounts—both fictional and scholarly—have an aspect of storytelling to them. Understanding how narrative plays a role in daily life will benefit any student interested in conflict and critical thinking. One simply can't ignore story in contemporary thought from fields spanning engineering to peacebuilding to public relations.

In this class, we will draw a through-line over the course of western patriarchy coming to terms with its own limitations. A narrative approach to pragmatic social science is the result of that process of tragic self-confrontation as philosophers and social scientists discovered that their epistemological foundations were unstable and inherently subject to power, bias, and privilege. Therefore, the assigned readings for this course are examples of the mountain peaks of the range of those western male authors, but only as their ideas point beyond themselves; the projects we will create as assignments need have nothing to do with them insofar as the challenges we now face point in different directions.

Building on this insight—narrative theory emerges as an insider critique of the epistemology of western patriarchy—and with an unwavering sense of hope, we will read and discuss seminal texts in the development of a narrative approach to applied social science, arriving at a place in which the student will be equipped to enter the field with a relentlessly practical and normative sense of how story works and how to transform the narrative ecology of whatever space in which the student operates. The goal is to help the student to tell their story and change the world.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this class you will be able to:

- a) review the foundations of narrative analysis;
- b) discuss the critical issues in the field of narrative and conflict resolution;
- c) design and produce a unique multimedia narrative analysis relevant for peace and conflict studies.

Graded Exercises and Related Matters

Weekly Reading Reflections: (70 Points)

There are seven books assigned for this class. We will move through them at a rate of one book every other week. Each week, the student will be responsible to prepare a short (<750 words) reading reflection on the reading assignment for the

week (5 points each). The reflection should be both descriptive and critical, allowing the student to share perspectives on the book in question and its use in the field.

Narrative Rabbit Hole: (30 Points)

There will be one synthetic narrative analysis assignment that allows the student to become creative in exploring some aspect of the field of narrative as it relates to peace and conflict resolution. The goal of this assignment is to conduct original yet synthetic research on a specific topic in the field and to develop from that research a “rabbit hole,” which is a multimedia web product, potentially to be shared on the website of The Narrative Transformation Lab (TNT Lab). The goal of the rabbit hole is to go down a path of special interest to the student and to document that process of exploration in a web-based application. Not all of these research products will be posted for the lab website, but those which pass quality control guidelines will be posted and in the student’s name. This provides the student with an opportunity to establish a record of their progress in the class with a vetted (if not peer-reviewed) research product.

Grading:

- To earn an A, students need to earn over 90 points
- To earn a B, students need to earn over 80 points
- Scores below 80 points will be treated as needed

Instructor and Office Hours

This section of the course is taught by Solon Simmons, who can be reached at ssimmon5@gmu.edu. There will ample opportunities for Zoom meetings with students as needed throughout the summer term.

Academic Integrity

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also

be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

As in many classes, a number of projects in this class are designed to be completed within your study group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Collaborative projects may be divided up so that individual group members complete portions of the whole, provided that group members take sufficient steps to ensure that the pieces conceptually fit together in the end product. Other projects are designed to be undertaken independently. In the latter case, you may discuss your ideas with others and conference with peers on drafts of the work; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; <http://ds.gmu.edu>) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact Disability Services at 993-2474, <http://ds.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services.

Diversity and Inclusion

The practice of conflict resolution demands special talents of self-control with respect to difference. Students of all backgrounds, ideologies, and points of view are welcome in

this classroom and should feel comfortable in voicing their opinions. We will cultivate a climate of respect for difference with special attention to the challenges associated with polarizing language in politicized discourse, which will demand forbearance in reacting to the language of progressive, liberal, conservative and radical political traditions.

Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy>) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (<http://ssac.gmu.edu>), Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://caps.gmu.edu>), and Student Health Services (<http://shs.gmu.edu>).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are not considered confidential resources and are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at <http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix>, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.

Privacy

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.

Books

- 1) Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Moral and Ecce Homo edited by Walter Kaufman ISBN-13: 978-0679724629
- 2) Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning ISBN-13: 978-0807014271
- 3) Carl Jung, The Archetypes and the Unconscious ISBN-13: 978-0691018331
- 4) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus ISBN-13: 978-0816614028

5) Hebert Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method ISBN-13: 978-0520056763

6) Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors ISBN-13: 978-0801491511

7) Northrop Frye The Secular Scripture ISBN-13: 978-0674796751

Class Meetings

Section 1: Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals (GoM)

THE MEANING CRISIS

January 26 pp. GoM 15-96

February 2 GoM pp. 97-163

Section 2: Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (MSFM)

THE ONTOLOGY OF HUMAN SUFFERING

February 9 MSFM pp. 3-96

February 16 MSFM pp.97-165

Section 3: Carl Jung The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (ACU)

MYTHIC STRUCTURE AND ARCHETYPES

February 23 ACU pp. 3-181

March 2, ACU pp. 182-290

Section 4: Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (TP)

STRUCTURALISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM

March 9, TP pp. 1-191

March 13-March 19

SPRING BREAK

March 23, TP pp. 192-516

Section 5: Hebert Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method (SI)

COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

March 30 SI pp. 1-126

April 6 SI pp. 127-208

Section 6: Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors (DFM)

RITES OF PASSAGE AND LIMINALITY

April 13 DFM pp. 23-155

April 20 DFM pp. 156-299

Section 7: Frye The Secular Scripture (SS)

THE MORAL IMAGINATION

April 27 SS pp. 1-94

May 4 SS pp. 95-190