SYLLABUS: ANTH 163 ORIGINS OF STORYTELLING (ONLINE)

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“We must assume that storytelling is as old as mankind, at least as old as spoken language.” --Oates (1992:8)

“But if it’s a story, even in my head, I must be telling it to someone. You don’t tell a story only to yourself.” --Atwood (1985:52)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do humans tell stories? We will address this question by exploring the hunter-gatherer context in which storytelling emerged. To a greater degree than other species, humans depend for their survival on social learning—i.e., on knowledge acquired from others. Drawing on evolutionary theory and related disciplines, this course explores storytelling as one of humanity’s earliest information technologies. The first half outlines the evolutionary context in which storytelling emerged, the psychological capacities that make social learning and narrative possible, and the foundations of cultural transmission. The second half examines storytelling in terms of the information demands of ancestral human environments. We explore cross-cultural genres in Indigenous hunter-gatherer oral traditions (e.g., tricksters, monsters, heroes, shape-shifting animals) in terms of the traditional ecological knowledge they encode and the recurrent problems of hunter-gatherer life they address. As a science-credit fulfilling course, this class uses the scientific method as a critical thinking tool to interrogate Western views of literature and the role it plays in human societies. Course readings include scientific articles and hunter-gatherer narratives.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

All course materials (i.e., readings, lectures, films, worksheets, quizzes) are posted on the course Canvas site and are organized into weekly units, or modules. You should expect to spend about 12 hours per week on this course. You are responsible for checking the course Canvas site and your UO email regularly for updates and announcements. Course work involves the following:

1. Readings. Each week there is a set of articles and/or stories to be read before listening to the lectures (the lectures reference the readings, so lectures will be hard to follow if you haven’t done the reading first). The first slide of each lecture indicates which readings it covers.
2. **Lectures.** A set of lectures to be watched before taking the week’s quiz. For some weeks the lecture component of the course includes a film or video.

3. **Worksheet.** Each week you must complete a worksheet. These are open-book assignments designed to test your ability to apply important concepts and research presented in the week’s readings and lectures.

4. **Quiz.** Every week there is a timed, closed book, multiple-choice, online quiz on the week’s readings and lectures. You are not allowed to look at the lectures, readings, or your notes or use translation programs while taking quizzes. Quizzes are designed to test your understanding of core course concepts and important research findings.

## Estimated Student Workload

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Hours/Week x 10 Weeks</th>
<th>Total Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worksheets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review for Quiz</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Quizzes</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## GRADE POLICY

Your grade for the course is based on the total points you earn on the worksheets and quizzes. Grading is done on a straight percentage scale. If the course is taken P/NP, a C- (70%) or higher is required to pass. **Grades are not rounded up and there is no extra credit given for this course.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worksheets (points possible vary by week)</td>
<td>1070</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Quizzes (10 @ 100 points each)</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2070</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Late Work

No late work or make-ups are allowed except as appropriate to comply with accommodations or resolve tech issues. If a technological glitch disrupts your quiz or assignment submission, take a screenshot to document the issue and then email me or your GE as soon as possible. We will assess the situation and extend the deadline if appropriate.

## Grading Scale
Expected levels of performance

**A:** Quality of performance is outstanding relative to that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at the highest level.

**B:** Quality of performance is significantly above that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at a high level.

**C:** Quality of performance meets the course requirements in every respect; demonstrates adequate understanding of course content.

**D:** Quality of performance is at the minimal level necessary to pass the course, but does not fully meet the course requirements; demonstrates a marginal understanding of course content.

**F:** Quality of performance in the course is unacceptable and does not meet the course requirements; demonstrates an inadequate understanding of course content.

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed as a Natural Science Core Education course. At UO, core education is designed to provide a broad, interdisciplinary education that helps students think critically and creatively, communicate clearly, and reflect ethically. In course assignments and quizzes you will practice critical thinking about the role of storytelling in human evolution using theoretical reasoning and scientific research. In course assignments you will practice scientific written communication by describing and analyzing key features of oral storytelling using scientific concepts and terminology. This course also fulfills the Global Perspectives category of the Cultural Literacy Core Education requirement, which aims to foster student encounter with and critical reflection on cultures, identities, and ways of being in global contexts beyond the United States. In this class, you will engage stories that reflect systems of meaning in diverse hunter-gatherer societies.

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to

1) understand and apply the scientific method as a critical thinking tool  
2) describe the processes of natural selection and adaptation  
3) describe key cognitive adaptations that make storytelling possible  
4) describe the key components of narrative and what they tell us about its function  
5) outline the evidence that enables us to date the emergence of storytelling  
6) describe basic features of the socio-economic context in which storytelling emerged  
7) outline key adaptive problems faced by our hunter-gatherer ancestors and the information sets needed to address these problems  
8) explain the role that storytelling plays in transmitting these information sets
9) analyze stories from forager oral tradition in terms of these information sets

CONTACT INFORMATION & TROUBLESHOOTING

Questions/Concerns

Your GE is your first point of contact for this course. If you have questions about course requirements, grading, or how to prepare for quizzes, please contact your GE. If you require accommodations, or if you have questions or concerns that cannot be answered or resolved by your GE, please contact me. Contact us at our UO email address. Always use your UO account and include ANTH 349 in the subject. Don’t use the Canvas messenger or non-UO email. We will make every effort to respond within 24 hours; however, do not expect responses outside of normal business hours (i.e., Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

Office Hours

Our office hours and email addresses are listed at the top of the syllabus. If these hours are not convenient for you, we are happy to meet by appointment. To schedule an appointment, contact us via email.

Make Copies of Your Work!

Given that this is an online course, I recommend that you store all of your work on a personal external memory drive. The recommended workflow is to create all your work on a word processing document and then cut and paste into the forum on Canvas. Your instructor is not responsible for lost or missing coursework. Please be safe and back up your work!

Course Announcements

Set your Canvas notification preferences so that course Announcements will be sent to an email address, phone number, or other platform that you regularly check. I use Announcements to send out important course information and updates, and you are responsible for checking them in a timely fashion. Click here for instructions on how to set preferences.

Tech Issues & Support

With online courses, technical failures inevitably occur. As I cannot monitor the course site continually, I depend on you to notify me of any tech issues as soon as they come to your attention. Don’t panic if I don’t respond to your email immediately. When tech failures occur, deadlines will be extended as appropriate (see GRADE POLICY > Late Work). If you experience difficulty accessing course materials on Canvas, make sure you are using Google Chrome, as Canvas is not highly compatible with other browsers. For other tech issues, contact Canvas Support Services or the UO Technology Service Desk.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Inclusion
The UO College of Arts and Sciences affirms and actively promotes the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education at this institution without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other consideration not directly and substantively related to effective performance.

**Accessible Education**

Please let me know within the first two weeks of the term if you need assistance to fully participate in the course. Participation includes access to lectures, web-based information, in-class activities, assignments, and tests. The Accessible Education Center works with students to provide an instructor notification letter that outlines accommodations and adjustments to class design that will enable better access. Contact the Accessible Education Center for assistance with access or disability-related questions or concerns.

**Academic Misconduct**

The UO [Student Conduct Code](https://www.uoregon.edu/studentconduct) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g., quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at [https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism](https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism). Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a 0 for that particular assignment or exam, and the incident will be reported to campus authorities.

**Copyright--Do Not Post Class Materials for Sale!**

Materials written by your instructor are the instructor’s (or in some cases the UO's) intellectual property. It is important that everyone respect each other's rights. For instance, you should not copy and redistribute course materials without the instructor's permission. The instructor may also post other copyrighted materials on the course site. It is the instructor’s responsibility for ensuring that such posting does not violate copyright law, but you should be aware that you do not have the right to make additional copies or redistribute these materials.

*Copyright warning: The Canvas site for this class contains copyrighted works that are included with permission of the copyright owner, or under exemptions provided by U.S. Copyright Law (Sections 110, and/or 107). Copying of any of these copyrighted works is prohibited.*

**Reporting Obligations**

I am an Assisting Employee under the University’s Prohibited Discrimination and Retaliation Policy. As an Assisting Employee, I will direct students who disclose prohibited discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment or violence, to resources that can help and will only report that information shared to the university administration if the student requests that the information be reported (unless someone is in imminent risk of serious harm or a minor).
Students who have experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources and help at https://safe.uoregon.edu/. To get help by phone, students may also call either the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator/OICRC at 541-346-3123 or the Dean of Students Office 24-hour hotline at 541-346-7244. Students experiencing all forms of prohibited discrimination or harassment may find information and resources at https://investigations.uoregon.edu/ or contact the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator/OICRC at 541-346-3123 or the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 for help.

**Academic Disruption Due to Campus Emergency**

In the event of a campus emergency that disrupts academic activities, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change. Information about changes in this course will be communicated as soon as possible by email and on Canvas. Students should log onto Canvas and read any announcements and/or access alternative assignments. Students are also expected to continue coursework as outlined in this syllabus or other instructions on Canvas.

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**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

**Week 1: Origins**

Scalise Sugiyama (2005) “Reverse-engineering narrative”

Boyd et al. (2011) “The cultural niche”

**Week 2: Cultural Transmission**

Evans & Zarate (2005) *Introducing Evolutionary Psychology* (pp. 3-60)

Boulton & Smith (1992) “The social nature of play fighting and play chasing: mechanisms and strategies underlying cooperation and compromise”


Film: *The Human Spark, Part II*

**Week 3: Cognitive Foundations of Storytelling**

Evans & Zarate (pp. 87-104)

Onishi et al. (2007) “15-month-old infants detect violations in pretend scenarios”

“Tugtoväk the moose, who duped the kayak man”

Schacter et al. (2007) “Remembering the past to imagine the future: the prospective brain”

Film: *The Human Spark, Part III* (optional)
**Week 4: Cooperation & Conflict Management**

Evans & Zarate (pp. 61-77, 143-150)

Boehm (1993) “Egalitarian behavior and reverse dominance hierarchy” (p. 227-236 only!)

“Why Kwanyip never lacked guanacos”

“A tale about stingy reindeer-owners”

“Siligtigkê who murdered the women of the village”


“Coyote marries the chief’s daughter”

“Coyote and the seven buffalo”

“Coyote kills Deer with his ceremony”

“Coyote and the expanding meat”

“Sendeh overeats and clings to a grape vine”

**Week 5: Mating**

Evans & Zarate (pp. 105-132)

“Puan takes a lover”

“The rival husbands”

“Two women”

“A Wasco woman deceives her husband”

“The Grizzly Bears and the Black Bears”

Evans & Zarate (pp. 81-86)


“Coyote marries the chief’s daughter”

“How a poor boy won his wives”

“The dog and the girl” (pp. 62-63)

“Double-Face tricks the girl” (pp. 49-50 only)

“Chief of the red tipi”
“The wronged woman”

**Week 6: Warfare & Heroes**


Biocca (1970) “The Karawetari attack” (pp. 31-37)

“A Cree, caught alone, is killed by the Beaver”

“Wonyoni escapes from the Cree”

“Those people”

“Mavaranaq”

“The girl who was stolen by an inlander”

“Clever Kaskoyuk”

“The origins of the Kiowa Apache”

“Kunuk the orphan boy” (pp. 132-135 only)

Jobling 2001 “The psychological foundations of the hero-ogre story”

“The birth of Killer-Enemies and Child-of-the-Water” (pp. 47-77)

“Œeõemë, the child warrior”

“The Tale of La’la”

“Clever Kaskoyuk”

“How Bear Woman got her name”

“The old woman and the polar bear”

Film: *Adventure Time*

**Week 7: Hunting**

Barrett (2005) “Adaptations to predators and prey”

“A stubborn fisherman”

“Armadillo and Jaguar exchange teeth”

“The Child-Armadillo, the Jaguar, and the Millipede.”

“Leopard-hunting: the fatal adventure of !Kwai-kwa and his companion”
“How Bear Woman got her name”
“The crocodile they couldn’t kill”
“Adventures with buffalo”
“Wild Man” (#48)
Blurton-Jones & Konner (1976) “!Kung knowledge of animal behavior”
“Coyote visits the Red Ants”
“Hunting experiences” (I & IV)
“Tugtoväk the moose, who duped the kayak man”
“The wasps and the origin of peccaries”
“Pine Squirrel Criticizes Deer”
“Tapir tries to hide”
“Day and night”

**Week 8: Gathering**

Galef & Clark (1971) “Social factors in the poison avoidance and feeding behavior of wild and domesticated rat pups”
“Red Brocket and the false palm fruits”
“Caterpillar’s tobacco and the kernals of wild fruit”
“The war of the fishes with the Okanagon”
“Theft of fire”
“Fish Hawk invents implements” (pp. 72-74)

**Week 9: Environmental Hazards Part I**

“Starving Beaver visit the Rocky Mountains”
“The bitter fruit: the lala myth”
“The famine” (pp. 500-501)
“A woman hides bear meat from her starving husband”
“Story of Big-Horned Owl”
“A famine at the Cascades”
“Mt. Mazama 1865”
“Oral history saves island from tsunami”
“The big fire”
“The story of the dolphins”

**Week 10: Environmental Hazards Part II**


“Qoa’qlqal”

“Omamë creates the mountains in his flight”

“How the land was distributed”

“The cannibals”

“Yakima are not smart west of the mountains”

Evans & Zarate (pp. 77-80)

Tooley et al. (2006) “Generalising the Cinderella Effect to unintentional childhood fatalities”

“The child and the crocodile”

“Some neglected children are transformed into birds”

“The little girl who was kidnapped”

“Two children escape from an Atlatl’lia” (pp. 274-276)

“Spine Breaker” (#247)

“Wild Woman” (#45)