

The Power of Story: Pattern, Language, & a Poetics of Place
The Evergreen State College Winter Quarter, 2007

The truth about stories is that's all we are.
-Thomas King



**A Greek Storyteller/Bard Pours Wine to the Muse, Erato,
who—using him as her instrument—will sing songs and stories to move human hearts**

Instructor:	Rebecca Chamberlain	360-866-2141	chambreb@evergreen.edu
	http://academic.evergreen.edu/c/chambreb/		
	"Power of Story" http://diac.cpsr.org/cgi-bin/diac02/pattern.cgi/public?pattern_id=493		
Meeting Times:	Thursdays, 6:00-10:00	Meeting Location:	SEM 2 A3107, SEM 2 A3105
Credits:	Upper Division, 4 Credit Hours	Reference No.:	2006-AAAIOH
		Program Fee:	\$10
Field Trips:	Feb. 1 st :	The Life and Times of Leonardo da Vinci, Harlequin Productions	
	Feb. 15 th :	Mid-Quarter gathering at the Instructor's home	

One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted—knowingly or unknowingly—in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives.

-Ben Okri, Nigerian storyteller

Course Overview:

From traditional myth-tellers to the art of storytelling in the modern world, stories are fundamental to being human. How and why do we tell them? How can we engage the power of story in our everyday lives? In oral cultures, language and myth are often grounded in a relationship between humans and the natural world. How have story patterns changed as society evolves through different technological and communications mediums? This course offers a foundation in both theory and practice as we explore storytelling and word play in a variety of interdisciplinary and professional fields. How can stories be used to: enhance education; strengthen communication skills, build communities; sustain cultural and family groups; support self-reflection, counseling, therapy, psychology and the healing arts; support social activism and sustainability movements; provide entertainment through a variety of performance, literary, and technological mediums; or other applications? Participants will be encouraged to share stories in a wide variety of settings as we ask, "How can myths, ancient and modern, help us adapt to a quickly changing world?"

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In the telling of a story there are silences in which words are anticipated or held on to, heard to echo in the still depths of the imagination. In the oral tradition silence is the sanctuary of sound.

--N. Scott Momaday

Required Texts:

Chamberlain, Rebecca, ed. *The Power of Story: Language, Pattern, and a Poetics of Place—Program Reader*. A variety of articles and essays on the art of storytelling.

Helm-Mead, Erica. *The Moon In The Well: Wisdom Tales to Transform your Life, Family and Community*. Chicago: Open Court P. 2001. (0-8126-9441-4)

Kane, Sean. *Wisdom of the Mythtellers*. Ontario, Broadview Press. 1994.
(1-55111-041-5) or Second edition. 1998. 1551112086

Mellon, Nancy. *The Art of Storytelling*. Rockport, MA. Element Books. 1992.
1-86204-346-9 Paperback), or *Storytelling and the Art of Imagination*. Rockport, MA. Yellow Moon Press. 2003. (0938756664, hardcover).

Rodgers, Will and Helen Whybrow, editors. *The Story Handbook: Language and Storytelling for Land Conservationists*. San Francisco, The Trust for Public Land, A Center for Land and People Book, 2002. (0-9672806-2-1)

Strauss, Susan. *The Passionate Fact: Storytelling in Natural History and Cultural Interpretation*. Golden CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996. (1-55591-925-1)

Optional Texts--Select ONE of the following...

King, Thomas. *The Truth About Stories*. House of Anansi Press, 2003. (0887846963)

Zipes, Jack. *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry*. New York: Routledge. 1997. (0-415-91851-0)



Their story, yours and mine --- it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them.

--William Carlos Williams

Expectations:

-Faithful attendance and full participation at all meetings, lectures, workshops, films, seminars and field-trips.

-Read and write weekly responses to the texts.

-Participate in all class workshops, seminars, and writing groups.

-Maintain a portfolio and journal of class handouts, notes, workshops, papers, writing, research, and cumulative work for the quarter. These will be reviewed in the sixth week and ninth week.

-Successful completion of all projects, presentations, workshops, or assignments on time.



There were always the stories. And they weren't just stories, they were the truth. They were views on the truth of life. And the truth of this life was that it was a way of life, the way we – the community of Acoma Pueblo, the larger Native American world, the world in general – lived. And it was the stories which opened my eyes, my mind, my soul upon that way of life, that world in which I lived. And because the world continued and I continued with it, the stories went on, constantly in the making, changing, reaffirming the belief that there would always be the stories.

--Simon J. Ortiz, "Always the Stories"

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Assignments:

1. Complete weekly readings and write reading response papers.
2. Keep a program portfolio of all assignments. Turn it in week five and nine for evaluation.
3. Develop and perform a traditional myth or folktale for the class
4. Attend and participate in at least one community or storytelling event.
(You may be part of a workshop, work with a group to tell stories as part of an open mic., or watch professional storytellers in action, etc. These may be events suggested as extra-curricular/ optional activities in this syllabus, or they may be events that you create or find out about on your own.
5. Special Project (Choose **ONE** of the following). You will write or create a special project this quarter. Your outline is due in week two, your first draft is due in week six. You will present your final project in weeks eight, nine, or ten. It can be

-A Writing Project (3-5 pages):

- an original myth based in in-class workshops or readings.
- an autobiographical essay or story based on in-class storytelling workshops
- a philosophical essay, based on readings and seminar discussions, that explores cultural, environmental issues about storytelling. Topics can explore the art, history, cultural, environmental, the mythic function of stories and storytelling. or the role of storytelling in the modern world, etc.
- Conduct an oral history interview. (Topics include biographical stories, family history, urban folklore, etc.)
- Research a topic and write a research paper on some aspect of storytelling. This could be a post-modern feminist interpretation of fairytales, using stories for healing and psychology, uses of storytelling in schools, museums, prisons, environmental education, etc.

-A Creative Project:

Produce a storytelling program in the community, in a school, environmental organization, for radio broadcast, or other creative medium, a visual art piece based on the interactive role of storytelling, or other project.

Note: These projects must be approved by the instructor ahead of time.



*We have stories
as old as the great seas
breaking through the chest
flying out the mouth
noisy tongues that once were silenced,
all the oceans we contain
coming to light.*

--Linda Hogan, "To Light"

Course Equivalencies: Students can receive a total of four quarter hours upper division credit for college level work in the following areas: Folklore, Literature, Performance Arts, or Writing.



Good stories fire the listener's imagination. They draw people in and include them in the storytelling process.

--Edward O. Welles

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Class Portfolio

Each student is required to keep a class portfolio throughout the quarter. This will be turned in during the sixth week and during the ninth of the quarter for evaluation. It will be returned to you in week ten. Include your name and a table of contents. Record the topic and date of each item in your portfolio. Each section should be arranged chronologically. The portfolio must be kept in a loose-leaf three ring binder with dividers and should contain the following:

Note: Date and chronologically order each entry.

- 1) Table of contents that includes the following...
- 2) Course syllabus, covenant, and all class handouts
- 3) Reading responses for required texts and readings. Follow format on reading response handout.
(A section of reading notes is strongly recommended.)
- 4) Seminar notes
- 5) Class notes: lectures, guest speakers, workshops and films.
- 6) In-class workshops. (Each workshop will be numbered and dated.) This will include things like storytelling maps, outlines, dialogue scripts, and other such activities.
- 7) Your Special Project: This includes multiple drafts of your work, notes you make about your work, comments from peer editing/feedback workshops, research notes, and notes for oral presentations.
- 8) Self and Faculty evaluations
Three signed copies on official forms due in week ten. (These are required for this class and are worth one credit.)



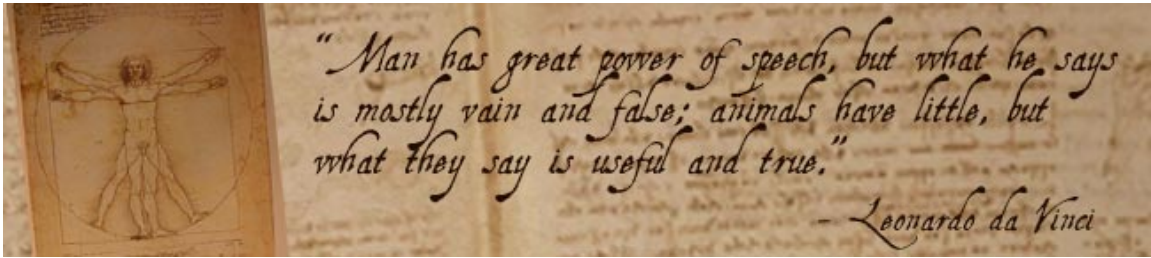
Life will go on as long as there is someone to sing, to dance, to tell stories and to listen.

--Oren Lyons

Course Objectives:

Course Participants Will. . .

- Explore how pattern, language, and story can shape a poetics of place for today's world.
- Develop their imaginative and rejuvenate power as storytellers and writers.
- Develop multiple ways to pass stories on in their personal and professional lives
- Tell a variety of stories, including:
 - personal and family stories;
 - developing and telling a traditional folktale for performance, (legend, myth, tall tale, fable, fairy tale, etc.);
 - gain experience developing a number of improvisational stories by participating in a variety of storytelling games and activities that develop plot, characterization, inflection, and other performance techniques.
- Gain awareness of a variety of narratives and styles of performance.
- Develop a philosophy of the importance and role of storytelling in traditional and contemporary settings.
- Gain experience looking for the symbolic and psychological messages that stories share.
- Learn memory-enhancing techniques, and dialogue techniques for scripting the patterns and inflections of oral language.
- Be exposed to current issues and curriculum activities that tie the art form of storytelling into the evolving state and national standards in arts education.
- Explore the theoretical, artistic, cultural, historic, and social role of pattern, language, orality, literacy, and technology. We will learn how stories are shaped in different mediums: as they are told orally, through writing, and through various technological mediums such as computers, film, and radio.
- Explore philosophical, political, and artistic issues regarding the role of storytelling in shaping aspects of our lives, history, community, and future.



Guest Artists and Field Trips:

We are fortunate to have a number of guest artists, field trips, and other storytelling opportunities as part of our studies this quarter. Some of these events are required as part of the class, some of them you can participate in on your own. Check the class schedule, syllabus, and handouts for the dates and details of each event. They include:

Guest lecturers include: Rebecca Hom (storyteller); Joyce Stahmer (storyteller); Peter Donaldson (Leonardo da Vinci); Rich Schwab, Joseph Campbell Roundtable and the MonoMyth Foundation).

Program Events:

Feb. 1st **Peter Donaldson:** "The Life and Times of Leonardo da Vinci."
<http://harlequinproductions.org/seasonpages/07/leonardo.html>
6:00-7:50 p.m. Seminar at "Plenty's." 200 4th Ave. W. We will gather in the large meeting room, and will have separate checks for dinner, tea, etc.
8:00-10:00 p.m. "Leonardo" performance with Peter Donaldson.
10:00-11:00 p.m. Post Production meeting with Peter Donaldson, The role of contemporary storytelling for social, cultural, & environmental change.

Peter links storytelling to social activism. The sign of a great storyteller is that they can bring you from tears to laughter, and then rearrange everything you thought you knew about the world. Peter Donaldson created such a performance with "Salmon People." Afterwards, my husband, Steven Fenwick called him a true "Bio-Regional Bard."

Peter's work with Leonardo and the "new Renaissance" is bound to push artistic and philosophical boundaries again. This program deals with many of the social, political, environmental, and artistic issues that our world faces-- and that we strive to address on this campus. He links storytelling with social action. You are also encouraged to participate in Peter's televised community forum, listed below.

Feb. 8 **Joyce Stahmer:** Joyce is a masterful storyteller, working with multi-cultural stories, personal narratives, Playback Theatre (Improv. theatre and healing), bringing stories into everyday life, and using stories to cross boundaries, etc. Her presentation will be followed by a movement, improv./ storytelling workshop with Rebecca and Joyce.

Jan 25 or Feb.22 **Rebecca Hom:** Rebecca is a remarkable teller who works with story programs that focus on world wisdom, folk tales, personal/family stories, and teaching the value of storytelling to professional educators and parents. Rebecca says, "Our lives are stories and we are all storytellers," Rebecca is the "Back-Roads Teller," and is an active member of the South Sound Storytelling Guild, <http://southsoundstory.org/default.aspx>

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Other guests: from the South Sound Storytelling guild, Evergreen Campus, and other venues may join us as the quarter progresses. We will list them in additional handouts.

Suggested/Optional Events:

Campus Events and Liberal Arts Forums

Jan. 24th Winter Liberal Arts Forum: "How stories Define Our Identity" "

Mukti Khanna and Hirsh Diamant invite you to attend the Winter Liberal Arts Forum: Who Do You Think You Are?" 6-8 p.m., TESC Longhouse. This forum will include brief faculty presentations on various types of identity (gender, educational, historical, national, etc.), a writing workshop, and seminar. Seminar will be based on identity-related readings assigned previously by each program. Students and faculty will come together to discuss the readings and reflections.

Your role would be to attend this gathering and to raise the issue of how stories shape our identity.

Feb. 24th Red Pine, Poet, 10:00-12:00, Sem II A 1105. Zen and the art of poetry. How does Red Pine use narrative in his poems, or does he? What is the connection between poetry and storytelling?

March 11, 2:00 –5:00 Spring Liberal Arts Forum, "Self Cultivation and Taoist, Buddhist, Islamic, and Confucian traditions. Ask, "What is the role of storytelling in these traditions?"

"The Life and Times of Leonardo da Vinci"

Jan. 24th "Pay What You Can Night." This is a chance for you to see this performance at a reduced rate, or to bring your friends, IMPORTANT INFO: Pay What You Can tickets will go on sale at noon on Wed, Jan 24 at our Box Office and we limit 2 tickets per person present. Show time is 8pm.

Reservations for Pay What You Can tickets are not accepted, tickets must be purchased in person.

Feb. 11th Leonardo and the New Renaissance--live Televised Forum--2:00@Harlequin,Tickets \$10.

South Sound Storytelling Guild:

Monthly Meetings--7:00--Second and last Wednesdays of each month.

Meet in the lobby on the Senior Center side of the building. at the Olympia Center, 222 Columbia Street NW in downtown Olympia. You're welcome to participate in meetings and an open mic., or to come and listen to other tellers in a "Hear One, Tell One," story swap.

January 31, "Resolutions and promises that changed a life". The meeting will include a birthday party for members. Come and tell a story. Bring your friends.

Just for Fun!

March 20th and 21st International Earth Day Gathering. Laura Simms, Rebecca Chamberlain, Doug David, Vi Hilbert, and other tellers are planning to meet on Whidbey Island for a gathering of stories and earth awareness. More details forthcoming.

March 24, Jill Johnson Storytelling Workshop, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm.

"Mining the Gold: Using Local and Regional History to Create a Storytelling Presentation"

State Capital Museum Coach House, 211 21st Avenue SW, Olympia, WA

Call (360) 753-2580. Non-refundable fee is \$20.00

Jill Johnson spent two years researching, writing, and then performing Little, But Oh My! - the story of Berte Olson. The show tells the story of the first woman to skipper a ferry boat on Puget Sound and own her own ferry boat company. Premiering in 2003, it has been performed throughout Western Washington and is part of the Inquiring Mind program of Humanities Washington.

March 24, 7:30 pm. Honoring Our Memories

Traditions Cafe and World Folk Art, 300 5th Avenue SW, Olympia, WA, suggested donation \$10

"Honoring Our Memories." an evening of stories about historical characters. Storytellers, writers, and historians will share stories about characters from their family trees, characters from our region, characters

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from around the world, characters well-known and unsung. Come join us for a fascinating evening getting to know some characters from the past.

All great literature ends at 1100. After that, it's just books.

--J. R. R. Tolkien

It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in-between stories. The old story, the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yes we have not learned the new story.

--Thomas Berry