

Psychology 335: Narrative Identity

Spring, 2022; MW, 2:30-4pm, Sharpless 416

Instructor Information

- Jennifer Lilgendahl
- Office: KINSC S422
- Office hours: 3-4 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, or by appt.
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Course Description

This course is an in-depth examination of the field of **narrative identity**, which takes as its guiding assumption that identity is constructed through our attempts to find meaning in past experiences and narrate our lives. Course readings will draw from both quantitative and qualitative traditions and from several fields of psychology (developmental, personality, cultural, and clinical). Topics to be addressed include the development of narrative identity from childhood to old age, how cultural, historical, and social-structural forces shape narrative identity, and the role of narrative transformation in therapeutic processes, self-growth, and social change. Additionally, a recurring theme this semester (and especially in the second half of the semester) will be the power of narrative to facilitate our understanding of *how individuals experience feelings of difference and marginality* in relation to their developing identities.

Learning Goals

- To develop a working knowledge of the key concepts, frameworks, and methods that comprise the field of narrative identity as an approach to studying personality and human development; to be able to analyze actual narrative material through this formal framework.
- To understand and appreciate the mixed-methods approach in psychology, which combines quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches.
- To be able to think critically about the primary empirical literature on narrative identity and engage in and help lead informed class discussions about this work.
- To develop and hone one's oral and written communication skills in the context of developing personally chosen presentation and final project topics.
- To appreciate how the narrative approach illuminates cultural diversity and gives voice to those who inhabit marginalized identities; to learn to hear one another's stories with open-mindedness and empathy.
- To develop an appreciation for the potential applications of narrative identity research to promote positive change (e.g., growth, healing, community, etc.) in individual lives and in various settings, such as schools, college campuses, prisons, hospitals, corporations, governments, etc.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course – all readings will be available on Moodle and include both journal articles of original studies and review/theoretical articles. It is important to note that as a 300-level, this course will be reading intensive and will require your active engagement with the readings. An important part of your participation will be to complete readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss and evaluate their methods, results, and broader implications.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course include an individual presentation, a midterm paper, a final paper, and class participation. A brief description of each of these components is provided below.

- Class participation / discussion questions / reaction paragraphs = 20%

- Presentation = 20%
- Midterm take-home exam = 25%
- Final project (Life Story Interview / research proposal) = 35%

Class Participation

As a 300-level, seminar-style course, this course will rely heavily on active student participation in the classroom. Although class will contain some lecture in order to provide necessary background for various topics, my intention is to be in “discussion mode” the majority of the time. Class time will involve a variety of different types of activities, from traditional discussion, to small group discussion, to in-class exercises and demonstrations. In particular, we will spend a fair amount of time analyzing narratives and discussing them. An important part of your grade (20%) will be based on the extent to which you attend and *actively participate* in all of these activities. Your participation grade will also be assessed in terms of the effort you put into writing discussion questions you will be periodically asked to write for class (class will be broken down into groups and rotate for discussion questions). I may also periodically ask you to do some sort of informal “homework” assignment, such as engage in a self-reflection, interview a friend, find an article that addresses a particular topic, complete a questionnaire, etc. These types of activities will not be formally graded, but they will be used as a basis for in-class discussion. Your treatment of these informal assignments will be reflected in your participation grade.

Individual Presentation

Over the course of the semester, each student will be responsible for giving one 15-minute presentation. This presentation will involve a creative integration of primary memoir/narrative material from a non-academic source (e.g., memoir, published interview, podcast) and the research literature. More details will be provided in class.

Midterm Exam

The first major class assignment will involve a midterm exam taking place in the week before Spring Break. The format of the midterm exam will be an open-book, open-note exam in which you use course material to analyze a set of narratives I provide.

Final Project

The culminating project for this course will involve conducting your own Life Story Interview (with a person whom you choose), analyzing it using the literature on narrative identity, and developing a research proposal based on your observations from the interview. This is a big project, and one that we will develop for several weeks in the second half of the semester. This first part of the project will involve choosing a topic and picking a person whose life/identity somehow speaks to that topic and adapting the Life Story Interview (i.e., adding/editing questions) to address your interests. The second part of the project will involve conducting the interview and transcribing it, and discussing your narrative material with both myself and your classmates. The final part of the project will be writing your formal analysis of the interview and identifying literature that speaks to your interpretations and ideas.

Class Policies

- Attendance: Good attendance is expected in this course and will obviously influence your class participation grade. In general, I will not penalize you for the occasional missed class (e.g., 1 or 2); however, it is best to email me to let me know ahead of time if you are going to miss class because you are sick or have some kind of conflict. In addition, you are responsible for announcements made in class.

- ****Covid Note:** Obviously, the current realities of the pandemic increase the chances of having to miss class (quarantining, isolating with possible symptoms, etc.). We will follow college guidance and deal with those situations together as they arise. It goes without saying that it is more important than ever to not attend class if you are feeling sick. We are in this together and need to consider the health and well-being of everyone in this community, not just ourselves. I will absolutely be committed to working closely with you to make sure you are able to stay on track with the course material if covid-related absences become an issue. We are all navigating uncertain territory together this semester with respect to in-person instruction during a pandemic!
- **Space of mutual respect and sensitivity:** Given the nature of this course, we will sometimes be sharing personal information with one another and we will regularly be reading the stories of real people. I want to emphasize from the start that we aim to create a respectful and sensitive space where we listen closely and with empathy to one another and that we welcome a variety of different perspectives and viewpoints. Additionally, while I have not included narratives of severe trauma on the syllabus, an important aspect of narrative identity is how people narrate very difficult events in their lives. Thus, I want to provide at the outset a general trigger warning that some life stories and personal narratives may contain material that could be upsetting or difficult for individual students. Please feel free to talk to me about any concerns you have throughout the course of the semester. Communication is key to a healthy classroom!
- **Deadlines/late work/extensions:** The pandemic has required increased flexibility in many aspects of our lives. In this spirit, I encourage you to always communicate with me if you anticipate difficulties with getting your work to me on time. It is always better to communicate earlier rather than later if you are struggling in any way. Timely communication gives me the best opportunity to support you in completing your work and being as successful as possible in this class. At the same time, I encourage you to do your best to meet deadlines whenever possible. It is an important life skill, and will benefit you to be able to check things off your list in a timely fashion. My policies regarding the grading of late work are as follows:
 - **Midterm exam:** For the midterm exam, your grade will be reduced according to how late it is, unless we have communicated and made alternative arrangements ahead of time. If you foresee a conflict or a problem with getting the midterm exam completed on time, please be in touch with me as early as possible! My flexibility requires your communication.
 - **Final project:** Because the final project is due at the very end of the term, late papers will only be accepted if formal arrangements have been made through your Dean.
 - **Presentation:** Once we have a presentation schedule set, it is very important to stick to your assigned date, as it affects the flow of the course. If you are sick when you are scheduled to present (or quarantining, etc.), we will reschedule.
 - **Discussion questions:** Discussion questions will not be accepted late. Their purpose is to facilitate class discussion each week, so if you miss the deadline for your assigned week, that opportunity has passed. Do your best to always submit your discussion questions on time as this is part of your participation grade.
- **Email correspondence:** I will always do my best to respond to emails as quickly as possible. However, my days and evenings are sometimes extremely busy, so my guarantee is within 24 hours. If something is urgent, you may note that on the subject line!
- **Plagiarism/academic dishonesty:** It goes without saying that any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If I suspect any such behavior may be occurring, I am obligated to report such suspicions to the Haverford Honor Council. It is very important, particularly in the age of the internet, to educate yourself on what constitutes plagiarism. A detailed discussion is available on p. 86 of the Haverford Student Guide

(<http://www.haverford.edu/deans/files/studentsGuide1011.pdf>), and I am available to talk at any time if you have any questions or concerns about this very important issue.

- Permissions: All of the materials made available to you in this course, including the syllabus, handouts, and PowerPoint slides, should not be shared with anyone or posted anywhere without my permission. Also, lectures and discussions should not be recorded without my permission.

Accommodations for Disabilities

I am committed to partnering with you on your academic and intellectual journey. I also recognize that your ability to thrive academically can be impacted by your personal well-being and that stressors may impact you over the course of the semester. If the stressors are academic, I welcome the opportunity to discuss and address those stressors with you in order to find solutions together. If you are experiencing challenges or questions related to emotional health, finances, physical health, relationships, learning strategies or differences, or other potential stressors, I hope you will consider reaching out to the many resources available on campus. These resources include CAPS (free and unlimited counseling is available), the Office of Academic Resources, Health Services, Professional Health Advocate, Religious and Spiritual Life, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the GRASE Center, and the Dean's Office. Additional information can be found at <https://www.haverford.edu/deans-office-student-life/offices-resources>.

Additionally, Haverford College is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and providing equal access to students with a disability. If you have (or think you have) a learning difference or disability – including mental health, medical, or physical impairment – please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu. The Director will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. It is never too late to request accommodations – our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing. Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use their accommodations in this course should share their accommodation letter and make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss how their accommodations will be implemented in this course. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully implement.

If, at any point in the semester, a disability or personal circumstances affect your learning in this course or if there are ways in which the overall structure of the course and general classroom interactions could be adapted to facilitate full participation, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice that they may be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this accommodation from the Director of Access and Disability Services and then must speak to me. Other class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

Title IX College Statement

Haverford College is committed to fostering a safe and inclusive living and learning environment where all can feel secure and free from harassment. All forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence are violations of Haverford's policies, whether they occur on or off campus. Haverford faculty are committed to helping to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the College community as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination, harassment, or violence, know that help and support are available. Staff members are trained to support students in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and

housing accommodations, and more.

The College strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of sexual misconduct. Please be aware that all Haverford employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors, clergy, and healthcare providers) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the Bi-College Title IX

Coordinator: <https://www.haverford.edu/users/ktaylor4>

Information about the College’s Sexual Misconduct policy, reporting options, and a list of campus and local resources can be found on the College’s website: <https://www.haverford.edu/sexual-misconduct>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wk	Date	Topics / Activities	Readings
1	1/19	Introductory Overview	
2	1/24	Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bruner (1987). Life as Narrative •McAdams (2001). The psychology of life stories
2	1/26	Narrative Methodology: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Adler et al (2016). The incremental validity of narrative identity in predicting well-being. •Breen, Scott, & McLean, (2019). The “stuff” of narrative identity
3	1/31	Childhood and Adolescence: Building the Narrative Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fivush (2011). Development of autobiographical memory •Habermas & de Silveira (2008). The development of global coherence in life narratives across adolescence
3	2/2	Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood I: Processes of Identity Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •McLean & Jennings (2012). Teens telling tales •Vo-Jutabha et al (2009). A qualitative analysis of Vietnamese adolescent identity exploration
4	2/7	Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood II: In-depth look at narrative identity and psychological adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Banks & Salmon (2013). Reasoning about the self in positive and negative ways: Relationship to psychological functioning in young adulthood •McLean et al (2013). Reflecting on a difficult life: Narrative construction in vulnerable adolescence •Sales, Merrill, & Fivush (2013). Does making meaning make it better? Narrative meaning making and well-being in at-risk African-American adolescent females
4	2/9	Adulthood I: Stability and Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Dunlop et al (2016). The autobiographical author through time • Singer (2019). Repetition is the scent of the hunt: A clinician’s application of narrative identity to a longitudinal study
5	2/14	Adulthood II: Disruptions, Growth, and Ego Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pals (2006). Authoring a Second Chance in Life •King et al (2000). Stories of Life Transition
5	2/16	Aging: Narrative Processes as the Story Concludes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Synnes (2015). Narratives of nostalgia •Bohlmeier et al (2011). Narrative foreclosure in later life

6	2/21	Family co-construction / wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Alea et al (2015). “We-ness” in relationship-defining memories and marital satisfaction •Pratt et al (2008). Intergenerational transmission of values
6	2/23	<i>No class – time to work on midterm – **midterm due Friday, 2/25 by midnight**</i>	
7	2/28	Narrative identity and mental illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Raffard et al (2010). Narrative identity in schizophrenia •Lind et al (2019). Personal and parents’ life stories in patients with borderline personality disorder
7	3/2	The role of narrative in therapeutic processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Singer & Bonalume (2010). Autobiographical memory narratives in psychotherapy: A coding system applied to the case of Cynthia •Lysaker et al (2003). Narrative transformation as an outcome in the psychotherapy of schizophrenia
		Spring Break	
8	3/14	Theoretical and conceptual perspectives on culture, power, history, marginality, and narrative identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •McLean & Syed (2016). Personal, master, and alternative narratives: An integrative framework for understanding identity development in context •Fivush (2004). Voice and silence: A feminist model of autobiographical memory
8	3/16	Master narratives, gender, and sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hammack & Cohler (2011). Narrative, identity, and the politics of exclusion: Social change and the gay and lesbian life course •Bradford & Syed (2019) Transnormativity and transgender identity development: A master narrative approach
9	3/21	Narratives of duality and conflict –bicultural identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Garrett, M. T. (1996). “Two people”: An American Indian narrative of bicultural identity •Hammack (2010). Narrating hyphenated selves: Intergroup contact and configurations of identity among young Palestinian citizens of Israel
9	3/23	Narrative identity and social class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Wiley et al (1998). Constructing autonomous selves through narrative practices: A comparison study of working-class and middle-class families •Nelson et al (2006). Classing jumping into academia
10	3/28	Narrative approaches to the experience of first-generation college students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pyne & Means (2013). Underrepresented and in/visible: A Hispanic first-generation student’s narratives of college •Gray et al (2018). Identity work by first-generation college students to counteract class-based micro-aggressions •Jehangir (2010). Stories as knowledge: Bringing the lived experience of first-generation college students in the academy
10	3/30	Narrative approaches to the academic trajectories of college students of color – focus on STEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Syed (2010). Developing an integrated self – academic and ethnic identities •McLean et al (2021). Identity development and major choice among underrepresented students interested in STEM majors
11	4/4	Narratives and disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Adler (2018). Bringing the (disabled) body to

		identity	personality psychology: The case of Samantha
11	4/6	Narrative identity, life stories and addiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Singer, J. A. (2001). Living in the amber cloud: A life story analysis of a heroin addict •Dunlop & Tracy (2013). Sobering stories
12-14	4/11-4/27	Applied topics, TBA (Prison narratives, uses of narrative for educational purposes, medical narratives, etc.), also class time devoted to working on final projects	TBA
		<i>Final projects due at end of finals period (different dates for seniors and non-seniors)</i>	