ENGL 199: ORIGINS OF LITERATURE

Instructor: Dr. Michelle Scalise Sugiyama
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Office Hours: Friday 1-3pm and by appointment
Office: 170 Straub Hall

Course Content: 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 information acquired from others. Drawing on evolutionary theory and related disciplines, this course explores the origins of literature in terms of the information demands of ancestral human environments. The first half outlines the evolutionary context in which narrative emerged, the adaptations that make social learning and narrative possible, and the foundations of cultural transmission. The second half examines cross-cultural themes in hunter-gatherer oral traditions—e.g., tricksters, monsters, warfare, sex and marriage—in relation to recurrent problems of forager life and the kinds of information required to solve them. Course readings include scientific articles and hunter-gatherer folklore.

Format: The course will consist of lectures and discussion

Evaluation Criteria: Your grade in the course will be based on your performance on the midterms and final exam, and on attendance:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam I (in class, Week 4)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam II (in class, Week 7)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Final Exam (in class, Finals Week)</td>
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Exams will cover lectures, readings, and films, and will include short answer (1-3 sentences) and short essay (1-3 paragraphs) sections. The final exam will be cumulative but will primarily focus on the material from the second half of the class. You will need a green book for each exam. Exams and assignments must be taken/turned in at the scheduled time—under no circumstances will make-up exams or assignment extensions be given without a documented excuse (e.g., signed note from your doctor). If you will not be able to take an exam or turn in an assignment, you must notify me in advance (preferably by e-mail).

Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me. Please bring a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your accommodations.

Directions to Scalise Sugiyama’ Office: Use the main entrance of Straub. Upon entering, you will find yourself in a lobby; turn right and go to the end of the hall. You will see a door with a sign over it that says “Hill Center.” Go through this door and then through a second door immediately on your right. Turn right into a short hallway; my office is at the end of the hall.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**  
*Folder/file names are in boldface in brackets*

**Week 1: Origins**

MON [Scalise 2005] “Reverse-engineering narrative”

WED Evans & Zarate (pp. 3-60)

FRI Film: *The Desert People*

**Week 2: The Foraging Niche**

MON [Lancaster & Lancaster 1983] “Parental investment: the hominin adaptation” (pp. 33-52 only!)

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

FRI [Hewlett & Cavalli-Sforza 1986] “Cultural transmission among Aka pygmies”

**Week 3: Cultural Transmission**

MON Holiday

WED [Schacter 2007] “Remembering the past to imagine the future: the prospective brain”


FRI Evans & Zarate 2005 (pp. 61-104, 144-150)

**Week 4: Cooperation & Conflict**

MON Midterm I

WED Film: *The Human Spark*

FRI [Boehm 1993] “Egalitarian behavior and reverse dominance hierarchy” (pp. 227-240 only!)

[Rasmussen 1931] “Papinuaq, who forgave his friend’s bad-temperedness” (p. 417), “Siligtigkê who murdered the women of the village” (p. 434), “Tigganajuk, who killed the jealous Iliktaoq” (p. 435-436)
**Week 5: The Trickster**

**MON** Evans & Zarate 2005 (pp. 96-104)


[Gusinde 1975] “Why Kwanyp never lacked guanacos” (pp. 32-33)

[Bogoras 1918] “A tale about stingy reindeer-owners” (pp. 30-32)

[Yanomamo 1990] “289/Agouti, the stingy mother-in-law”

**WED** [McIlwraith 1948] “Raven and his sisters,” both versions (pp. 408-410), Raven Stories: “Raven and Buck” (pp. 389-390), Raven Stories: “Raven and Water Ouzel,” both versions (pp. 386-388), Raven Stories: “Raven and Seal” (p. 388)

[Opler 1938] “Coyote names the members of his family” (pp. 308-309), “Coyote pretends to go hunting” (309-310), “Coyote loses the power to obtain food” (pp. 278-279), “Coyote as eye juggler” (pp. 277-278), “Coyote shows how he can lie” (pp. 316-317), “Coyote kills Deer with his ceremony” (pp. 327-329), “Coyote makes an old couple fight” (pp. 314-316)

[Dorsey 1904] “Coyote and the seven buffalo” (pp. 262-265)

[Parsons 1929] “Sendeh overeats and clings to a grape vine” (p. 42)

[Teit 1898] “The Coyote and his guests” (pp. 40-42)

**FRI** [Lowie 1918] “Old Man Coyote and the Box Elder” (pp. 45-46)

[Sapir 1909] “Coyote as Medicine Man” (pp. 11-19), “The origin of fish in the Columbia” (pp. 3-7)

[Opler 1938] “Rabbit escapes” (p. 300), “Coyote obtains fire” (pp. 269-272)

[McIlwraith 1948] “The cunning of Mink” (pp. 422-423)

[Boas 1901] “Myth of the Coyote” (pp. 45-49)

[Kroeber & Gifford 1980] “Izkaraya Story” (pp. 158-159)

[Parsons 1929] “Sendeh and the Mountain Ogres” (pp. 40-41)

**Week 6: Mating**

**MON** Evans & Zarate 2005 (pp. 105-132)

[Rasmussen 1931] “Netsersuitsuarssuk” (pp. 416-417)

[McIlwraith 1948] “The wronged woman” (pp. 451-453)

[Jacobs 1959] “Deetkattoo” (pp. 165-167)
[Goddard 1916] “The rival husbands” (pp. 274-275)
[Bogoras 1918] “Yukaghir tale” (pp. 48-49)
[Adamson 1934] “The mountains” (p. 268)
[Roe 1983] “Worawora woman” (pp. 31-34)
[Teit 1898] “The Grizzly Bears and the Black Bears” (pp. 69-72)
[Kroeber & Gifford 1980] “Pidishkadim story” (232-233)

WED [Wilson & Daly 1992] “The man who mistook his wife for a chattel” (pp. 289-322)
[Adamson 1934] “Crane and his unfaithful wife” (p. 369)
[Sapir 1909] “A Wasco woman deceives her husband” (pp. 242-244)
[Rasmussen 1931] “Tigganajuk, who killed the jealous Iliktaq” (pp. 435-436),
“Waking, I will fight” (pp. 431-432),
[Yanomamo 1990] “237/For the pleasure of a bath”
[Goddard 1916] “A man and his wife are saved by lightning” (pp. 277-278)
[Teit 1898] “The dog and the girl” (pp. 62-63)
[Opler 1938] “Coyote marries the chief’s daughter” (pp. 318-319)
[Bogoras 1918] “Tale about the Sea-Spirit” (pp. 12-14)


Week 7: The Food Quest

MON [Stammbach 1988] “An experimental study of social knowledge: Adaptation to the special manipulative skills of single individuals in a Macaca fascicularis group”
[Teit 1898] “Story of Stetso” (pp. 75-76), “The war of the fishes with the Okanagon” (p. 77)
[Kroeber & Gifford 1980] “Fish Hawk invents implements” (72-74), “Theft of fire” (11-12)
[Lowie 1918] “Day and night” (pp. 25-28)
[Yanomamo 1990] “76/Caterpillar’s tobacco and the kernals of wild fruit,” “102/Red Brocket and the false palm fruits”

WED [Blurton-Jones & Konner 1976] “!Kung knowledge of animal behavior” (pp. 325-348)
[Kroeber & Gifford 1980] “Theft of fire” (11-12), “Mockingbird (Tuus) and Varied Thrush (Achku),” all three versions (pp. 233-235)

[Rasmussen 1931] “Tugtoväk the moose, who duped the kayak man” (pp. 398-399)

[Villas Boas 1970] “The Tapir: the Anta and the stars” (pp. 171-173)

[Yanomamo 1990] “172/Tapir tries to hide,” “141/Enemy sorcerers turn into coatis”

FRI Midterm II

Week 8: Threats

MON [Sobel & Bettles 2000] “Winter hunger, winter myths: subsistence risk and mythology among the Klamath and Modoc” (pp. 276-316)

[Rasmussen 1931] “Struggle for existence” (pp. 131-139), “Siuglugssuaq, who ate his grandchild” (p. 432), “Igimarasugssugssuaq” (p. 433)

[Sapir 1909] “A famine at the Cascades” (pp. 227-229), “A hard winter near the Dalles” (pp. 244-245)

[McIlwraith 1948] “The famine” (pp. 500-501)

[Kroeber & Gifford 1980] “Story of Big Horned Owl” (pp. 237-238)


[Kroeber & Gifford 1980] “Story about Panther” (238-240)

[Jacobs 1959] “South Wind,” parts 1-6 (pp. 123-126)

[Gusinde 1975] “How the land was distributed” (pp. 65-70), “The story of the dolphins” (pp. 71-72)

[Teit 1898] “Qoa’qlqal” (pp. 42-45)

[Yanomamo 1990] “80/The Black Currasow spirits and the origin of night,” “211/Omamë creates the mountains in his flight”


[Rasmussen 1931] “Inugpasugssuk” (pp. 252-254)

[Bogoras 1918] “A tale about the Wood-Master” (pp. 10-12)

FRI [Hill & Hurtado 1995] “Ache Life History” excerpt (pp. 1-5)
[Lewis-Williams 2000] “How ≠Kasin’s eldest brother was carried off by a lion” (83), “Leopard-hunting: the fatal adventure of !Kwai-kwa and his companion” (90-91), “A day of adventure and tragedy” (84-89)

[Lowie 1918] “Adventures with buffalo” (269-270)


[Dreamtime] “The crocodile they couldn’t kill” (pp. 73-75)

[Jacobs 1959] “Wild Man,” both versions (pp. 162-164)

Week 9: Threats

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

[Rasmussen 1931] “The Itqilit” (pp. 122-27)

[Bogoras 1918] “A tale of the Chukchee invasion” (pp. 28-29)


[Jacobs 1959] “Those people” (pp. 171-173)

[Opler 1938] “The origins of the Kiowa Apache” (pp. 381-383)

[Rink 1875] “Kunuk the orphan boy” (pp. 133-143), “The girl who was stolen by an inlander” (pp. 265-267)

WED [Chagnon 1974] Excerpt from Studying the Yanomamö

[Jacobs 1959] “Wild Woman” (158-161)

[McIlwraith 1948] “The little girl who was kidnapped” (pp. 446-448), “The boys who drifted to sea,” first version (pp. 467-470)

[Dreamtime] “The child and the crocodile” (pp. 79-80)

[Boas 1932] “A K!á´waq!a dies of fright. Story of the Āwí’ɬ!ídɛx” (pp. 95-96)

[Sapir 1909] “Two children escape from an At!at!a’lia” (pp. 274-276)

[Owl 1938] “The adventure at Owl’s home” (pp. 55-57)

[Rasmussen 1931] “Amajorjuk” (pp. 248-250)
“An imprudent boy is transformed into a turtle,” “Some neglected children are transformed into birds,” “A child-eating ogre”

“Story about cannibals” (pp. 29-30), “The woman’s head” (pp. 97-99)

“New science, old myth”

“Coyote marries his own daughter” (280-282), “Coyote and his mother-in-law” (pp. 313-314)

“Why the Guanaco-man lives with his daughters” (109-110)

“Diabexwa’xxwa, the Big-Footed Man” (248)

“Bat, the incestuous son-in-law”

“Patterns of characterization in folktales across geographic regions and levels of cultural complexity”

“181/The birth of the twins,” “191/Yoasi and the short life span,” “193/The daughter of the waters,” “217/The origin of the rahara water monster,” “221/The origin of disease”

“Dirty Boy” (pp. 384-387)

“The tale of La’la” (pp. 90-94)

“Clever Kaskoyuk” (pp. 74-76)

“Atceçö kills a bad man” (242-243)

“Dog Husband” (pp. 96-97)

“Order of life and death” (pp. 19-21)

“Adaptationist criteria of literary value”

Concluding Remarks

Final Exam: 10:15 am, March 18 (Friday)