

Narrative Selves East and West

REL 407/507 Winter 2014 CRN 27241/3

Instructor: Mark T. Unno, Office: SCH 334, Tel. 346-4973, Email: munno (at) uoregon (dot) edu
TU 2:00 p.m. - 4:50 p.m., SCH 358; Office Hours: Tues & Thurs 12:00-12:50 p.m. SCH 334

Overview

Through selected readings in religious and philosophical thought East and West, as well as through films, this course examines the manner in which narratives of selfhood are constructed and presented. Questions explored include: What is the role and character of narrative in defining selfhood? How do fractures and fissures in this narrative occur? Can a self exist without any significant narrative? What is the relation between memory, time, and space in the narrative self? In delving into these questions, we will examine 1) different versions of the narrative self, 2) models of selfhood that call into question various narratives (narrative and counter-narrative), and 3) models and theories of self that call into question the very nature of a narratively defined self. Readings include selected narratives from a Pure Land Buddhist, Taoist, and a Jewish diarist as well as secondary theoretical and methodological works. Format is lecture-discussion combination including student presentations. Assignments include three shorter papers and one longer final paper. Additional readings and a longer final paper will be required for students enrolled in REL 507.

Requirements

1. *Attendance*: Required. Students can have one unexcused absence without penalty. Each class missed thereafter without prior permission will result in 1-2 grade penalty for the course grade.
2. *Short exams*: There will be two short, in-class exams, based on materials from the readings, lectures, and course web site.
3. *Medium papers*: There will be two medium-length papers (2-4 pages) based on topics that will be provided by the instructor.
4. *Presentation*: Students will make a presentation on the readings for one of the section meetings. The presenter should *not* summarize the reading but should use the presentation to discuss why the selected ideas-passages in question are important for understanding the reading and proceed to explain as well as raise questions about these ideas-passages.

The primary purpose of these presentations is to *launch* the discussion, not to demonstrate breadth of knowledge or to lead the discussion. Each presenter will prepare a handout with 2 questions and brief, corresponding quotations from the readings. More detailed instructions will be provided on the course web site.

5. *Final paper*: **Each student will hand in a final paper of 7-9 pages double-spaced (A longer final paper of 11-13 pages will be required for those who have registered for REL507)**. Suggested topics will be provided. Students may choose to create their own topics with the consent of the instructor. In the case of the latter, a one-paragraph description of the topic must be submitted by **email** to the instructor four days prior to the due date for the peer review draft.
6. *Late policy on written assignments*: Three grace days total will be allotted excluding the final paper for which no extensions will be given. For the short papers, a cumulative total of three late days will be allowed without penalty. Thereafter, each late day will result in a two-point deduction from the course grade. Weekends are not counted against the grace days.

Email accounts. Students should all have email accounts. Your email address will be used to communicate with you during the course.

Student Assessment In this course students will:

- A. Develop their paper writing skills through regular feedback on papers and an exam containing questions regarding the process and elements of writing university essays.
- B. Develop a sophisticated understanding of how diverse religions and philosophies define the dark or problematic dimensions of human existence.
- C. Acquire tools for the study of comparative religion through the examination of narrative construction of the self concept as characterized by diverse strands of religious and philosophical thinking, through the use of primary sources and secondary scholarly literature.
- D. Learn to identify and analyze thematic presentations of the narrative self concerning diverse factors of human culture such as gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and class.
- E. have the above areas assessed through exams, papers, and class discussion.

Grades

Short exam I 5% Short exam II 5% Discussion 10% Presentation 10%
Short paper I 15% Short paper II 20% Final paper 35%

Required Texts

Shinmon Aoki, *Coffinman* (Anaheim, CA: Buddhist Education Center, 2004).
Joan Frances Casey, *The Flock* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1992).
Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life + Letters from Westerbork* (NY: Owl Books, 1996).
Bruce Rubin, *Jacob's Ladder* (NY: Applause Books, 2000) (optional text).
Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2003).
Course Reader REL 407-507 Narrative Selves East and West, 539 E 13th St, Eugene, OR 97401 TEL 541 485 6253.

Weekly Schedule REL407-507 Narrative Selves East & West

(Reading assignments are to be completed by the date under which they are listed.)

CR = Course Reader; RT = Required Text

Week 1 (1/7) INTRODUCTION: Course Syllabus and Narrative 1

The Notebook (film clips)

Paul Brockelman, *Time and Self: Phenomenological Explorations*, 7-17, 71-83 (CR1).

Jerome Bruner, "The "Remembered Self," 41-51 (CR3).

Week 2 (1/14) Phenomenologies of Time and Self; Autobiographical Subjectivity in Question

Katsuki Sekida, *Zen Training*, 108-146 (CR2).

Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 101-120 (CR4).

Hilde L. Nelson, *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*, 1-35, 176-188 (CR5).

Week 3 (1/21) Uncovering, Recovering and Creating Self-Narrative. **Paper 1 due in class.**

Elspeth Graham et al, "Pondering All These Things in Her Heart," 51-71 (CR6).

Sue Campbell, *Relational Remembering: Rethinking the Memory Wars*, 25-45 (CR7).

[Meredith Maran, "The Lie That Tore My Family Apart," *Salon.com*, Sept 20, 2010 \(online essay\).](#)

Joan Frances Casey, *The Flock* (RT).

Week 4 (1/28) Memories of the Self: Christian and Freudian

Mark Freeman, *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*, 25-49, 222-232 (CR8). **Exam A in class.**

Martin Conway, *Autobiographical Memory: An Introduction*, 16-28 (CR9).

Gillian Clark, *Augustine: Confessions*, vii-viii, 54-69 (CR10).

Augustine, *The Confessions*, ix-xxvi; Book VII, 105-125; Book VIII, 129-133 (CR11).

Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 88-99, 140-155 (CR12).

The Butterfly Effect (film).

Week 5 (2/4) Zhuangzi's Daoism: Narrative, Perceptualism, and the Dao.

Zhuangzi, 1-140 (focus pages: 31-49, 62-63, 78-81, 94-95, 126-140) (RT).

Philip Ivanhoe, "Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill," 639-654 (CR13).

"The Ten Oxherding Pictures," in *How to Practice Zazen*, 26-45 (CR14).

Week 6 (2/11) Shin Tradition of Pure Land Buddhism: Narrative Oceans of Karma and Light.

Mark Unno, "The Borderline between Buddhism and Psychotherapy," 139-158 (CR15).

Shinmon Aoki, *Coffinman*, xiii-xvi, 3-111 (RT).

Week 7 (2/18) Spiritual Autobiography: Jewish, Christian, Jungian, and Beyond **Paper 2 due in class.**

Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life* (RT).

Tom Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference*, 1-26 (CR18).

Denise de Costa, *Anne Frank & Etty Hillesum: Inscribing Spirituality and Sexuality*, 141-165, 207-239 (CR17).

Week 8 (2/25) Alternate Realities: Buddhist Liberation, Christian Redemption, Daoist Perceptualism **Exam B in class.**

Film: *Jacob's Ladder*

Sandy Gunther, "An Alternate View of Reality . . . in Jacob's Ladder," 1-10 (CR16).

Week 9 (3/4) Buddhist Karma: Narrating the Unfathomable

Film: *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, . . . and Spring Again*

Week 10 (3/11) Conclusions and Beginnings: Wrap-up lecture, student presentations, discussion. **Final paper due in class.**

Course Reader, REL 407/507 Narrative Selves East & West

Phenomenologies of Time and Self

1. Paul Brockelman, *Time and Self: Phenomenological Explorations*, 7-17, 71-83.

A phenomenology of the narrative self.

2. Katsuki Sekida, *Zen Training*, 108-146.

A Zen Buddhist phenomenology of thoughts and self-reflection

Autobiographical Subjectivity in Question

3. Jerome Bruner, "The "Remembered Self"," in Ulric Neisser & Robyn Fivush, eds., *The Remembering Self: Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative*, 41-51.

"Self" as perpetually rewritten story

4. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 101-120.

Ideological power and authority in the author

Recovering, Discovering, and Uncovering Self through Narrative

5. Hilde L. Nelson, *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*, 1-35, 176-188.

Counter-stories that heal the self

6. Elspeth Graham et al, "Pondering All These Things in Her Heart: Aspects of Secrecy in the Autobiographical Writings of Seventeenth-century Englishwomen," in *Women's Lives-Women's Times: New Essays on Auto-Biography*, eds. Trev Lynn Broughton and Linda Anderson, 51-71.

Writing the self in secret

7. Sue Campbell, *Relational Remembering: Rethinking the Memory Wars*, 25-45.

Contestation in Remembered Accounts of Childhood Abuse

Autobiography and Memory from Augustine to Freud

8. Mark Freeman, *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*, 25-49, 222-232.

Reflections on Augustine's Confessions

9. Martin Conway, *Autobiographical Memory: An Introduction*, 16-28.

Three theorists of autobiographical memory including Freud

10. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 88-99, 140-155.

Animism->Religion->Science; Oedipal origins in the scene of the "primal horde"

11. Gillian Clark, *Augustine: Confessions*, vii-viii, 54-69.

Background of Augustine's Confessions.

12. Augustine, *The Confessions*, ix-xxvi; Book VII, 105-125; Book VIII, 129-133.

Selections from *The Confessions*.

Models of Selfhood

13. Philip Ivanhoe, "Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LX:4 639-654.
Skillfulness in the Dao (Way).

14. "The Ten Oxherding Pictures," in *How to Practice Zen*, 26-45.

A Zen narrative of self as oxherder and oxen.

15. Mark Unno, "The Borderline between Buddhism and Psychotherapy," in *Buddhism and Psychotherapy Across Cultures*, ed. Mark Unno, 139-158.

The narrative self as deeply heard, with specific reference to Shin Buddhism.

16. Sandy Gunther, "An Alternate view of Reality: Understanding Mystical Experience in *Jacob's Ladder*," unpublished paper, 122-130.

Narrative strands in the film *Jacob's Ladder*.

Complementary Themes of Selfhood

17. Denise de Costa, *Anne Frank & Etty Hillesum: Inscribing Spirituality and Sexuality*, 141-165, 207-239.

Intertwining strands of spirituality and sexuality.

18. Tom Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference*, 1-26.

Intimacy and integrity: Eastern and Western views of the self-in-culture.