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Tutorial; “Narrative and Identity”

All human beings tell stories, indeed some researchers argue that a narrative capacity is a critical and unique feature of human cognition. The great political philosopher, Hannah Arendt, claims that we tell stories because we need them to understand the intentions of human actors, and without them we cannot make sense of human speech and action. Stories not only help us to make sense of actions, they also motivate them. The story we weave from the given and chosen aspects of our lives crucially determine the direction of our lives and the lives of those around us. Will we construct and enact narratives of sacrifice, whether nationalist or religious, or will it be narratives of historical inevitability, of empire, or of race? Will our stories celebrate one voice, one plot, one perspective, or many? What moral or political convictions underlie our stories of self and other : what notions of sameness, of difference, of us and of them, of friend and foe? To what extent are we responsible for our own life story: after all none of us choose the beginning of our life story, and most of us do not choose its end. After reading some of the empirical on the role narrative plays in the construction of memory and identity, we will consider these and other questions, focusing on the ideas of self, of nation, of otherness, and of war. Among the authors we will study are Bruner, Nelson, Anderson, and Hedges.

Requirements: Attendance is required, In addition to being present in class, it is my expectation that you have the reading done and be sufficiently prepared (having reflected on the reading, possibly having prepared outlines of reading, or having notes and questions prepared) so that you can contribute meaningfully to class discussion. While each of you will be asked to present a short account of your research to the entire class at the end of the semester, your in class contribution to discussion is important and will be considered in your final grade. There will be four short essay assignments, two of them requiring re-writing. Each of you will be required to visit the writing lab at least once during the semester and some of you may be asked to take more (or even all) papers to the writing lab. In addition to these assignments there may be some less formal assignments. Each of you must complete the exercise on citation. The final assignment for the class will be a 7-10 page research paper on a topic that you will choose but that will require my approval. This will require library research which may be undertaken in collaboration with other students in the tutorial.

Tentative Calendar

Week 1

August 26- Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Chap 1.-6

Week 2

August 31 – Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Arendt, excerpt from *The Human Condition*, and Bruner, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*,
September 2 - Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* Chapters 4 and 5

Week 3

September 7- Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Chapters 9 and 10
September 9- Abbott, “Narrative and Life”, and “Defining Narrative”, from *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, and Ritvoi, “An Integrationist Model of Identity” from “yesterday’s self”,

Week 4

September 14 - Katherine Nelson, “Narrative and Self, Myth and Memory: Emergence of the Cultural Self and “the Socialization of Autobiographical Memory in Children and Adults: The Roles of Culture and Gender” Both from *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self*.

September 16 – Kenneth Gergen, ”Mind, text and society; Self-memory in social context”, from *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self*.

Week 5

September 21- Mandler ,Chapters 1 and 3 from *Stories, Scripts, and Scenes: Aspects of Schema Theory*

September 23 – John Shotter, pp.129-222 from *Social Accountability and Selfhood*

Week 6

September 28- John Shotter, pp.129-222 from *Social Accountability and Selfhood*
September 30- Peter Stearns”,Emotions” from *Discursive Psychology in Practice*,pp.37-54

Week 7

Oct 5. Condorcet, Essay,, The Future Progress of the Human Mind.
Oct.7- Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” and Kant , excerpts from Kant’s remarks on race, from, “The Difference Between the Races”

Week 8

October 12- catch up
October 14 – Marx and Foucault

FALL BREAK –October 16-24

Week 9

Oct. 26 -Brickman, “The Figure of the Primitive: A Brief Genealogy”
Oct 28 – Said, Orientalism

Week 9

Oct 26 –Anderson *Imagined Communities*
Oct 28 Anderson *Imagined Communities*

Week 10

Nov. 2 Hedges, *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*
Nov. 4 Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*

Week 11

Nov. 9- - *Terror in the Mind of God*
Nov.11- *Terror in the Mind of God*

Week 12

Nov. 16 “ Handmaidens of Terror” newspaper article on women suicide bomber and class presentations.
Nov. 18 - class presentations

Weeks 13

Nov. 23 - class presentations

Nov, 22-Dec 6 Research Paper, individual conferences
Dec 10, Research Paper Due