

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Multifaith Leadership in the 21st Century: How to Change the World through Public Narrative

Fall 2023 -- 4 Credits
UPADM-GP 254
Tuesdays 2pm-4:30pm
GCASL, Room 369

Instructor Information

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Course Description

In the context of an increasingly polarized American society, this course seeks to train students to mobilize diverse faith communities together for the greater good. Unleashing the power of storytelling, students will articulate their values and explore the ways it can be shared. The course will draw on case studies from historical and contemporary leaders who have achieved success in creating sustainable change, as well as interrogating relevant current affairs as they arise and viewing storytelling through a global lens. Students will develop skills to understand the power of stories more profoundly, how to use them in their own lives and within the frameworks of institutions and organizations. They will be able to identify better social change strategies and the importance of storytelling to enhance effectiveness and emotional connection.

Learning Outcomes

Through this course, students will learn to:

1. Analyze how stories are used to motivate action, identify key components of effective storytelling, critique stories as told in various media and in person, and generate their own authentic story.
2. Craft authentic stories for social change and plan an action by connecting their own story to the values of a broader community and to a specific course of action.
3. Assess the roles that race, power and privilege play in elevating and downplaying stories and understand how muting the stories of others can contribute to stereotyping, tokenizing, and othering
4. Discern the values which motivate action and articulate their own values which can serve as a common bond for action
5. Build deeper bonds with the Other through sharing stories with vulnerability and listening with openness.

Teaching & Learning Methodologies

Four learning methodologies will be involved in this course:

Lectures The lectures will provide relevant historical knowledge, highlight the intellectual contexts of the required readings, spell out key concepts and outline analytical implications.
Participation and discussion Much of the work of the class involves introspection, reflection, and sharing of ideas and experiences. Readings will provide theoretical frameworks and case studies, which will be deliberated in class. We will often break into small groups to allow for a more focused and participatory learning experience.
Written assignments - Response Papers You will be expected to write three response papers on required readings in the course of the term. The papers build on each other, incrementally bringing you to the final project.
Oral presentation - Storytelling Students will be challenged to craft, tweak and tell stories orally during class. This exercise requires preparation, following the theoretical frameworks which will be introduced during the first class.

Assignments and Grades

Assignment	Course Objective	% of Grade
Storytelling	2, 4, 5	15.00
Assignment #1	1, 2	20.00
Assignment #2	3, 4	20.00
Assignment #3	2	20.00
Class Participation	1, 5	25.00
Total		100.00

Class Participation

Performance Indicator	"A" Level	"B" Level	"C" Level	"D" Level
Frequency of participation in class and in meetings	Frequently initiates contributions and offers to respond to questions posed in class; regularly raises questions in meetings	Occasionally initiates contributions and offers to respond to questions posed in class; occasionally raises questions in meetings	Rarely initiates contributions and offers to respond to questions posed in class; rarely raises questions in meetings	Does not initiate contributions and will only respond to direct questions posed to student; does not raise questions in meetings
Quality of comments / questions	Comments always insightful and constructive; uses appropriate legal terminology; asks insightful questions that demonstrate student has done the reading and has actively listened to the presentation	Comments mostly insightful; mostly uses appropriate legal terminology; asks questions that demonstrate a good understanding of the material presented during the presentation	Comments are sometimes constructive; does not use appropriate legal terminology; comments too long or not always relevant to discussion	Comments are uninformative; does not use appropriate legal terminology; heavy reliance on general sentiment ("I don't like the idea", "sounds great")
Listening skills	Actively listens during meetings / presentations, including when other students speak; builds on comments of others	Mostly attentive when others present or pose questions; occasionally needs reminder from instructor to focus or comment	Often inattentive and needs reminder to focus in class; interrupts others or otherwise disrupts others who are speaking	Does not listen to others; speaks while others speak; detracts from discussion

Course Overview

This course is rooted in the framework developed by community organizer Marshall Ganz:

“Leadership, especially leadership on behalf of social change, often requires telling a new public story, or adapting an old one: a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now. ...

1. A story of self communicates the values that move us to lead.
2. A story of us communicates values shared by those whom you hope to motivate to join us.
3. A story of now communicates the urgent challenge to those values that demands action now.”

Unit I: The Story of Self

9/5: Introduction: What makes stories work?

Watch: Brene Brown, [The Power of Vulnerability](#)

Read: Marshall Ganz, [Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power](#)

Lecture: The VITALS system

9/12: Storytelling

Students share “stories of self”

9/19: Storytelling

Students share “stories of self”

9/26: Story of Self Workshop

In small groups, students follow Marshall Ganz worksheet, incorporate Feedback

First Assignment: *5 pages, typed and double-spaced, 12pt font, and 1-inch margins*

The purpose of this assignment is to build a personal narrative on the foundation of raw vulnerability. Vulnerability is the starting point of human connection. And yet, the stories can be shaped to further accentuate human connection, draw the audience in to the choice point, and enable listeners to experience the outcome. The story rooted in vulnerability is the raw material; Ganz’s framework provides a container or mold.

- Read and review [Marshall Ganz's piece on public narrative](#).
- Read the "[Participant Guide](#)". Consider your story using the frameworks of challenge, choice, and outcome (p. 8). Review the section on "action motivators" (p. 5-6) and think about the emotions you want your story to evoke.
- With these frameworks in mind, please tell your story, being sure to illustrate a challenge, choice, and outcome. Explain what you hope a reader might feel or how your reader might be motivated to act after reading your story.

Unit II: The Story of Us

10/3: How Negative Narratives are Constructed and Spread

Read: Henry Tajfel, “Social Identity and Intergroup Behavior,”
International Social Science Council, 1974.

First Assignment Due

10/10: Legislative Day – Monday Schedule - NO CLASS

10/17: How Stories Can Invoke Negative Values

Ava Duvernay, *13th* - Watch in class
Movie 1:40
Class Discussion for rest of the class

10/24: Tokenism

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women," *American Journal of Sociology*, 1977.

10/31: Othering and Distancing through Narrative

Watch: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, [The Danger of a Single Story](#)
Discuss TED talk and then small groups
The doll Experiment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM>

Two relevant links on it are:

1. <https://ifyc.org/interfaith-digital>
2. https://ifyc.org/sites/default/files/Interfaith_Educator_Guide.pdf

11/7: Friends or Allies?

Of Many watch whole movie
Clip from 42
Read: Martin Luther King Jr., [Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)
Abraham Joshua Heschel, [No Religion is an Island](#)

11/14: How to Build Difficult Coalitions

Case Studies
Read: Carol Gilligan, [Listening as a Path to Psychological Discovery](#)
Worksheet: Who Are Your People and What Are Your Values?

Second Assignment: 5 page reflection on the questions below AND An updated version of your story that takes both the feedback and this exercise into account WITH an explanation of what you did differently

In this module, we focused on the "Story of Us," learning about different social theories that create feelings of inclusion, exclusion, tokenization, and allyship. We discussed which values our "stories of self" would invoke which could be shared by these audiences.

Now it's time to identify your Us, your audience, and what your shared values are. It can be particularly powerful to address audiences who are not used to being addressed, individuals who are usually subsumed under a "single story" or tokenized as part of a narrative that centers on other people.

- Read through [Ganz's worksheet](#), with particular attention to the "story of us" and choosing your audience.
- Imagine, identify and describe your optimal "us" in three concentric circles:
 - Easily reachable -- several hundred people, most of whom you would have the ability to reach through your existing platforms
 - Reachable with help -- several thousand people, most of whom who you do not know or do not know well but at least really know people like them

- Reachable if picked up by a media outlet -- hundreds of thousands of people, most of whom you do not really know at all, but with the presumption that there are shared values
- Name:
 - What is the shared value that you want to invoke?
 - How can your story be adjusted in order to heighten or focus that value?
 - What elements of your story would you tell differently?

Unit III: Story of Now

11/21: Finding Your Problem

Defining "Urgency"

Small Group Work

Second half: Telling your Story of Self/Us/Now on one foot- students practice in pairs, and then instructors model assignment.

Second Assignment Due

11/28: How to build a coalition?

12/5: Linking the Story of Self, the Story of Us, and the Story of Now

Each student has 5-7 minutes to retell stories

12/12: Linking the Story of Self, the Story of Us, and the Story of Now

Each student has 5-7 minutes to retell stories

Third Assignment Due

Third Assignment: 5 page reflection paper answering the two questions below AND the final version of your story which integrates the stories of self, us and now.

1. People respond to deadlines. You have a powerful story. Looking back at your story of self and your "us", what change would you want to be implemented? What is the threat or opportunity that you are responding to which makes your change time-sensitive?
2. What part of this course moved you the most? What do you feel you are taking with you from the course (skills, knowledge, etc.)? What would you have liked to take but aren't?
3. Final version of your story of self, us, and and now.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.