ANTH 163: ORIGINS OF STORYTELLING

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“We must assume that storytelling is as old as mankind, at least as old as spoken language.”
--Oates (1992:8)

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, mating—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 folktales.

Format: The course will consist of lectures and discussion

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

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Section</td>
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<td>Worksheets</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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Discussion section assignments are designed to review important course concepts and prepare you for exams. Exams will cover lectures and readings, and will include matching and short essay sections. The final exam will be cumulative but will primarily focus on the material from the latter 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 at the scheduled time, you must notify me or your GTF in advance (preferably by e-mail).

Course Blackboard Site: You are responsible for checking the course Blackboard site regularly for updates and other information. The syllabus, course readings, assignments, and announcements will be posted there, as will lectures as they become available.

Academic Honesty: academic misconduct is a violation of the UO Student Conduct Code, which prohibits the “act of cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. Examples: looking at another
person’s exam, making up lab results, and failing to cite sources in a paper.” All work submitted for this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this class. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty risks failing the class.

**Students With Disabilities:** 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 asap. Please bring a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your accommodations.

**Required Texts:** Dylan Evans & Oscar Zarate, *Introducing Evolutionary Psychology: A Graphic Guide, 3rd ed.* Available at U of O Bookstore. All other readings are posted on Blackboard (see Schedule of Readings, below).

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**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

**Week 1: Origins**

TUE  Scalise Sugiyama (2005) “Reverse-engineering narrative” (optional)

THR  Evans & Zarate (pp. 3-60)

Boyd et al. (2011) “The cultural niche”

**Week 2: Cultural Transmission**

TUE  Boulton & Smith (1992) “The social nature of play fighting and play chasing: mechanisms and strategies underlying cooperation and compromise”


Film: *The Human Spark, Episode 2*

**Week 3: Cognitive Foundations of Storytelling**

TUE  Evans & Zarate (pp. 87-95)

Onishi et al. (2007) “15-month-old infants detect violations in pretend scenarios”

“Tugtoväk the moose, who duped the kayak man”

THR  Evans & Zarate (pp. 96-104)

Schacter et al. (2007) “Remembering the past to imagine the future: the prospective brain”

Film: *The Human Spark, Episode 3*

**Week 4: Cooperation & Conflict Management**
TUE Evans & Zarate (pp. 61-77, 144-150)

Boehm (1993) “Egalitarian behavior and reverse dominance hierarchy” (p. 227 to top of p. 236 only!)

“Why Kwanyip never lacked guanacos”

“A tale about stingy reindeer-owners”

“The greedy boy”

“Siligtigkê who murdered the women of the village”

THR Evans & Zarate (pp. 96-104)


“Coyote loses the power to obtain food”

“Coyote shows how he can lie”

“Coyote kills Deer with his ceremony”

“Coyote and the expanding meat”

“Coyote and the seven buffalos”

“Sendeh overeats and clings to a grape vine”

**Week 5: Mating**

TUE Evans & Zarate (pp. 105-132)

“The rival husbands”

“Two women”

“The Grizzly Bears and the Black Bears”

“Puan takes a lover”

“A Wasco woman deceives her husband”

“The chief of the red tipi”

“The treacherous bachelor”

THR Evans & Zarate 2005 (pp. 81-86)


“Coyote marries the chief’s daughter”
“How a poor boy won his wives”
“The dog and the girl” (pp. 62-63)
“Double-Face tricks the girl” (pp. 49-50 only)
“The wicked sister-in-law”
“The wronged woman”

**Week 6: Warfare**

**TUE**  **MIDTERM**

In-class, closed book; bring green book.


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

“A Cree, caught alone, is killed by the Beaver”

“Wonyoni escapes from the Cree”

“Those people”

“The origins of the Kiowa Apache”

“Kunuk the orphan boy” (pp. 132-135 only)

“Clever Kaskoyuk”

“The girl who was stolen by an inlander”

“Mavaranaq”

**Week 7: Heroes & Hunters**

**TUE**  Gottschall (2005) “Quantitative literary study: a modest manifesto and testing the hypotheses of feminist fairy tale studies”

“The birth of Killer-of-Enemies and Child-of-the-Water” (pp. 47-77)

“Ôeôemê, the child warrior”

“They told of Qishvet”

“The Tale of La-la”

“How Bear Woman got her name”

“The old woman and the polar bear”
THR  Blurton-Jones & Konner (1976) “!Kung knowledge of animal behavior”

“Coyote visits the Red Ants”

“Mockingbird (Tuus) and Varied Thrush (Achku)” 1st version (pp. 233-234)

“Tugtoväk the moose, who duped the kayak man”

“Tapir tries to hide”

“Enemy sorcerers turn into coatis”

Film: The Art of Tracking

Week 8: Subsistence and Subsistence Stress

TUE  Stammbach (1988) “An experimental study of social knowledge: Adaptation to the special manipulative skills of single individuals in a Macaca fascicularis group”

“The war of the fishes with the Okanagon”

“Fish Hawk invents implements” (pp. 72-74)

“Theft of fire”

“Day and night”

“Caterpillar’s tobacco and the kernals of wild fruit”

“Red Brocket and the false palm fruits”


“The famine” (pp. 500-501)

“Starving Beaver visit the Rocky Mountains”

“The bitter fruit: the lala myth”

“A woman hides bear meat from her starving husband”

“Story of Big-Horned Owl”

Week 9: Dangerous Animals

TUE  Barrett (2005) “Adaptations to predators and prey”

“Leopard-hunting: the fatal adventure of !Kwai-kwa and his companion”

“How Bear Woman got her name”

“Adventures with buffalo”
“The crocodile they couldn’t kill”

“Wild Man” (#48)

THR Holiday

**Week 10: Wayfinding & Environmental Threats**


“Qoa’qlqla’l”

“How the land was distributed”

“Oمامē creates the mountains in his flight”

Oral History 2005 (“Oral history saves island from tsunami”)

Mt Mazama 1865

“The big fire”

“The story of the dolphins”

THR Evans & Zarate (pp. 77-80)

Tooley et al. (2006) “Generalising the Cinderella Effect to unintentional childhood fatalities”

“Some neglected children are transformed into birds”

“The child and the crocodile”

“The Grizzly Bears and the Black Bears”

“Wild Woman” (#45)

“The little girl who was kidnapped”

“A K·lā´waq!a dies of fright”

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

**Week 11: Final Exam**