



TITLE OF THE COURSE

The Social Art of Language - Communication Skills through Storytelling and Drama

HOST PROFESSORS

Dr Alastair K. Daniel, Great Britain

Alastair K. Daniel is a performance storyteller, researcher, writer and consultant in storytelling (and related fields) working in the UK and abroad. Following twelve years touring schools in the UK and the Low Countries with The Story Tent, in 2010 Alastair made the move from professional storytelling to academia. In the summer of 2022, Alastair ended his term as Principal Lecturer in Primary English at the University of Roehampton to focus on storytelling once more, and develop his work as an independent scholar.

Alastair's 'Story Tent' style brings traditional and literary texts to life through physicalisation, puppets, masks, costumes, artefacts, rhymes and songs - creating performances in which the distinction between performer and audience become blurred. The Story Tent project came out of Alastair's use of storytelling as a teaching strategy with children with profound emotional and behavioural difficulties. He found that storytelling (contrasted with story-reading) provided a unique method of drawing children, who often had difficulties with imaginative play, into new worlds.

As a consultant and researcher, Alastair has worked with a range of organisations and specialises in the application of oral storytelling in educational contexts and the use of narrative analysis to evaluate educational programmes.

Dr Julie Wharton, Great Britain

Julie Wharton has provided a range of in-service training in mainstream and special schools across the region and has undertaken school reviews in partnership with Local Authority colleagues. She has supported colleagues in a university in the North East to validate their NASENCo programme and a University in the Midlands with the validation of their Postgraduate Certificate in Specific Learning Difficulties.

Julie has been an external examiner for the Open University's for Primary teaching and learning Module Grouping in the Childhood, Youth and Education UG Cluster for E103, E209, E214, E309 and HZFM300. She is now the external examiner for Nottingham Trent University's National Award for SEN Co-ordination.

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The language of instruction is English, but students are welcome to use their home language in the storytelling and drama activities which explore the creative aspects of communication.



In an age of social media and the virtual, this course addresses the need for people to be able to communicate in-person with each other. Starting from the position that story is the way that humans represent themselves to each other, the course focuses on oral storytelling - people making sense of the world around them through spoken language.

VERIFICATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Class Attendance and Active Participation: 20%
- Group Exercises and Directed Tasks: 40%
- Final Group Project Presentation: 40%

AIMS OF THIS COURSE

Students will:

1. Understand how narrative represents the primary means through which humans represent themselves to others, and through which they understand the experiences of others.
2. To see storytelling as both a social performance and a dialogue in which the exchange of experience between people is the principal concern.
3. Understand how non-verbal elements (vocal, gestural and spatial) contribute to effective communication
4. Develop their expressive capacities in both verbal and non-verbal (vocal, gestural and spatial) communication.
5. Appreciate that stories are never neutral and will always reflect power relationships, and that narratives can be adapted to address inequalities and injustice.
6. Be able to create and communicate coherent oral narratives (which reflect the differences between the written and spoken word).
7. Be able to critique oral communication and recognise where an act of communication could be improved by addressing both linguistic, non-verbal and social aspects of oracy.

This course is particularly relevant to any student who intends to pursue a professional life in which human interaction (whether in-person or online) will be crucial, and who wants to develop their spoken language skills.

Day	Title	Aims, Content and Readings	Resources and readings
1	Introduction to storytelling and drama	Aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to develop group cohesion and confidence in working together and speaking aloud.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hollow Woods cards• Story Dice• Juggling balls



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To introduce oral storytelling and theatre techniques as social performances• To develop awareness that storytelling and acting are natural elements of human communication which everyone uses day-to-day. <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Getting-to-know you activities• Storytelling and drama games• Discussion about social performance and the similarities and differences between storytelling and acting. <p>Related Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schechner (2020) <i>What is Performance?</i> (extract from Performance Studies) Available at: https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781351978941_A38492113/preview-9781351978941_A38492113.pdf (accessed 12/12/25)• Daniel (2024) The Nature of Storytelling – An Exploration: https://www.akdaniel.co.uk/single-post/the-nature-of-storytelling-an-exploration (Accessed 12/12/25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single line cards• Endowment cards• Lollipop sticks
2	Story and narrative: structure and underlying forces	<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To recognise the ability to construct and communicate stories as developmental• To understand common story structures• To understand how relationships between characters, motivations and contexts drives action in narrative• To demonstrate understanding of narrative structure (and narrative's underlying relationships) through creating and telling our own stories. <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starting with the English Folk Tale <i>Jack the</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative development handouts• Structure handouts• Story dice• Lollipop sticks• <i>Jack the Giant Killer</i> Kamishibai prompts



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		<p><i>Giant Killer</i>, we will develop our skills in narrative analysis;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will link our narrative analysis with the Japanese storytelling practice of Kamishibai.• We will then use electronic devices to create e-Kamishibai tellings of our own versions of the English folk tale.• Following presentation of these stories, we will critique our approaches look We will then create our own versions of this story and tell it. These tellings will be critiqued by the group. <p>Related Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robertson, J., Gjedde, L. Aylett, R., Luckin, R. and Brna, P. (2008) What is Story. In <i>Inside Stories: a narrative journey</i>. Nile Press pp27-54• Daniel A.K. (2019) Meaning Making, Meaning Shaping: Making Connections Across Narratives. An online presentation available at: https://www.akdaniel.co.uk/meaning-making-meaning-shaping (Accessed 12/12/25)• Dym Sensei (2010) <i>What is Kamishibai?</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6URceEr_zc (Accessed 13/12/25) NB. This video demonstrates the use of Kamishibai (or Paper Theatre). However, while the published Kamishibai images have text on the reverse (in other words are for story reading), traditional Kamishibai was storytelling rather than reading.	
3	Storytelling as dialogue - improvisation and exchange	<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To recognise the ability to construct and communicate stories as developmental• To understand the nature of the two-way communication between teller and audience• To develop confidence in adapting our telling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Juggling balls



		<p>in the moment in response to the audience and</p> <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Working with our own versions of the English Folk Tale of <i>Jack the Giant Killer</i>, we will work through improvisatory games and activities that will lead to dialogic performances of the story where a range of audience responses lead to different and individual tellings. <p>Related Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Lwin, S. M. (2017). Narrativity and creativity in oral storytelling: Co-constructing a story with the audience. <i>Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics</i>, 26(1), 34-53.Daniel, A.K. (2019) Storytelling Performance Part 3a: Engagement strategies in performance storytelling - Introduction. Available at: https://www.akdaniel.co.uk/single-post/2019/03/16/storytelling-performance-part-3a-engagement-strategies-in-performance-storytelling-intr (Accessed 12/12/25)	
4	Critical Storytelling	<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">To develop awareness of power relationships and representation within storyTo recognise that most oral narratives are not fixed, and can be adapted to address issues of power, class, gender, etc.To demonstrate an understanding of a critical approach to story through the adaptation of well-known folk and fairy tales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wordless version of LRRHPlay figure of LRRH



		<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will examine variations of well-known folk tales and consider how each reflects the society from which it comes• We will establish what characterises a critical approach to folk narratives and adapt well-known stories for a modern audience• We will tell adapted stories• We will critique the approach taken (its benefits and dangers) and how it can be applied beyond traditional tales. <p>Related Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashliman, D.L. (2025) <i>Folklore and Mythology: Electronic Texts</i>. Available at: https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/folktextrts.html (Accessed 12/12/25)• Folk and Fairy Tales in the Classroom: the 'coin and currency of culture' Part 3 (of 4) Available at: https://www.akdaniel.co.uk/single-post/2020/05/23/untitled (Accessed 12/12/25) <p>NB The intended audience for this blog is teachers, however the principles of criticality that it explores are universal</p>	
5	Storytelling as Embodied Communication Exploring character through embodiment	<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To recognise the essential role of the non-verbal as an element of communication• To explore physicality and voice in communicating actions, ideas and emotions• To demonstrate a developing awareness of the non-verbal through participation in a range of related activities. <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through a series of drama activities (including working with masks) we will explore the differences between language-based narration and story that is enacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Endowment cards• Juggling balls• Masks• Mirrors



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will consider how voice and gesture can both enhance communication and distract from meaning. <p>Related Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stotter, R. (1994). The Kinesic Component of Storytelling Performance. In <i>About Story, writings on stories and storytelling</i>. Stinson Beach CA, Stotter Press, pp53-59• Huntress, C. (2018) <i>The Breath of the Neutral Mask</i>. Available at: https://caelanhuntress.com/2014/11/09/the-breath-of-the-neutral-mask/ (accessed 12/12/25)	
6	Storytelling and space : making space into place through story	<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To appreciate how narrative action depends on the setting of the story• To understand how story turns space into place by highlighting specific aspects, qualities and (perhaps) histories of a space. <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Returning to the English tale <i>Jack the Giant Killer</i>, we look at the landscape of the story and how this permits certain actions and limits others.• The convention of Japanese 'Paper Theatre' (Kamishibai) will be introduced, and we will create our own versions of the <i>Giant Killer</i> narrative and capture images as a form of e-Kamishibai• The e-Kamishibai will be brought to life as we share our stories and critically assess how the local landscape has shaped both our stories and the telling of them. <p>Related Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• McKee, R. (1991) Structure and Setting. In	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small world people• Jack the Giant Killer• Kamishibai prompts



		<p><i>Story</i>. London: Methuen, pp67-78. Available at:</p> <p>https://dn790001.ca.archive.org/0/items/RoberMcKeeStorypdf/Robert%20McKee%20-%20Story%20%28pdf%29.pdf (accessed 12/12/25)</p>	
7	Story Making - Show Don't Tell: The Piper of Nysa	<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To apply the understanding of narrative (and the forces working within it), to explore the <i>Pied Piper</i>• To be able to communicate clear narratives through showing rather than telling (e.g. not telling listeners that it was cold, but showing (telling how) characters wrapping themselves in heavy coats, scarves and gloves)• To demonstrate understanding of storytelling as both an embodied and a located social performance through practical activity <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will explore versions of <i>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</i> and discuss the effect of location on the narrative.• Returning to Session 2, we will examine the underlying forces that drive narrative action and engage in a series of activities in which we explore how imply meaning without directly stating it (showing not telling)• In pairs/small groups we will plan and practice a filmed and located telling of <i>The Piper of Nysa</i>. <p>Related Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashliman, D.L. (2021) <i>The Pied Piper of Hamelin and related legends from other towns</i>. Available at: https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/hameln.html (Accessed 12/12/25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Piper story visual cues
8	Bringing it together filming in and around the city	<p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to put into practice the skills developed over the course	



	In their	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To demonstrate understanding of storytelling as both an embodied and a located social performance through practical activity <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Following opening group activities and discussion, students will go to their chosen locations in and around the city and create their film of <i>The Piper of Nysa</i>.Groups will return to the seminar room to discuss their films and support each other. <p>Related Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">n/a	
9	Student presentations and feedback	<p>Aim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">To demonstrate understanding of the course content through paired/group presentations and an ability to constructively critique the presentations of others. <p>Content: Presentations and Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Student presentations on financial management strategies for multinational companiesConstructive feedback from peers and instructorsReflection on key lessons and application of course content <p>Related Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">n/a	