

## PSYCHOLOGY 4085, Section 08: Life Stories - Spring 2020

### Instructor Information

Instructor: James Christopher Head

Time: 4:30-5:45, M/W

Location: 218 Melson Hall

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### Course Information

#### Course Description

In recent decades, many psychologists have characterized psychology as a “depopulated” field – one devoid of actual human beings. Accordingly, many have advocated taking an approach that focuses on life stories as a way humanize psychology. This course will explore the life story approach and will do so by weaving psychological theory with students’ examinations of a chosen figure. As students work toward constructing a psychologically informed life story analysis, they will be aided by a structured task-schedule, in-class exercises, and readings selected to provide essential frameworks, concepts and theories.

### Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- 1) Develop an understanding of life story analysis and its relevance to the field of psychology.
- 2) Develop an understanding of narration as a psychological process.
- 3) Engage in analytical writing that reflects an awareness of the historical, philosophical, and conceptual foundations of life story-focused psychology.
- 4) Cultivate an awareness of the uses of and distinctions between various forms of life story theories.
- 5) Engage in a research project focused on a life story analysis of a chosen figure.

### Grading Information and Policy

There are a total of 100 points possible in the course. The research project is worth a total of 80 points and consists of 10 tasks (project pitch – 10 pts., contextual factors presentation – 5 pts., capsule view of figure – 10 pts., self-talk analysis – 5 pts., others’ accounts analysis – 5 pts., works analysis – 5 pts., psychological theory presentation – 10 pts., final presentation outline – 5 pts., research report – 10 pts., and the final presentation – 15 pts). Quizzes will be worth 10 points. In-class writings are worth 10 pts. These 100 points will be used to calculate a percentage grade according to the standard percentage point divisions:

## Assignments and Requirements

**Attendance.** Formal attendance will be taken in this class and there is no way to learn the material, complete the project, or to get a good grade without regular attendance. Some course work will be completed in class and all assignments will only be fully explained in class.

**Readings.** You are expected to come to each class with a copy of the reading for the day, having read the materials listed on the same date as that lecture (see course schedule below). Each day's class will cover material relevant to the assigned readings, so you will be more prepared to understand the material if you come to class having read the assignment.

**Participation.** You are expected to participate in in-class activities and exercises. This class will be highly experiential (i.e., non-lecture), so you should expect to come to class, come on time, come prepared, and actively engage in your learning.

**Quizzes.** There will be several quizzes throughout the course of the semester, which will be given at the beginning of class. You must be in class when the quiz is given to have the opportunity to take it (no make ups). The quizzes will focus on course readings.

**In-class Writings.** There will be several in-class writings throughout the course of the semester, which will be assigned at the beginning of class. You must be in class when the writing prompt is given to have the opportunity to write about it (no make ups). The in-class writings will bridge course readings and class exercises.

**Research Project.** You are expected to construct a research project focused on the life of a chosen figure. This will be the summative project for this course, and accordingly, will reflect your understanding of the concepts and issues addressed in throughout the semester. This proposal will be constructed in stages, and thus, will build upon your work from the semester. These are the tasks of the project broken into assignments:

1. Project Pitch – Your initial proposal of your research topic, which will provide a rationale and plan for completion.
2. Contextual Factors Presentation – A brief presentation to the class that examines the life of your chosen figure in their sociohistorical context.
3. Capsule View – A relatively succinct written overview of your chosen figure's life that illuminates the importance of their story.
4. Self-talk Analysis – A relatively brief written analysis of the figure's narration of self.
5. Other's Accounts Analysis - A relatively brief written analysis of the way your figure is spoken about by others in their life.
6. Works Analysis - A relatively brief written analysis of the work (i.e., creations) of your chosen figure.
7. Psychological Analysis – A relatively succinct presentation to the class in which you deploy psychological theory in your analysis of your chosen figure.
8. Research Project Outline – A detailed outline that will map out your final project.
9. Research Report – A written report in which you introduce your subject, articulate your investigatory approach, present your findings, and discuss the implications of

your findings. This report should be conceived as a written compliment to your final presentation.

10. Final Presentation – A relatively substantial presentation to the class in which you present your comprehensive analysis of your chosen figure. This presentation should reflect a thoughtful synthesis of the tasks you completed throughout the semester (i.e. should reflect your use of psychological theory, present the person in their sociohistorical context, etc.).

All formal written assignments (i.e., not in-class writings) should be in APA format, should be double spaced, and should be in a standard (i.e., Times New Roman) 12pt font.

Grading structure and point scale:

90-100 points	90% - 100%	A
80 points - 89 points	80% - 89%	B
70 points - 79 points	70% - 79%	C
60 points - 69 points	60% - 69%	D
< 60 points	< 60%	F

### Late work policy:

All assignments are due (i.e., submitted on the course website, unless otherwise specified) by the beginning of the class period corresponding to the due date of the assignment (see the course schedule). Any work turned in after this time will be docked 10% for each day past the due date that it is not turned in.

### Texts, Readings, Instructional Resources, and References

Students will need to purchase *Bound for Glory*, by Woody Guthrie (Plume, 1983), which can easily and inexpensively be obtained from most book sellers. All other readings will be available on CourseDen under the “contents” tab. The number associated with each text corresponds with the class schedule (see below). Readings should be completed before the date in which they are scheduled to be addressed.

## Required Texts:

1. Billig, M. (1994). Repopulating the depopulated pages of social psychology. *Theory & Psychology, 4*(3), 307-335.
2. McAdams, D. P. (2008). Personal narratives and the life story. *Handbook of personality: Theory and research, 3*, 242-262. McAdams, D.P. (2008). Personal narratives and the life story. In J. P. Oliver, R.W. Robins, and L.A. Pervin's *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*. New York: Guilford Press.
3. Hermans, H. J., & Hermans-Jansen, E. (2001). The person as motivated storyteller: Basic metaphor. In *Self-narratives: The construction of meaning in psychotherapy*. Guilford Press.
4. McAdams, D. P. (2008). Personal narratives and the life story. *Handbook of personality: Theory and research, 3*, 242-262. McAdams, D.P. (2008). Personal narratives and the life story. In J. P. Oliver, R.W. Robins, and L.A. Pervin's *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*. New York: Guilford Press.
5. Yurchenco, H., & Guthrie, M. (1970). *A mighty hard road: The Woody Guthrie story*. McGraw-Hill.
6. Cray, E., & Terkel, S. (2006). *Ramblin' man: the life and times of Woody Guthrie*. WW Norton & Company.
7. Singer, J.A. (2001). Living in the amber cloud: A life story analysis of a heroin addict. In D.P. McAdams, R. Josselson, and Amia Lieblich's *Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 253-277.
8. Schultz, W.T. (2003). The prototypical scene: A method for generating psychobiographical hypotheses. In R. Josselson, A. Lieblich, and D.P. McAdams' *Up Close and Personal: The Teaching and Learning of Narrative Research*. Washington D.C., APA, pp. 151-175.
9. Elms, A.C. (2005). If the glove fits: The art of theoretical choice in psychobiography. In W.T. Schultz's *Handbook of Psychobiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 84-95.
10. Runyan, W.M.K. (2005). How to critically evaluate alternate explanations of life events: The case of Van Gogh's ear. In W.T. Schultz's *Handbook of Psychobiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 96-103.
11. Freeman, M. (2013). Axes of identity Persona, perspective, and the meaning. *Rethinking narrative identity: Persona and perspective, 17*, 49.
12. Ouellette, S.C. (2003). Painting Lessons. In R. Josselson, A. Lieblich, and D.P. McAdams' *Up Close and Personal: The Teaching and Learning of Narrative Research*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 13-28.
13. Cline, S., & Angier, C. (2010). *The Arvon Book of Life Writing: Writing Biography, Autobiography and Memoir*. A&C Black.
14. Henig, R.M. (2015). Sandra Bem: The last day of her life. *New York Times Magazine*.

## Class Schedule Information

Schedule		Topic	Reading #	Assignment Due	
January	6	Monday	Introduction		
	8	Wednesday	Why Life Stories?	1	
	13	Monday	Conceptualizing Life Stories	2	
	15	Wednesday	Learning from a Life	BFG	<b>Project Pitch</b>
	22	Wednesday	Learning from a Life	BFG	
	27	Monday	Learning from a Life	BFG	
	29	Wednesday	Learning from a Life	BFG	
Feb.	3	Monday	Learning from a Life	BFG	
	5	Wednesday	Learning from a Life	BFG	
	10	Monday	Life Stories in Context	3	
	12	Wednesday	Conceptualizing Life Stories	4	
	17	Monday	Learning from a Life	5	
	19	Wednesday	Life Stories in Context		<b>Contextual Factors Pres.</b>
	24	Monday	Learning from a Life	6	
	26	Wednesday	Writing a Life		<b>Capsule View</b>
March	2	Monday	Life Story Theorization	7	
	4	Wednesday	Observations of a Life		<b>Other Accounts Analysis</b>
	9	Monday	Life Story Theorization	8	
	11	Wednesday	The Narrated Life		<b>Self-Talk Analysis</b>
	23	Monday	Theorizing a Life	9	
	25	Wednesday	Life Through Works		<b>Works Analysis</b>
	30	Monday	Theorizing and Life Stories	10	
April	1	Wednesday	Theorizing and Life Stories	11	
	6	Monday	Theorizing and Life Stories		<b>Theory Presentation</b>
	8	Wednesday	Composing an Analysis	12	
	13	Monday	Composing an Analysis	13	
	15	Wednesday	Composing an Analysis		<b>Outline</b>
	20	Monday	Learning from a Life	14	
	22	Wednesday	Presenting a Life		<b>Final Presentation/ Report Due</b>
	27	Monday	Presenting a Life		<b>Final Presentation</b>

\*See the reading list (above) for complete references for all additional readings. All readings will be posted on the course website.

## Course and UWG Policies

### Honor Code

At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.

The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Each incidence of academic dishonesty is subject to review and consideration by the instructor, and is subject to a range of academic penalties including, but not limited to, failing the assignment and/or failing the course. Student conduct sanctions range from verbal warning to suspension or expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offense and/or number of offenses. The incident becomes part of the student's conduct record at UWG.

Additionally, the student is responsible for safeguarding his/her computer account. The student's account and network connection are for his/her individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. The student is responsible for all actions originating through his/her account or network connection. Students must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal their identities in electronic messages and actions. For more information on the University of West Georgia Honor Code, please see the [Student Handbook](#).

### Email Policy

University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email.

### Accessibility Services

**Accessibility Services:** Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Accessibility Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if he/she needs to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, the student should notify his/her instructor in writing and provide a copy of his/her Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Accessibility Services. Faculty cannot offer accommodations without timely receipt of the SAR; further, no retroactive accommodations will be given. For more information, please contact [Accessibility Services](#).

**Center for Academic Success:** The [Center for Academic Success](#) provides services, programs, and opportunities to help all undergraduate students succeed academically. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6280 or [cas@westga.edu](mailto:cas@westga.edu)

**University Writing Center:** The [University Writing Center](#) assists students with all areas of the writing process. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6513 or [writing@westga.edu](mailto:writing@westga.edu)

### **Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:**

If you are a student who is disabled as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act and require assistance or support services, please seek assistance through the [Office for Accessibility Services](#). UWG also provides [Accessibility Statements for Technology](#) that you may be required to use for this course.

For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, UWG Email, Credit Hour, and UWG Honor Code policies as well as information on Academic Tutoring, Student Services, and Technical Requirements, Privacy Policy, and Accessibility Statements, please see the [Common Language for Syllabus](#) document.

I strongly recommend that students make an electronic copy of everything submitted to me via the dropbox.

### **Additional Support Information**

#### **Technical Support**

Technical support for CourseDen, as well as the technological requirements, accessibility statements, privacy statements, tutorials, and other information can be found at [Technology Requirements](#).

#### **Support for courses**

\*Hyperlinks provided for accessibility throughout; full URLs are available at the end of the document.

#### **[CourseDen D2L Home Page](#)**

#### **[CourseDen Help](#) (8 AM – 5 PM)**

Call: 678-839-6248 or 1-855-933-8946 or

email: [online@westga.edu](mailto:online@westga.edu)

#### **[24/7/365 D2L Help Center](#)**

Call 1-855-772-0423

#### **[University Bookstore](#)**

#### **[Student Services](#)**

### **Center for Academic Success**

The new [Center for Academic Success](#) (CAS) provides services, programs, and opportunities to help all undergraduate students succeed academically. The CAS offers free appointment-based peer tutoring in core courses, as well as supplemental instruction (SI)—which is peer-facilitated collaborative learning—in a variety of disciplines. Students seeking help with study skills and strategies can attend workshops through the Academic Success Workshop series, or work individually with either a staff or peer Academic Coach. Beginning Fall 2014, the CAS will also offer “Back on Track,” a voluntary academic recovery program designed for students who want to improve their grades and academic standing. The Center for

Academic Success is located in UCC 200, and can be reached at 678-839-6280. Our email address is [cas@westga.edu](mailto:cas@westga.edu).

## Smarthinking

Smarthinking offers online tutoring services and resources (including the Writing Center) for UWG students/instructors in all courses. A link to Smarthinking is available in CourseDen under Resources in the navigation bar.

## Student Services

Here is a great resource of [Student Services](#) for all students at UWG, whether or not they are taking online courses. This link provides students with most of the information they need. If a student is experiencing distress and needs some help, check out [UWG Cares](#).

## Full URL Support for Courses

- **CourseDen D2L Home Page**  
<https://westga.view.usg.edu/>
- **CourseDen Help (8 AM – 5 PM)**  
<https://uwgonline.westga.edu/uwg-online-student-help.php>  
Email: [online@westga.edu](mailto:online@westga.edu)
- **24/7/365 D2L Help Center**  
<https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/>
- **University Bookstore**  
<http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/>
- **Common Language for Course Syllabi**  
<https://www.westga.edu/administrati on/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php>
- **UWG Cares**  
<http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/>
- **Accessibility Services**  
<https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php>
- **Student Services**  
<http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php>
- **Center for Academic Success**  
<http://www.westga.edu/cas/>
- **Distance Learning Library Services**  
<https://www.westga.edu/library/resource-sharing.php>
- **Ingram Library Services**  
<http://www.westga.edu/library/>
- **Proctored Exams**  
<http://uwgonline.westga.edu/exams.php#student>
- **UWG Accessibility Statements for Technology**  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Ri1XgaXiGx28ooO-zRvYPraV3Aq3F5ZNJYbVDGVnE A/edit?ts=57b4c82d#heading=h.yrqefffvts1f>

## Syllabus

As this document corresponds with a dynamic entity (a class), this syllabus is subject to change.