Storytelling for Impact

NYU | STERN

SPRING 2025   MCOM-GB 2107.20   KMC -----

DRAFT

Mondays: April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; May 6—1:30-4:20PM

Professor Diane Lennard   dlennard@stern.nyu.edu   KMC3-108 (inside KMC 3-100)

OFFICE HOURS   **TEACHING FELLOW**
By appointment   Adrianna Tomasello - at6138@stern.nyu.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW

A story can influence, persuade, and inspire action. This course is designed for students who want to explore the power of stories in a business context and improve their storytelling abilities. In each class session, you will have the opportunity to practice delivering a story that is based on your own experience, and then receive feedback on the story's impact from your peers and the professor. You will learn how to find, develop, and tell compelling stories that connect with the hearts and minds of the audience. Practice exercises will focus on expanding your range of expressiveness and enhancing your ability to communicate congruently. Throughout the course, you will engage in a process of personal reflection on your stories and storytelling techniques, view videos, and read articles. You also will develop a library of personal stories that can engage audiences and make your messages memorable.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the key components of a story with impact

- Practice telling personal stories that motivate, inspire, and connect with the audience

- Reflect on the structure, delivery, and impact of personal stories

- Experiment with different types of stories and identify their possible uses in a business context

- Create a personal library of stories that you can add to and use in a variety of business situations

REQUIRED READING AND VIEWING

- Berinato, Scott, video: "Telling Stories with Data in 3 Steps"
      Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Buffet, Warren, video: "Warren Buffett talks to 10,000 Small Businesses"
      Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Brown, Brene, video: "The Man in the Arena"
      Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Canada, Geoffrey, video: "Geoffrey Canada on Helping Harlem's Children"
      Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Ganz, Marshall, video: "Professor Ganz's Story of Self"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Gates, Bill, video: "Mosquitos, Malaria, and Education"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Gebbia, Joe, video: "How Airbnb designs for trust"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Guber, Peter, video: "The Art of Purposeful Storytelling"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Hinojosa, Maria, video: "From invisible to visible"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Hobson, Mellody, video: "Color blind or color brave?"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Jobs, Steve, video: "Steve Jobs introduces iPhone in 2007"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Lewis, Damian, video: "2024 Yale Law School Commencement"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Lewis, Damian, video: "The Mountaintop and the Valley: 2023 Commencement"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing

- Ma, Jack, video: "How I Overcame Failure"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- McRaven, Admiral William H., video: "Make Your Bed Speech"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Moriarty, Brian, article: "Storytelling in Business: How To Tell Engaging Stories"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Reading.

- Murguia, Janet, video: "Janet Murguia will never stop fighting for the Latino community"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Peterson, Lani, article: "The Science Behind The Art Of Storytelling"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Reading.

- Pinchai, Sundar, video: "The Incredible Journey of Sundar Pichai"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Reynolds, Garr, video: "Why storytelling matters"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Sandberg, Sheryl, video: "Sheryl Sandberg on How Women Hold Themselves Back"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Schenkler, Irv, article: "How to Review Your Videotape"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Reading.

- Su, Lisa, video: "This CEO Made AMD Billions – Now She Wants to Dominate the Market With AI"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Viewing.

- Thompson, Sophie: "The Importance of Storytelling in Business, with Examples: Sara Blakely, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Reading

- TPC Blog: "Yes, Even You Can Become a Masterful Storyteller"
  Available on Brightspace/Course Reading

RECOMMENDED READING:

- Choy, Esther K. 2017. *Let the Story Do The Work.* New York: AMACOM

- Ditka, Mitch. 2015. *Storytelling at Work.* Woodstock, NY: Idea Champions.

- Duarte, Nancy. 2010. *Resonate – Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Gallo, Carmine. 2016. *The Storyteller's Secret.* New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

- Karia, Akash. 2015. *TED Talks Storytelling.* Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.

- Leitman, Margot. 2015. *Long Story Short.* New York: Sasquatch Books.

- Lennard, Diane. 2018. *Strategic Communication at Work: The IMPACT Paradigm.* New York and London: Routledge.

- Simmons, Annette. 2006. *The Story Factor*. Cambridge, MA: Basic Books.
  Also, major source of course content comes from Annette Simmons book, *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins.* 2007. New York: AMACOM

GRADING

Assignments for this course are listed below. (Grading criteria for each assignment are listed on the following pages.) Your final grade will be based on class participation and assignment completion.

ASSIGNMENT	% OF GRADE	DUE
Story #1 Submission – Self-Introduction Story	*	Day before Module 1
Story #1 Reflections	6	Day before Module 2
Story #2 Submission – "Who I Am" Story	*	Day before Module 2
Story #2 Reflections	6	Day before Module 3
Story #3 Submission – "Teaching" Story	*	Day before Module 3
Story #3 Reflections	6	Day before Module 4
Story #4 Submission – "Vision" Story	10	Day before Module 4
Story #4 Reflections	6	Day before Module 5
Story #5 Submission – "Values in Action" Story	10	Day before Module 5
Story #5 Reflections	6	Day before Module 6
Story #6 – Final Project Story	25	Day before Module 6
Participation (Includes all italicized items above)	25	Ongoing

CLASS PARTICIPATION

In-class contribution is a significant part of your grade and an important part of our shared learning experience. Your active participation helps me to evaluate your overall performance. You can excel in this area if you contribute to the course by:

- Providing strong evidence of having thought through the material
- Advancing the discussion by contributing insightful comments and questions
- Demonstrating interest in your peers' comments, questions, and presentations
- Giving constructive feedback to your peers when appropriate
- Being present, punctual and prepared

Storytelling for Impact is designed to be a highly interactive course. The more you invest in the course the more you will learn and the more others will learn from you. You are required to keep pace with the class; follow the course outline; participate in all activities; and complete readings, viewings, and assignments by the designated due date (listed in the course outline).

BRIGHTSPACE

Announcements: includes course reminders; check these regularly
Course Information: includes syllabus and the class list
Pre-Course Survey: includes the Pre-Course Survey; please fill out and submit as soon as possible
Assignments: submit all written assignments on Brightspace/Assignments
Modules 1- 6: includes course reading, viewing, documents, assignments; class slides and recordings

NOTE: Please bring headphones and a device for viewing videos in class (Modules 3 and 5).

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attending each of the six class sessions is required and part of your grade.

NOTE: If you have a qualified disability and will require academic accommodation during this course, please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD, 998-4980) and provide me with a letter from them verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend.

VIDEO RECORDING

One way to improve your presentation skills is to watch yourself on video. For this reason, all of your presentations will be recorded on video and made available to you on Brightspace.

INTEGRITY

I expect that you will adhere to the Stern MBA Honor Code.
https://www.stern.nyu.edu/uc/codeofconduct

COURSE OUTLINE

MODULE ONE	
READING	View: Reynolds, "[Why storytelling matters](#)"
DELIVERABLE	▶ **Story #1: "Self-Introduction" Story** Introduce yourself by telling us a brief personal story (c. 2 min.) built in three steps: 1-Challenge: grab the listeners' attention with an unexpected challenge that you've faced 2-Struggle: tell a story around the struggle and the choices you made that ultimately led to conquering the challenge 3-Resolution: share the outcome you experienced and galvanize the listeners with a call to action Do not use visual aids, notes, or slides. Provide specific and relevant details.
AGENDA	**ACTIVITIES**
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm	• Course Introduction • Why Tell Your Stories
2:30 pm – 4:20 pm	• Story #1 Practice Presentations • In-class Feedback on Story #1 • Assignments

MODULE TWO	
READING/VIEWING	Read: Schenkler, "How to Review Your Videotape" View: Story #1 Practice Presentation video View: ["The Incredible Journey of Sundar Pichai"](#) View: ["The Mountaintop and the Valley: 2023 Commencement"](#)
DELIVERABLES	▶ **Reflection: Story #1 ("Self-Introduction")** Read "How to Review Your Videotape" (Course Reading) and then watch your Story #1 video (Module 1/Class Session Recording). Write your own thoughts about your story, including what you liked best; when you tell it again, what do you want to remember to say first and last; what new details could you include to make the story more alive and engaging? Post it (Assignments). *GRADING CRITERIA:* *1. Content: aligns with the assignment's requirements* *2. Examples: includes specific evidence and examples to support their reflections* *3. Critical thinking: provides critical analysis of their storytelling, showing engagement with course material* ▶**Submission: Story #2 ("Core Value")** Listeners want to know who you are and what matters to you. You build trust by revealing who you are and what you stand for as a person. Your core values come from lived experience (e.g. what one of your childhood mentors taught you; what you learned in your first job, a significant moment in your life). Craft a (1-2) minute story that reveals one of your core values (i.e. principles or beliefs of central importance in your life). Use the following process: Step 1: Review the 1-page list of values on Brightspace; first, circle your top 10 values and then pick the top 5 within that list; second, rank order the top 5 from 1 to 5 (1 being your highest priority currently); third, based on that prioritization, pick your top 2 highest values. Step 2: Think about personal stories demonstrating 1 of those selected core values, times when it cost you something to stand by (or not stand by) your value; or when sticking to it paid off. Step 3: Choose one of the ideas to develop into a story; then write the story with as many sensory details as you can remember. Submit it on Assignments/Story #2. In class, without using any notes, you will practice telling this story and then receive feedback on what works and what is memorable about your story.
AGENDA	ACTIVITIES
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	• How to Structure Your Stories • Story #2 Practice Presentations • In-class Feedback on Story #2 Structure
3:00 pm – 4:20 pm	• Story Elements • Assignments

MODULE THREE	
READING/VIEWING	View: Story #2 Practice Presentation video Read: Moriarty, "Storytelling in Business: How To Tell Engaging Stories" View: "How I Overcame Failure"
DELIVERABLE	▶ **Reflection: Story #2 ("Core Value")** Watch your Story #2 video (Module 2/Class Session Recording). Write your own thoughts about your story, including what you liked best; how you would tell it again and in what order; what new details could you include to make it more engaging. Post it (Assignments). *GRADING CRITERIA:* *1. Content: aligns with the assignment's requirements* *2. Examples: includes specific evidence and examples to support their reflections* *3. Critical thinking: provides critical analysis of their storytelling, showing engagement with course material* ▶ **Submission: Story #3 ("Teaching and Learning")** Teaching stories transport your listeners into an experience that lets them see a real situation and demonstrates how new behaviors create new results. Craft a (1-2) minute story that creates a shared experience of a lesson you learned through your experience and its rewards. Use the following process: Step 1: Consider the lessons you have learned from lived experience or a time that you or your team invented a solution where none existed before. Step 2: Think about stories that demonstrate in a concrete way a lesson learned and its rewards; a mistake you made and learned from it; or a story about someone you know well who inspires you and has the skills you want to learn so you can recreate their results. Step 3: Choose one of the ideas to develop into a story; then write the story with as many specific and sensory details as you can remember. Submit it on Assignments/Story #3. In class, without using any notes, you will practice telling this story and then receive feedback on what works and what is memorable about your story.
AGENDA	ACTIVITIES
1:30 pm – 3:30 pm	• How to Tell Your Story • Story #3 Practice Presentations (1/2 class); Partner Prep for Story #4 (1/2 class) • In-class Feedback on Story #3 Impact
3:30 pm – 4:20 pm	• Congruency and Authenticity • Assignments

MODULE FOUR	
READING/VIEWING	View: Story #3 Practice Presentation video View: "How Airbnb designs for trust" View: "Geoffrey Canada on Helping Harlem's Children" View: "This CEO Made AMD Billions "
Deliverables	▶ **Reflection: Story #3 ("Teaching and Learning")** Watch Story #3 video (Module 3/Class Session Recording). Write and post your thoughts about your story, including what you liked best; how you would tell it again and in what order; what new details could you include to make it more engaging. Post it (Assignments). *GRADING CRITERIA:* *1. Content: aligns with the assignment's requirements* *2. Examples: includes specific evidence and examples to support their reflections* *3. Critical thinking: provides critical analysis of their storytelling, showing engagement with course material* ▶ **Submission: Story #4 ("Vision for Self or Team")** Provide listeners with an engaging vision of the future and a path to a worthwhile goal. Craft a (1-2) minute story about an exciting future that inspires you or your team to overcome possible frustrations and difficulties. Step 1: Consider your vision for the future – imagine a day 1 to 5 years from now describing the kind of day you might have if your dreams were realized, including obstacles that might show up when imagining this future for you or your team. Step 2: Think of a time you wanted something important and uncertain to happen, overcame the obstacles, and succeeded (even if it was small wins); a time you had an opportunity but missed it because you gave up, didn't try, or let someone talk you out of it; or an individual you admire who inspires you and faced obstacles similar to yours, overcame them, and won. Step 3: Choose an idea to develop into a story; then write the story with as many sensory details as you can remember. Submit it on Assignments/Story #4. In class, without using any notes, you will practice telling this story and then will receive feedback on what works and what is memorable about your story. *GRADING CRITERIA:* *1. Relevance: story idea aligns with the assignment's requirements* *2. Message: clearly conveys the central idea* *3. Description: uses sensory imagery and includes specific details* *4. Conflict: story idea involves some internal and or external conflict* *5. Delivery: story is told congruently and elicits emotional response from the audience*
AGENDA	ACTIVITIES
1:30 pm – 3:30 pm	• How to Find Stories • Story #4 Practice Presentations • In-class feedback on Story#4 Impact
3:30 pm – 4:20 pm	• Intention • Assignments

MODULE FIVE	
READING/VIEWING	View: Story #4 Practice Presentation video Read: Peterson, "The Science Behind The Art Of Storytelling". View: "Color blind or color brave?"
DELIVERABLES	▶ **Reflection: Story #4 ("Vision")** Watch your Personal Story #4 video (Module 2/Class Session Recording). Write your own thoughts about your story, including what you liked best; how you would tell it again and in what order; what new details you could include to make it more engaging. Post it (Assignments). *GRADING CRITERIA:* *1. Content: aligns with the assignment's requirements* *2. Examples: includes specific evidence and examples to support their reflections* *3. Critical thinking: provides critical analysis of their storytelling, showing engagement with course material* ▶ **Submission: Story #5 ("Values in Action")** Identify a value you want to reinforce or inspire others to act on. Craft a (1-2) minute story that demonstrates that value in action, includes specifics, and shows what that value means behaviorally. Use the following process: Step 1: Consider your top five core values from the 1-page value list on Brightspace. Step 2: Think of personal stories when you were faced with a difficult decision that left you unsure, your values were tested, you chose an action that felt right that was aligned with a core value; a time you neglected to act on your values and it did not turn out well; or a mentor whose actions demonstrated behaviorally one of your core values and inspired you. Step 3: Choose one of the ideas to develop into a story; then write the story with as many details as you can remember. Submit it on Assignments/Story #5. In class, without using any notes, you will practice telling this story and then will receive feedback on what works and what is memorable about your story *GRADING CRITERIA:* *1. Relevance: story idea aligns with the assignment's requirements* *2. Message: clearly conveys the central idea* *3. Description: uses sensory imagery and includes specific details* *4. Conflict: story idea involves some internal and or external conflict* *5. Delivery: story is told congruently and elicits emotional response from the audience*
AGENDA	ACTIVITIES
1:30 pm – 3:30 pm	• What the Main Idea of the Story is For You • Story #5 Practice Presentations (1/2 class); Partner Prep for Story #6 (1/2 class) • In-class Feedback on Story #5 Impact
3:30 pm – 4:20 pm	• Final Project Story Planning • Storytelling for Impact – Coaching and Main Idea Review

MODULE SIX

READING/VIEWING	View: Story #5 Practice Presentation video Read: Simmons: "The Six Kinds of Stories" View: "The Art of Purposeful Storytelling"
DELIVERABLES	▶ **Reflection: Story #5 ("Values in Action")** Watch your Personal Story #5 video (Module 2/Class Session Recording), then fill out the Self-Evaluation of Impromptu Speaking Exercise form (Course Documents) and post it (Assignments). *GRADING CRITERIA:* 1. *Content: aligns with the assignment's requirements* 2. *Examples: includes specific evidence and examples to support their reflections* 3. *Critical thinking: provides critical analysis of their storytelling, showing engagement with course material* ▶ **Submission: Story #6 (Final Project)** Identify and craft a story (c.3-min.) from your own personal experience that you want to tell. It can be a story about something good or bad that happened to you, a time you shined or a time you blew it, an important person in your life, or a current event that has significant meaning for you. *GRADING CRITERIA:* 1. *Relevance: story idea aligns with the assignment's requirements* 2. *Message: clearly conveys the central idea* 3. *Description: uses sensory imagery and includes specific details* 4. *Conflict: story idea involves some internal and or external conflict* 5. *Delivery: story is told congruently and elicits emotional response from the audience*
AGENDA	ACTIVITIES
1:30 pm – 4:20 pm	• Final Project: Story #6 Presentations • Debrief and Takeaways • Personal Library of Stories

MODULE	TOPICS	READING/VIEWING	DELIVERABLES
1	Course Introduction **Why Tell Your Stories** Story #1 Practice and Feedback	View: Reynolds	Story #1: "Self-Introduction"
2	**How to Structure Your Stores** Story #2 Practice and Feedback Story Elements	Read: Schenkler, View: Story #1 video Pinchai Williams	Story #1 Reflection Story #2: "Core Value"
3	**How to Tell Your Stories** Story #3 Practice and Partner Prep for Story #4 Congruency and Authenticity	Read: Moriarty View: Story #2 video Ma	Story #2 Reflection Story #3: "Teaching and Learning"
4	**How to Find Stories** Story #4 Practice and Feedback Intention	View: Story #3 video Gebbia Canada Su	Story #3 Reflection Story #4: "Vision for Self or Team"
5	**What's the Main Idea** Story #5 Practice and Partner Prep for Story #6 Final Project Story Planning and Coaching	Read: Peterson View: Story #4 video Hobson	Story #4 Reflection Story #5: "Values in Action"
6	**Final Project: Story #6 Presentations** Debrief and Review Personal Library of Stories	Read: Simmons View: Story #5 video Guber	Story #5 Reflection Story #6: "Final Project"