

# Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences

## IX Annual Seminar

### The Enigma of Story: Lived Experience, Time and Narrative (An International Event)

14-16 March 2018

Venue:

*Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences  
Baroda*



The ninth annual seminar of Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences will be held on the theme “The Enigma of Story: Lived Experience, Time and Narrative” during 14-16 March 2018 at the Centre in Baroda. This year, we will organize the event as a seminar-workshop, which will have lectures by the resource persons based on the select course material, interactive sessions and presentations by the participants based on the theme of the seminar. The keynote speakers of the seminar, Craig Irvine and Maura Spiegel, both from the Program of Narrative Medicine at Columbia University, New York will also act as the workshop faculty.

### **Concept Note (prepared by the faculty)**

Narrative Medicine is a new discipline and clinical practice centered in close reading of literature and grounded in philosophy, literary theory, psychoanalysis and social justice theory. It is designed to improve the delivery of healthcare. A fundamental philosophical assumption of this field is that stories are the primordial means through which we experience and convey the meaning of our lives. We share Paul Ricoeur’s conviction that our lives are always already “entangled” in stories, from the most personal to the institutional and socio-political. Ricoeur challenges the rigid, unambiguous distinction between stories and life. The relation between living and narrating is fundamentally enigmatic: from the beginning we experience life *in* stories and stories *in* life. Indeed, Ricoeur contends that life is the process of constructing a narrative identity. This is crucially important in the experience of illness and disability, where there is a kind of interruption of story. Those receiving a patient’s story need to understand the on-going lived

experience of the story, as well as the clinician's role in that story's co-construction.

Ricoeur argues that emplotment, or “the process of composition, of configuration” central to narrative, “is not completed in the text but in the reader and, under this condition, makes possible the reconfiguration of life by narrative.” When we read a novel or watch a film, we belong, at the same time, to the world-horizon of the work in imagination and the world-horizon in which the action of our “real life” unfolds. Each new narrative work opens new horizons in which we might experience, explore, and try on alternative realities, new ways of being-in-the-world. The enigmatic relation between stories and life baffles the mind that seeks concrete, unambiguous conclusions, defining and dominating reality through technical mastery. If the heart of who I am lives in stories—Ricoeur's narrative identity—then one cannot hope to respond to the lifeworld-altering aspects of illness without close attention not only to the “objective” conclusions of the differential diagnosis but to the singular, specific stories of each patient. Close reading and discussion of stories give us tools to understand how stories work and work on us. Narrative skills enhance critical self-reflection, resulting in more effective clinical engagement and a more critical eye focused on the scene of care, the institutional and social structures in which we work and live.

Together we will examine Ricoeur's theoretical framework in *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*, along with several narrative works, including an excerpt from *The Good Story* by J.M. Coetzee and Arabella Kurtz, a short story by Alice Munro, and the film *Departures*, directed by Yojiro Takita.

## Resource Persons

**Craig Irvine, Ph.D.**, is Academic Director of the Master of Science in Narrative Medicine program. He is a founder and Academic Director of the Program in Narrative Medicine at Columbia University. Professor Irvine, who holds a doctorate in philosophy, is a co-author of *The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine* (Oxford University Press, 2017). For more than 15 years, he has been designing and teaching cultural competency, ethics, Narrative Medicine, and Humanities and Medicine curricula for residents, medical students, physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, dentists, and other health professionals. He has over 20 years of experience researching the history of philosophy, phenomenology, and narrative ethics, and over 25 years of experience teaching ethics, humanities, the history of philosophy, logic, and narrative medicine at the graduate, undergraduate, and preparatory school levels. He has published articles in the areas of ethics, residency education, and literature and medicine and has presented at numerous national and international conferences on these and other topics.



**Maura Spiegel, PhD**, who is a founder and the Associate Director of the Program in Narrative Medicine at Columbia University, is Senior Lecturer of English and

Comparative Literature at Columbia University, where she teaches courses on fiction and film. Professor Spiegel, who co-edited the journal *Literature and Medicine* (Johns Hopkins University press) with Rita Charon, MD, PhD, for seven years, is also a co-author of *Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine* (Oxford University Press, 2017). She is the co-



author of *The Grim Reader: Writings on Death, Dying and Living On* (Anchor/Doubleday), *The Breast Book: An Intimate and Curious History* (Workman), which was a Book-of-the-Month Club Quality Paperbacks selection. She has written for *The New York Times* and has published essays on the history of the emotions, Charles Dickens, diamonds in the movies, among many other topics. She is currently writing a book about the life and films of Sidney Lumet for St. Martin's Press.

### **Deadline for Application**

Anyone who is interested in the area of narrative medicine can attend the program. The last date for receiving the proposal for participation is February 25, 2018. If you wish to present a paper at the seminar, please email a 300-words abstract to Bini B.S. (binisajil@gmail.com) before 25 February 2018. The participants whose abstracts have been selected will be informed by February 28, 2018. One may participate without presenting a paper. The last date for registration is 5 March 2018. The workshop material will be emailed to the registered participants.

### **Registration Fee**

Each participant is required to pay a registration fee of Rs. 1500/- (Rupees one thousand five hundred only) through a bank draft payable to Balvant Parekh Centre for GS and OHS in Baroda. You may transfer the money directly to our account and the details of bank transfer will be shared with you on request. The fee will take care of the lunch and tea during the Seminar. The registration fee is non-refundable and does not include the cost of accommodation. For details of accommodation in Baroda, please contact the convener. The participants have to make their own travel arrangements.

### **Application Format**

*The following format should be used for sending applications for participation in the Seminar:*

*Name*

*Gender*

*Address (including telephone number and email ID)*

*Institutional Affiliation*

*Areas of Academic Interest and Teaching*

**Address for Correspondence**

Bini B.S

(Convener of the Seminar)

Academic Fellow, Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human  
Sciences, C-302, Siddhi Vinayak Complex

Behind the Railway Station

Faramji Road, Baroda-390007

E-mail: *binisajil@gmail.com*

Tel: 0265-2320870 (O); Website: [www.balvantparekhcentre.org.in](http://www.balvantparekhcentre.org.in)