

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*



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Lived Experience, Time and Narrative
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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.



Program Schedule

14 March 2018

10.00-10.30 am	Inauguration
10.00-10.15 am	Welcome and Introduction to Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences Prafulla C. Kar, Director of the Centre
10.15-10.25 am	Thematic Introduction to the Seminar by the Faculty
10.25-10.30 am	Vote of Thanks Bini B.S., Academic Fellow of the Centre and Convener of the Seminar
10.30-11.15 am	Paul Ricoeur and Narrative Medicine
11.15-11.30 am	Tea break
11.30 am- to 12.30 pm	Paul Ricoeur and Narrative Medicine
12.30-1.00 pm	Discussion
1.00-2.00 pm	Lunch
2.00-3.00 pm	Introduction to Narrative Medicine Methods: Close Reading and Prompted Writing with Passage from Ondaatje's <i>The English Patient</i>

3.00 - 4.00 pm

Presentations by Participants

Graphic Narration

Chair: E. Raja Rao

1. Sweetha Saji and Chinmay Murali: “Towards a Visual Paradigm of Illness – Intersections of Graphic Medicine and Narrative Medicine”
2. Neeraja Sundaram: “Graphic Stories of Caring in the Family – Narrating the Precarity of Support”

4.00-4.15 pm

Tea break

4.15-6.15 pm

Presentations by Participants

Narrating the Self

Chair: E. V. Ramakrishnan

Observations about the seminar theme by E.V. Ramakrishnan

3. Ananya Mohanty: “The Story of ‘I’– A Reorientation of the Memoir in Narrative Medicine”
4. Sushmita Sihwag: “Memory, Narrativisation, and the Struggle for an ‘I’ – Issues of identity in the Tibetan Memoir”
5. Punit Pathak: “Narrative Medicine and Kafka’s Diaries”

15 March 2018

10.00-11.15 am

Close Reading and Discussion

Alice Munro “The Floating Bridge” with Paul Ricoeur as a touchstone

11.15-11.30 am

Tea break

11.30 am to 1 pm

Narrative Medicine and Representation

1.00-2.00pm

Lunch

2.00 -3.00 pm

Discussion on Film and Narration

3.00-4.00 pm

Presentations by participants

Genre, Text and Technique of Narration

Chair: Dilip K. Das

6. Neeti Singh: “Gustav Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and the Metaphor of Surgery and Healing”

7. Sanjay Mukherjee: “What Poetry Narrates”

4.00-4.15pm

Tea break

4.15-6.15 pm:

Presentations by Participants

Narrating Illness, Cure and Healing

Chair: Madhurita Choudhary

8. Meenakshi Srihari: “The (Bio)Social Network – Narrative, Trauma and the Digital”

9. Samrita Sinha: “Twentieth Century American Popular Culture and the Pathology of Anorexia”

10. Hannah Johns: “Lived Experiences and Cancer Care – Notes from Field”

11. Shobhana Singh: “Alternative Medication – My Own Perspective”

16 March 2018

10.00-11.15 am:

Another Angle on Narrative:

Discussion of Chapters from Coetzee and Kurtz's *The Good Story*

11.15-11.30 am:

Tea break

11.30 am to 1.00 pm:

Discussion Continued &

Narrative Medicine Exercise

1.00-2.00 pm

Lunch

2.00-3.00 pm

Presentations by Participants

Stories of Life and Dying

Chair: Sanjay Mukherjee

12. E. Raja Rao: “Does Truth Matter in the Life Story?”

13. Bini B.S. : “The Art, Act and Ache of Dying – Emplotting of Death in Select Stories of People Living with Cancer ”

3.00-3.20 pm

Valedictory and Responses from the Participants

3.20 pm

Tea Break

4 pm:

Balvant Parekh Distinguished Lecture:

“Merleau-Ponty and Medicine: Language, Creativity, and the Body”

Craig Irvine

Synopsis of the Lecture: In this talk I discuss the role Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of embodiment might play in bringing attention to the lived experience of illness, challenging medicine’s predominate focus on the pathophysiology of disease. Merleau-Ponty understands language as a gesture that is the very embodiment of thought. The creativity of language is the foundation for being-with the other, whether in health, illness, or even the approach of death.