

INFO 5443 Storytelling in Knowledge Transfer Syllabus

Dr. Tonda Bone

"When knowledge stops evolving, it turns into opinion or dogma."
~ *Working Knowledge*, Davenport & Prusak, p. 10

Course Description

Storytelling is an inherent form of communicating and of learning. This makes it a powerful tool for knowledge management strategies, particularly that of knowledge transfer. The two overarching learning goals for students of this course are to 1. Construct an approach for using storytelling as a knowledge management (KM) process for sharing/capturing tacit knowledge and 2. Develop best practices for using storytelling to implement knowledge transfer (KT). Students will explore how theoretical and practical tenets of storytelling are used to realize KM and KT goals of creating, capturing, and sharing tacit organizational knowledge. In addition to theoretical research and practical discussion, students will: 1) Develop and perform stories to support key aspects of a knowledge management infrastructure and 2) Apply interviewing and coaching methods to elicit stories from others. To frame story methodology for KM and KT programs, students will be introduced to the practical strategic principles of KM and KT. The course culminates with a synthesis paper describing a storytelling KM or KT framework suitable to the student's current or desired profession. This course is suitable for all majors and does not require previous experience with storytelling.

Course Objectives

- Demonstrate understanding of practical and theoretical concepts of oral storytelling as a communication and learning methodology
- Describe the similarities and differences between knowledge management (KM) and knowledge transfer (KT)
- Develop a philosophy of best practices for the use of storytelling in various approaches and aspects of KM and KT
- Describe KM/KT approaches in terms of the student's field of study or current work environment
- Demonstrate proficiency in creating and performing stories for pertinent knowledge management approaches
- Demonstrate proficiency in eliciting stories from others
- Analyze aspects of a KM or KT strategy where storytelling would be an effective tool for developing the strategy, as situated within the context of the student's field of study or current work environment

Course Overview

The primary focus in this course is on how we can use story and storytelling to mediate and improve knowledge transfer (KT), regardless of its application. We consider this from 2 primary angles:

1. Storytelling as a mode of KT, and
2. Intentional storytelling as your personal tool to support the development of KT, KM, and other initiatives.

The majority of the course will focus on how to recognize key areas for KT applications and how to employ story and storytelling as the transfer method. This means you will be determining how to help key knowledge holders share their knowledge with others using story. However, you also need to understand the basics of how to develop, find, and deliver a story in order to meet goals related to buy in, participation, and other managerial tasks.

Thus, the course is broken into 2 main parts. Part 1 includes an overview of the course and an introduction to KT, but its primary focus is as a mini-storytelling seminar designed to 1) introduce you to the basics of story elements and delivery techniques and 2) help you understand the power of story as a knowledge sharing tool. Don't worry -- we are all storytellers. It's our most basic form of communication. Part 2 is the meat of the course, where you will apply the psychology of story to reach KT goals. In this section, we'll look at KT models and approaches and consider how to incorporate story and storytelling to address different forms of knowledge and different environments. We'll consider approaches like communities of practice, mentoring, focus groups, and one-to-one transfer strategies. You'll also demonstrate interviewing techniques to help solicit stories from knowledge experts.

Professor Information



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Dr. T's Accessibility and Responsiveness Parameters:

I think you will find me highly accessible and responsive to you in both discussion and via email. Please use the discussion boards as much as possible for questions and problem solving so that I and your peers can all deliver assistance. Please also use discretion with email and consult with me as needed for real problems you cannot otherwise solve via assistance in the boards. For example, assignment-related questions should go in the Assignment/Peer Help forum; questions about your specific grade should be directed to me privately via course messaging.

I generally will be actively in the class every day Monday - Friday. I generally will take off all day on Saturday and Sunday, so if you have questions about assignments, please catch me during business days. For rare occasions that I am away at a conference or doing consulting, I will post messages to the class.

To ensure same-day response to questions, please post them before 5 pm Central Time.

Course Access

This course instructional content is presented online via Canvas LMS (learning management system) technology. The course begins the first official day of classes in the semesters in which it is offered. Registered students will be uploaded into the student database and can access the course using their UNT EUID and password beginning on the first day.

If this is your first Canvas course, you may find the [Canvas Student Guides](#) to be a useful resource.

Assignments

Assignments and weekly work are designed for theory, design, and application:

- 1. Discussion and Participation:** Weekly discussion participation and activities. 45% of course grade (8 posts x 5 points each)
- 2. Video Test Link:** This brief assignment lets you create an introduction video, upload the link to YouTube, and then share the video with the class. Its purpose is to ensure you can successfully submit your storytelling performance assignment. 2% of course grade (2 points).
- 3. Storytelling Demonstration:** This is a 2-part assignment. Perform 1 KM/KT-related story, along with a Preparation Report. Performance will be uploaded to YouTube (or other video-sharing service) and made available to the course members. Performance is worth 7% of course grade (7 points). Preparation Report is worth 8% (8 points).
- 4. Story Interviewing and Elicitation:** Develop an interviewing protocol (including guiding questions) for a knowledge expert in your selected KT environment. This research-supported report will be 3-4 pages long (single-spaced). 12% of course grade (12 points)
- 5. Small Group Story Meeting:** Develop a complete plan for creating and leading a small group story meeting. This research-supported report will be 3-4 pages long (single-spaced). 12% of course grade (12 points)
- 6. KT Initiative Plan Research Paper:** Construct a 4-6 page (single spaced) synthesis paper, supported by relevant literature and resources, which describes a knowledge transfer initiative pertinent to your field of study or current work and discuss where storytelling could be implemented to facilitate the development of the knowledge management strategy. 14% of course grade (14 points)

Course Evaluation Scale

A = 90 - 100 pts

B = 80 - 85 pts

C = 70 - 79 pts

D = 60 - 69 pts

F = 59 pts or below

Required Texts

Critical Knowledge Transfer: Tools for Managing Your Company's Deep Smarts. Dorothy Leonard, Walter C

Swap, & Gavin Barton. 2014.

Other materials will be available via open access or through the UNT Library.

Required Course Technology

While this course is grounded in the oral storytelling tradition, we make strong use of technology to achieve our goals. The course is offered via the Canvas platform, but we also utilize other social media and Web 2.0 technologies as described below.

Reliable Internet access is required. Please do NOT take this course if you do not have access to reliable high-speed Internet in order to perform your stories and watch related videos.

Other specifications:

1. **Hardware.** Your system's hardware must support Canvas. Blackboard Learn. See the [Canvas App and Browser Compatibility](#) page to evaluate your system.
2. **Streaming media player.** The majority of videos in this course are streamed, but you may need to download a media player for the occasional item. I suggest the [VLC media player](#) by VideoLAN.
3. **Speakers.** Obviously, you also will need speakers in order to hear audio.
4. **Microphone.** You will need a microphone to record your storytelling performances and other audio files. **Please note:** Occasionally, integrated microphones (i.e., built into the laptop) pick up so much of the computer's internal noise that the quality of the audio is not acceptable for your presentation. In those cases, you may need to borrow or purchase an external microphone.
5. **Web camera.** You will need a Web camera in order to record your story performance assignment. An integrated Web camera (i.e., built into your laptop) usually is sufficient.
6. **Other software.** We use various technologies and software applications in the course (YouTube, wikis, etc.). You will not be required to purchase software, but you may need to create an account with the provider in order to use the software and participate in the course.

Course Participation Policy & Expectations

This is an online class, not a self-paced course. Assignments and discussion have due dates to which students must adhere. The entire course is available to you, and you are free to work ahead. However, discussion and other collaborative work in the class must follow the due dates listed on the course calendar in order to maintain the class flow.

Participation occurs through your discussion posts and other activities submitted via the discussion forums. Work should emphasize content and the student's assimilation of knowledge; thus, discussion posts, written assignments, and other projects/tasks should be substantive, and statements and arguments should be supported by examples and/or relevant citations. Feedback will be provided to help the student recognize strengths and improve any weaker areas.

Discussion activities require frequent and timely interaction on your part. Students are required to visit the class on a regular basis to read and respond to communications, course material, and course activities/assignments.

Course business is conducted through the Announcements page. You are required to read this page regularly to keep apprised of changes and additional information related to the course, its structure, and its operation. Be sure also to check your email for course announcements.

I foster a course culture of support, mentorship, and collaboration. I provide several areas in the forums where you can share course-related and professional information, as well having social interaction and sharing. These forums are strictly optional.

Student Information Notification

Canvas enables faculty to track where and when students visit various areas of the course site, times of first and last logins, and number of conference postings. This information is used, in part, in determining the participation grade for the course.

"Attendance"

All students are expected to fully participate in all class activities. Full participation includes web-based activities.

Information about the University of North Texas' Attendance Policy may be found [here](#).

Late Work Policy

All work is due at Midnight, Central time, on the date stated on the course calendar. Late assignments may be excused and accepted only by prior arrangement with the instructor or in the case of a documented illness or emergency. Any other late assignments, including discussion, receive an automatic 11% deduction for each 24 hours late. No unexcused work will be accepted after 48 hours past the original due date.

Students are advised that it is better to submit partial work for some credit rather than submitting nothing. Please plan accordingly.

Incomplete Grades

The Graduate Catalog located at <http://www.unt.edu/catalogs/> describes and explains grading policies. A grade of Incomplete (I) will be given only for a justifiable reason and only if the student is passing the course. The student is responsible for contacting the instructor to request an incomplete and discuss requirements for completing the course if an approval is agreed upon. If an incomplete is not removed within the time frame agreed upon by instructor and student, the instructor may assign a grade of F.

Withdrawal from the Course

The Graduate Catalog located at <http://www.unt.edu/catalogs/> describes and explains withdrawal policies and deadlines. The UNT semester course schedule lists specific deadlines. A grade of Withdraw (W) or Withdraw-Failing (WF) will be given depending on a student's participation and grades to date. Please note that a student who simply stops participating and does not file a UNT withdrawal form may receive an F.

Effort Expected

This is a three-credit-hour course. Students can expect to work 3 - 4 hours per week for each credit hour. This means students may spend about 9 - 12 hours a week on readings, assignments, discussions, and assignment preparation.

ADA Information

Any student with a disability that will require accommodation under the terms of federal regulations should register with the [Office of Disability Accommodation](#). The student also must let the instructor know of accommodations on the first day of class and present a written accommodations request to the instructor by the second week of class. Information concerning specific accommodations to provide equal opportunities is available from the [Office of Disability Accommodation](#).

Institutional Policies

UNT takes a strong stance against plagiarism and holds its students to high standards of ethics.

Plagiarism offenses can result in immediate course failure and/or removal from the University. Please review the UNT's plagiarism policy.

Dr. T's Philosophy of Hope for Good Work by All

I will give you 100% of my best as your teacher and will incorporate into my work in this class all that I ask of you: Be who you are. Do your best. Use good judgment. Trust your instincts. Participate fairly. Help others. Be kind and generous in thought and deed. Give credit where credit is due. Pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

Course Content

Module 1 | Introduction to the Course

Module 1 introduces you to the course structure and its expectations, logistics of the interviewing assignments and final project, and reviews the administrative details of the course. You'll spend this time getting acclimated with the course -- its structure, goals, and expectations. You also introduce yourself to the other participants in the course.

Module 2 | Introduction to Storytelling, KT, and KM

Module 2 provides you with an overview of what storytelling has been traditionally and the role and purpose it serves in organizations, business, knowledge management (KM), and knowledge transfer (KT) initiatives. You're challenged to develop your own working definition of storytelling in the context of KT. As well, you'll explore knowledge transfer and knowledge management definitions and learn basic strategies.

Module 3 | Story and Storytelling

In this module and the next, we consider elements of story, as well as techniques for telling and performing stories. The content in this module primarily is grounded in traditional oral storytelling method and theory. You will adapt these principles to fit your specific intentional storytelling goals.

Module 4 | Story Performance (Delivery Techniques)

This module is about story performance, including warm-up techniques, delivery techniques (which includes voice, gestures, pacing, and pause), and tips for learning a story.

Module 5 | The Psychology of Stories

In Module 5, we look at the psychology of story -- that is, why we share stories, what stories can do that other communication forms can't, and the power stories you need in your professional arsenal. We also consider intentional and persuasive storytelling, and how stories for knowledge sharing can vary from traditional frameworks.

Module 6 | Story Performance Week

One of the goals of this course is for you to be able to use intentional storytelling to further professional and organizational goals. This week you will prepare and present (tell) a Who I Am or Why I Am Here story to support a professional context of your design and choosing.

Module 7 | More on KT

In Module 7, we take a closer look at KT and how your approach (strategy) will be mediated by your context (i.e., field, such as health, business, government, education, etc.), and goals (e.g., social component of a KM program, dissemination of research to decision makers, dissemination of information to the public, controlling the loss of your organization's "deep smarts" when key employees leave, etc.). We also consider the KT life-cycle and a common framework for KT initiatives.

Module 8 | Storytelling in KT Approaches

In Module 8, we examine methods for selecting and developing KT approaches. As well, we'll consider the use and role of story and storytelling as a methodology within these approaches.

Module 9 | Eliciting Stories

In many cases, KT occurs in a one-on-one environment or in very small groups. In Module 9, we examine methods for eliciting stories from knowledge experts in your target knowledge areas.

Module 10 | Focus Week 1: Interviewing KEs

This week you develop an interview approach for your selected knowledge expert.

Module 11 | Leading a Story Group

In this module, you can learn practical and proven tips and strategies for leading small group sessions. This will help you prepare for your Small Group Story Meeting assignment.

Module 12 | Focus Week: Leading Group Discussions

In Module 12, you put into practice your knowledge of leading a small group story discussion.

Module 13 | Creating a KT Culture

In this module, we consider how the organization's culture can help or hinder KT efforts, and we learn methods for convincing reticent knowledge holders to share.

Module 14 | Planning KT

This week, you will synthesize your knowledge of storytelling and knowledge transfer to create a KT plan for your selected environment.