

# Public Narrative:

Loss, Difference, Power & Change

MLD 356M/A111Q  
Fall 2017 Syllabus

## INSTRUCTOR:

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## TIME AND LOCATION:

Tuesday and Thursday  
2:45 – 4:00pm  
STARR Auditorium

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## OFFICE HOURS:

Mondays, 4:00 –6:00pm  
[Sign up here](#)

## TEACHING FELLOWS:

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Starr

## O v e r v i e w

This module builds on its prerequisite MLD 355, Public Narrative: Self, Us, Now. In MLD 355 you began learning the practice of public narrative: exercising leadership by translating your values, and those of others, into the emotional capacity to respond to challenges with strategic agency, as opposed to reacting with avoidance or fear. In this module we focus on how to meet the leadership challenge of building an empathetic bridge through which we can enable others to respond with agency to four key forms of disruption: loss, difference, domination, and change.

In this module:

- First, you will learn to **diagnose a leadership challenge** drawn from your own experience by using the tools of public narrative, to describe the challenge, who was involved, and the distinct narratives in play, informed by background reading, film clips, and critical reflection.
- Second, you will learn to **analyze the leadership response** to this challenge by examining these narratives in terms of their intent, the values they articulated, and their effectiveness strengthening the agency of the participants.
- Third, you will **learn leadership lessons** in the use of public narrative that you could bring to your own practice? How can you enable others to respond to disruptive events with greater agency? How can you link your own exercise of agency with that of others?

After two introductory classes we focus on one of four key leadership challenges each week: loss, difference, power and change. You will diagnose the leadership challenge, analyze the public narrative response, and draw lessons for leadership practice. After the first week of class, when we meet together twice, we meet together on Tuesday and in sections on Thursday.

Each Thursday, by 12:00 PM, you will submit a **two-page reflection paper** in which you describe **a case drawn from your own experience** of that week's leadership challenge, analyzing the public narrative response, and drawing lessons from it.

- **Diagnose a leadership challenge** draw from your own experience in terms of public narrative? How does it illustrate the week's focus? Who were the key actors? What different narratives were in play?
- **Analyze the leadership response** to that challenge in terms of *public narrative*? Examine the public narratives in play in terms of their intentions, values they articulate, and effectiveness strengthening the agency of the participants.
- What **leadership lessons** can you **learn** that could be of use in your own practice? How can you enable others to deal with narrative challenges? How can you do this in a way that enhances their agency? How do you create a bridge between your agency and the agency of others? Was public narrative used well, could it have been used better, what are the takeaways.

Each week 3-4 students will also make an **oral presentation of their case to the section** as a focal point for discussion. When it is your turn, to prepare for your presentation, you must:

- 1- Meet with your TF during office hours that week prior to your presentation.
- 2- Submit your reflection paper to your TF by 5:00 PM on Wednesday, the day before section,
- 3- Share a one paragraph case summary with your section by 5:00 PM on Wednesday, the day before the section

Your **FINAL ASSIGNMENT** is a five-page paper in which you choose a leadership challenge in which *you* were – or are – an actor. You will diagnose it, analyze it, and draw lessons from it. Using specific examples, consider how you could use narrative tools to address the challenge. Assess what you have learned in the course of the module about how to use public narrative strategically.

**GRADING** is based on class attendance, participation and presentation (35%), reflection papers (25%), and final paper (40%)

All course materials are available on the Canvas page: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/33448>

You will also be asked to review passages from two books **REQUIRED** for MLD 356, which are on reserve in the Kennedy School Library:

1. George Marcus, *The Sentimental Citizen: Emotion in Democratic Politics* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002).
2. Richard Kearney, *On Stories: Thinking in Action* (New York: Routledge, 2006)

**INTRODUCTION: COMMON CHALLENGES, COMPETING STORIES, ALTERNATE FUTURES****W E E K 1 | UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE NOW'S****LECTURE: Tuesday, October 17, 2017**

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We often tell different stories about the same event, moment, or challenge, depending on variations in our stories of *self*, how we define our *story of us*, and the *story of now* we have in mind. Stories also vary with the values to which they give expression. Bruner and Amsterdam explain why this is so: we shape and are shaped by the world. Callahan shows how policy differences can grow out of different narratives rooted in different values.

In the videos, two political leaders try to meet the leadership challenge of mobilizing “agency” in the face of disruptive uncertainty based on different stories of self, stories of us rooted in different values, and on “now’s” with very different potential outcomes. Today we will introduce the framework we will use to analyze the cases students will prepare, present, and discuss.

*Required Reading:*

1. What This Course is About.
2. \*\*\* Jerome Bruner and Anthony Amsterdam, “Chapter 8, On the Dialectic of Culture”, *Minding the Law*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), (pp. 217-245). [29 pages]
3. Kathe Callahan, et al, “War Narratives: Framing Our Understanding of the War on Terror”, *Public Administration Review*, July/August, 2006, (pp. 554 – 568). [15 pages]
4. Course Guide
5. Case Presentation Worksheet

*Class Work:*

1. Introduction: Public Narrative, Narrative Dialectic; Organization of Course.
2. Lecture/Discussion: Overview of Module.
3. Debrief: 2008 Obama and McCain Nomination Acceptance Speeches.

**LECTURE: Thursday, October 19, 2017**

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Today we will put our analytic framework to work analyzing cases like those you will prepare for presentation and discussion in section. We will also introduce the concept of the “empathetic bridge” as a way to link one’s own agency with that of others by analyzing. The video of Sen. Robert Kennedy delivering the news of Dr. M.L. King’s assassination to an African-American rally in 1968 offers a look at how self, us, and now can interact to strengthen agency at very challenging moments.

*Required Reading:*

1. What This Course Is About.
2. Course Guide
3. Case Presentation Worksheet

*Class Work:*

1. Lecture/Discussion: Conflict, Continuity, and Change.
2. Debrief: Robert Kennedy, “Remarks on the Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King”, April 4, 1968, Indianapolis.

**LECTURE: Tuesday, October 24, 2017**

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In our private lives we have all had to learn to deal with the challenge of loss at some point. McAdams argues that it makes a big difference how. Do we tell a story of loss as inevitable, what always happens to “us”, what he calls a “contamination” narrative? Or do we tell a story in which loss, as painful as it is, may be the cost of growth, learning, and change? What can we learn from our private experiences of loss that can prepare us for moments when we must exercise public leadership in response to loss? How can we tell an authentically “redemptive” public narrative as opposed to a “contaminating” one? How can we enable others to respond to loss in similar fashion? Polletta shows how some people have learned to turn a “victim” story into one of agency. Voss explains the role redemptive narrative can play in enabling organizational resilience in the face of loss – and what happens when it is missing. The Joy Luck Club shows how a redemptive narrative of loss can be passed across three generations, from mother to daughter, enabling greater agency. The video shows how Renata Teodoro, one of the leaders of the *Dreamers*, was able to tell a redemptive narrative following defeat in the Senate four years ago.

**Required Reading:**

1. \*\*\*\*Dan P. McAdams and Philip J. Bowman, “Chapter 1: Narrating Life’s Turning Points: Redemption and Contamination,” *Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition*, (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001), (pp. 3-34). [32 pages]
2. Francesca Polletta, “Ways of Knowing and Stories Worth Telling,” *It Was Like A Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006), (pp. 109-140). [32 pages]
3. Kim Voss, “Claim Making and Framing of Defeats: Interpretations of Losses by British and American Labor Activists, 1886-1895”, *Challenging Authority: the Historical Study of Contentious Politics*, Michael Hanagan, Leslie Page Moch, and Wayne te Brake eds., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), (pp. 136-148). [13 pages]

**Class Work:**

1. Lecture/Discussion: Loss, Contamination, and Redemption
2. Debrief: The Joy Luck Club
3. Debrief: The Dreamers

**Reflection Paper (2 pages, 12:00 PM Thursday):** analyze a leadership challenge of loss drawn from your own experience, the public narrative response, and the leadership lessons.

**SECTION: Thursday, October 26, 2017**

How you can use public narrative to respond to the challenge of loss? Based on analysis of student cases, consideration of responses, and evaluation of effectiveness, what are the lessons for leadership practice, how can you put them to work?

**LECTURE: Tuesday, October 31, 2017**

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This week we focus on public narrative responses to the leadership challenge of difference. When confronted with the challenge of difference, is an inclusive narrative always the most effective leadership response? When might an exclusive narrative, a narrower “story of us”, be more effective? What if the difference is in the content of the narratives themselves? In this case, Stone and Winslade argue, developing a third story distinct from those in contention, may be a wiser path. Bozzoli shows a way different private narrative can be woven into a shared public narrative, contributing a healing process, integrating individual loss the solidarity of community. *Mean Girls* shows a way we can use almost any marker of difference to create exclusive stories of us. The Milk movie illustrates conditions under which one can create

more agency through exclusion and conditions under which one can create more agency through inclusion. And Sesame Street makes a strong case for the possibilities of inclusion.

*Required Reading:*

1. \*\*\* Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen, "Chapter 8, Getting Started: Begin From the Third Story", (pp. 147-162), *Difficult Conversations*, (New York: Penguin, 1999). [16 pages]
2. John Winslade and Gerald Monk, "Chapter 1, Narrative Mediation: What Is It?" (pp. 1-30), *Narrative Mediation*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001). [30 pages]
3. Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, Jean L. Kahwajy, and L.J. Bourgeois III, "How Management Teams Can Have a Good Fight", *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1997, (pp. 77-85). [9 page]
4. Belinda Bozzoli, "Public Ritual and Private Transition: The Truth Commission in Alexandra Township, South Africa 1996", *African Studies*, 57(2), 1998, (pp. 167-195). [29 pages]

*Class Work:*

1. Lecture/Discussion: Difference, Inclusion, and Exclusion.
2. Debrief: Mean Girls, Sesame Street, Harvey Milk

*Reflection Paper (2 pages, 12:00 PM Thursday):* analyze a leadership challenge of difference drawn from your own experience, the public narrative response, and the leadership lessons.

**SECTION: Thursday, November 1, 2017**

How you can use public narrative to respond to the challenge of difference. Based on analysis of student cases, consideration of responses, and evaluation of effectiveness, what are the lessons for leadership practice, how can you put them to work?

**W E E K 4 | POWER INEQUALITY**

**LECTURE: Tuesday, November 7, 2017**

This week we focus on public narrative responses to the leadership challenge of unequal power. Scott argues that at any moment of unequal power four narratives or "transcripts" are in play: subordinate narratives (hidden and public) and dominant narratives (hidden and public). The leadership question is how to strengthen the agency of the "us" for whom one is responsible when challenged in this way. Is it always with a public story of resistance? What about a hidden story of resistance and public story of compliance? Does one ever tell a story of resistance from a dominant position - hidden or public? Cuoto shows how individual hidden resistance narratives can be a source of shared public resistance narratives. My paper shows how a public resistance narrative was articulated among California farm workers. *North Country* allows us to observe and evaluate the effectiveness of diverse leadership responses to the complex interplay of hidden and public narratives under conditions of gender and class based power inequality in Northern Minnesota mines.

*Required Reading:*

1. Marshall Ganz, "Speaking of Power", Gettysburg Project, 2014.
2. \*\*\*James C. Scott, Chapter 1, "Behind the Official Story" (pp. 1-16), Chapter 2, "Domination, Acting and Fantasy" (pp. 17-44) in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale, 1990). [44 pages]
3. Richard A. Cuoto, "Narrative, Free Space, and Political Leadership in Social Movements", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol.55. No.1 (February, 1993), (pp. 57-79). [23 pages]
4. Marshall Ganz, "The Power of Story in Social Movements", *American Sociological Association Annual Meeting*, 2001, 13 pp. [10 pages]
5. \*\*\*Lewis Coser, "Chapter 12, Conclusion", *The Functions of Social Conflict*, (New York: Free Press, 1956). (pp 151-157). [7 pages]

*Class Work:*

1. Lecture/Discussion: Power Inequality, Resistance, Compliance
2. Debrief: North Country

*Reflection Paper (2 pages, 12:00 PM Thursday):* analyze a leadership challenge of unequal power drawn from your own experience, the public narrative response, and the leadership lessons.

**SECTION: Thursday, November 9, 2017**

How you can use public narrative to respond to the challenge of unequal power. Based on analysis of student cases, consideration of responses, and evaluation of effectiveness, what are the lessons for leadership practice, how can you put them to work?

**WEEK 5 | CHANGE**

**LECTURE: Tuesday, November 14, 2017**

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How can we exercise narrative leadership in response to change? We can reject change: we hang on to our old story no matter what. We can also reject continuity: in the name of change we throw out the old story in its entirety and begin an entirely new one. We may also find a way to accommodate enough change within our old story to assure its continuity. On the other hand, we may also find a way to adapt enough of our old story to begin telling a new one. Which response most enables the agency of our “us”?

*Required Reading:*

1. \*\*\*Joshua J. Yates and James Davison Hunter, “Chapter 6, Fundamentalism: When History Goes Awry”, *Stories of Change: Narratives and Social Movements*, Joe Davis ed., (Albany: State University of New York, 2002), (pp.123-148). [26 pages]
2. Bruner and Amsterdam, “Chapter 9, Race, the Court and America’s Dialectic”, *Minding the Law*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), (pp.246-281). Continuity narrative (Plessey), Change narrative (Brown). [14 pages]

*Class Work:*

1. Lecture/Discussion: Change: Rejection, Conservation, Reform or Revolution.
2. Debrief: TBD

*Reflection Paper (2 pages, 12:00 PM Thursday):* analyze a leadership challenge of change drawn from your own experience, the public narrative response, and the leadership lessons.

**SECTION: Thursday, November 16, 2017**

How you can use public narrative to respond to the challenge of change. Based on analysis of student cases, consideration of responses, and evaluation of effectiveness, what are the lessons for leadership practice, how can you put them to work?

**WEEK 6 |**

**SECTION: Tuesday, November 21, 2017**

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How you can use public narrative to respond to the challenges of loss, power, difference or change. Based on analysis of student cases, consideration of responses, and evaluation of effectiveness, what are the lessons for leadership practice, how can you put them to work?

**Thursday, November 23, 2017**

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**THANKSGIVING:** no section meetings

**W E E K 7 | CONCLUSION: CONFLICT, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE**

**SECTION: Tuesday, November 28, 2017**

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In your last section meeting you have the opportunity to reflect on what you have learned, what has facilitated your learning, what improvements you would make. It is also an opportunity to articulate appreciation for the contribution section members have made to each other's learning.

**LECTURE: Thursday, November 30, 2017**

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What did you learn about how to use public narrative in response to major leadership challenges? What did you learn about how to diagnose the challenge? What about how to strategize a narrative response? What does it really mean to enable others to act with agency in response to challenge? How can you tell if you succeeded?

**F i n a l A s s i g n m e n t**

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**5 PAGE PAPER** (double-spaced, 12-point type) analyzing a leadership in which *you* were an actor, the public narrative responses, and leadership lessons learned. Due **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2017** at 5:00 PM Eastern Time, submitted to your TF via e-mail.