



The Storyteller

Council for American Studies Education Conference
February 27th, 2015 :: The Newberry Library
www.casechicago.org



As teachers of American History and American Literature, we spend much of our time telling stories that are meant to communicate truths – historical or literary – about the country we live in. Ultimately, we play the role of storytellers, charged with the task of making meaning of the story of the United States. In our attempt to bring forth a rich and diverse curriculum, we present texts that cross racial, gender, and class lines. And yet, if you have ever been to a CASE conference, you know – from only a quick glance at the faces and nametags – that we appear as a rather homogeneous bunch. To be blunt, with few exceptions, we are overwhelmingly white and suburban. Primarily, the stories we tell are not our own; we often have the delicate and complicated task of telling other peoples' stories. We teach inside a paradox: the stories of others, the ones we tell and those we choose not to tell, and the way we tell those stories, are inextricably linked to our own experiences and perspective.

Conference Schedule

8:00am	Ruggles Hall	Registration & Continental Breakfast
8:45am	Ruggles Hall	Welcome from CASE Steering Committee
9:00am	Ruggles Hall	Keynote Address – Alex Kotlowitz

Session 1: Developing Students as Storytellers 10:10 am – 11:00 am

B-82 **Developing Well-Being in Students' Narrative Identities** Matthew Dewar (Lake Forest H.S.)

This presentation will explore narrative themes associated with well-being. It will examine research on narrative identity, Joseph Campbell's work on the "Hero's Journey," and explore personal narrative writing exercises oriented toward social-emotional growth that can be utilized in a history or language arts classroom.

Ruggles **Notions of Power and its Opposite** Neil Rigler & Ken Kramer (Deerfield H.S.)

This presentation will lead teachers through an abbreviated version of a unit on the African-American experience from slavery through civil rights in which students are brought to the dance studio for an extended activity involving various poses and movements. We use these to explore notions of power and its opposite; we will share the assignment we created out of it in which students work in groups to present a movement and text-based summation to the unit.

B-84 **Telling True American Stories: Hearing/Producing/Performing Oral History**
Steve Schwartz, Kristen Finkbeiner, & Bernie Heidkamp (Oak Park & River Forest H.S.)

This presentation will share an American Studies project that is part Studs Terkel, part Anna Deavere Smith, and part This American Life – all framed by Tim O'Brien's conception of what makes a "true story." In order for students to tell stories that capture the paradoxes of the American experience – to recognize the complexity in our study of history and culture – students flip the traditional research process, privileging oral history, supplemented by background research, to capture multiple, first-person perspectives around a controversial event or issue in recent American history. They ultimately record a podcast in which they perform, arrange and contextualize monologues of diverse voices (culled chiefly from their own interviews). We use oral histories around Hurricane Katrina and 9/11 as examples and discuss the work of Terkel and Smith to teach interview and performance techniques.

11:00 am – 11:20 am Ruggles Hall Break & Snacks

B-82 Knight-Time Stories: Bringing Voices of Your School's Past to Life

Frank Mirandola & Jason Block (Prospect H.S.)

Make your students historians as they investigate school, local, and national history as they examine how your school is a microcosm of American history. They will bring to life the voices of your school's past and tell the stories that have been silenced for years in an iMovie documentary through the use of primary and secondary sources.

Ruggles Transforming Traditional Research into a Cross-Disciplinary Story-Telling Experience

Alex Klein & Ariell Bachman (New Trier H.S.)

This presentation will demonstrate how to transform the traditional research process into an authentic, cross-disciplinary story-telling experience. Our Junior Research Project centers on the relationship between American media and American values by asking students to first research a specific time period in American history and then investigate the extent to which a specific pop culture medium during the period reflects common American values during that era. After research, students create an essay that will be produced through iBook. This platform is uniquely capable of enhancing students' production of their own theory about how media reveals what Americans believe at a particular moment in time.

B-84 The American Dream: Incorporating Family Story-Telling

Rita Sayre (Elk Grove H.S.)

In American Studies and American literature, so much of our curriculum surrounds powerful stories of individuals seeking a better life. Perhaps the most dramatic stories are sitting right in your classroom. The presentation will offer a sample mini-unit on incorporating family storytelling into an American Studies curriculum in the context of the quest for the American Dream. We will see examples of student work and discuss how families' experiences can make the classroom curriculum relevant and rich with meaning.

Session 3: Oral History**12:20 pm – 1:10 pm****B-82 Oral History: Thinking About the Present While Listening to the Past**

Aileen Heidkamp & Todd Maxman (New Trier H.S.)

This presentation will connect 21st century students to the 1960s. The presenters will discuss the content, concepts, skills, purpose, and place of a 1960s Oral History project that casts the student as researcher and author of history, and heightens his/her awareness about one's familial or community connections to history; the project additionally serves to underscore the role of the historian in documenting past events. Presenters will offer an overview of the project and also showcase student samples of field notes and final products.

Ruggles Studs Terkel Radio Archives

Tony Macaluso & Allison Schein (WFMT)

The Studs Terkel Radio Archive, a massive collection of oral histories and conversations (5,600 hours of audio) with influential and "uncelebrated" people conducted by Terkel, is a powerful resource for countering this "freezing" of historic narratives since it provides teachers and their students with the ability to use audio to experience historic situations as the original participants did: as something messy, un-predetermined, requiring courage and difficult choices, and full of excitement, humor and life. The presentation will discuss ideas for how teachers might use material from the archive to help students explore several different aspects of 20th century history.

B-84 The Starfish Project

Avi Lessing (OPRF H.S.)

The Starfish Project is a two year project based on the idea that everyone has a story worth listening to. We used interviews to create a theater performance piece about love, violence, and home in Oak Park and River Forest. In this experiential workshop, we will delineate and practice various skills and methodologies that this kind of work entails and how it might connect to other disciplines -- e.g. participatory action research, oral history, ethnography, and empathy work that may be useful in your classrooms and other spaces.