

Santa Clara University

TESP 132: TELLING YOUR STORY: DISCERNING VOCATION

Spring 2008, Section 40368
M/W 7:00 PM – 8:45 PM
Arts and Sciences 133

We travelers, walking to the sun, can't see
Ahead, but looking back the very light
That blinded us shows us the way we came,
Along which blessings now appear, risen
As if from sightlessness to sight, and we,
By blessing brightly lit, keep going toward
That blessed light that yet to us is dark.

Wendell Berry, *Given*

Instructor:

Michael C. McCarthy, S.J.
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00 – 2:00 PM; or by appointment
Office: 352 Bannan Hall
Telephone: (408) 554-4715
E-mail: MCMcCarthy@scu.edu

Course Description:

Provides students with an opportunity to ask where, in the future, they may be called to go in life by considering how, in the past, they have been led to this moment. In an attempt to discern significant patterns of value, emphasis will be given to the range of narrative strategies that individuals use to reflect back on the stories of their lives. In addition to reflecting on their own histories, students will study both narrative forms (e.g., novels, autobiography, films) as well as more critical works (e.g., theological, philosophical) pertinent to the theme of discerning vocation.

Course Goals and Objectives:

The ultimate goal of the course is to assist students in discerning their sense of vocation as they move toward the conclusion of their undergraduate careers. By the end of the course students will have:

- 1) Examined major movements and people in their own histories so as to clarify core values and desires that will anchor them as they approach the future;
- 2) Cultivated and exercised their reflective skills so as to recognize, analyze, and evaluate basic conflicts, temptations, hopes and aspirations they experience;
- 3) Articulated a narrative of their lives as well as consciously reflected on the strategies they employ to tell their stories.

To achieve such goals, students will:

- Read and discuss significant narrative and theological texts on topics and ideas relevant to the question of vocation;
- View and discuss important films on issues relevant to the question of vocation;
- Listen to and discuss audio programs on similar issues;
- Write weekly short analytical papers on the texts/films;
- Write daily journal entries reflecting both on issues raised in class and on personal experiences;
- Create and revise, in some form, a “life story” or “spiritual autobiography,” a portion of which will be presented in class.

Materials: To pursue these goals and objectives the following texts, films, and podcasts will be treated in whole or in part:

Texts:

Wendell Berry, *Hannah Coulter* (Shoemaker Hoard)
Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (Touchstone)
Augustine, *Confessions* (New City Press)
Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (HarperOne)
Pierre Wolff, *Discernment: The Art of Choosing Well* (Liguori)
Po Bronson, *What Should I Do With My Life?*(Ballantine)
Other Readings on ANGEL

Films:

The Graduate (1967)	Fight Club (1999) - Recommended
L'Enfant (2005) - Recommended	Dirty Pretty Things (2002)
It's a Wonderful Life (1946)	When Did I See You Hungry? (2002)
Tender Mercies (1983)	Wings of Desire (1987)
The Painted Veil (2006)	Blue (1993)
Kolya (1996) - Recommended	Water (2005) – Recommended
Romero (1989)	Red (1993)

Podcasts from “This I Believe” (www.thisibelieve.org):

An Optimistic View of the World	Utterly Humbled By Mystery
All the Joy the World Contains	Admittance to a Better Life
The Universe Is Conspiring to Help Us	All Beings Are Interconnected
Learning to Find the Silver Lining	Learning Curve of Gratitude
There Is No Blame: There is only Love	A Marriage That's Good Enough
We All Need Mending	Deeper Well of Memory
Finding Redemption through	Just Like Pastrami
Acceptance	Integrity
Inner Strength from Desperate Times	Making It Up As I Go Along
Living My Prayer	As I Grow Old

Podcasts from “This American Life” (www.thislife.org):

90: Telephone	204: 81 Words
326: Quiz Show	304: Heretics
174: Birthdays, Anniversaries, Milestones	261: The Sanctity of Marriage
18: Act V	328: What I Learned from Television
317: Unconditional Love	324: My Brilliant Plan
	323: The Super

Method and Assessment

The most crucial aspect of this course is the students' reflection/discussion on the major themes, ideas, and issues raised both in the texts/films and as they occur in individuals' thought. Topics for discussion have been arranged systematically so as to help students gradually to formulate a "life story" incorporating past, present, and future. Texts, films and other materials have been chosen not so they will themselves be the focus of the course in their own right but so that they may stimulate discussion and provide key images, concepts, and models. Most classes will begin by listening together to a selected essay from "This I Believe."

Evaluation: **A** (95-100%); **A-** (90-95); **B+** (87-89); **B** (83-86); **B-** (80-82); **C+** (77-79); **C** (73- 76); **C-** (70-72); **D+** (67-69); **D** (63-66); **D-** (60-62); **F** (below 60).

Attendance, Participation, Preparation: 20 %

Weekly Essays: 20 %

Journal: 20 %

Final Project/Presentation: 40 %

Attendance, Participation, Preparation:

I will take attendance promptly at the very beginning of each class meeting. Please don't be late. You may miss **one** class meeting for whatever reason with no questions asked. After that, your attendance/participation/preparation grade will decrease by 15% per class missed. In addition to physical presence, throughout the quarter I will assess students' preparation for class, as well as on the quality and frequency of their contributions. I fully expect people to have done the reading and/or viewed the films and be ready for a good discussion. I also reserve the right to give quizzes (announced or unannounced) if I suspect people are not preparing for class. Let me say how much I detest making such threats but consider it a last-ditch effort in case people regularly show up unprepared.

The instructor will encourage students to participate through various means, including calling on them, inviting opinions/knowledge of the material, and moving into small groups. It is always best, however, when most students volunteer and when a few persons do not dominate the discussion. Sometimes students find it helpful to have some descriptive guidelines for how participation is evaluated. Here is a general rule I follow:

C- = The student shows up in class but very rarely contributes. Occasionally answers a question by the instructor.

C = The student shows up in class, but contributes only a few times in the course of the quarter. Occasionally answers a question by the instructor.

C+ = The student shows up in class, makes a few contributions that demonstrate some knowledge of the subject matter. Occasionally asks questions for points of clarity.

B- = The student shows up in class, makes several contributions that demonstrate some knowledge of the subject matter. Occasionally asks questions for points of clarity.

B = The student shows up in class. Over the quarter makes several contributions that show knowledge of the subject matter as well as interesting insight. Asks questions that move beyond points of clarity. Picks up/develops points made by others.

B+ = In most classes the student makes a contribution that shows solid knowledge of the subject matter, insight, and engagement with the text. Responds productively to contributions made by other students and asks questions that deepen the conversation.

A- = In virtually every class, the student shows mastery of the subject matter, engagement with the text, subtlety of thought and insight. In addition, the student positively engages his/her fellow students in a way that deepens the discussion. Asks perceptive questions that help the class move forward. Demonstrates discussion skills that members of the class recognize and benefit from.

A = In virtually every class, the student shows not just mastery of the subject matter and engagement of thought, but extraordinary subtlety of thought and insight. The student significantly contributes to the class by asking challenging questions related to the subject at hand, pushing the conversation forward and stimulating thought on the part of the whole class. Demonstrates exceptional discussion skills that members of the class recognize and benefit from.

Please note that discretion is always important. A student who disrupts or dominates the class, who fails to understand the difference between being provocative and being engaged, who does not demonstrate the skill of disagreeing sensitively and politely, or who is simply trying to show off is not participating well.

Essays:

By 6:00 PM each Monday, students are to have submitted to the appropriate Drop-Box on Angel (under “Lessons”) a 1-page (double-spaced) essay answering the question set for that day. In addition, they will hand in a hard copy of the essay at the beginning of the class meeting. The relevant material for the essay is the reading and/or film to be discussed in class that day. The paper should begin with a single thesis of no more than 20 words and be highlighted **in bold**. Essay topics can be found in course schedule. Essays will be graded on the basis of how well they articulate the thesis and support it with close knowledge of the material. All formal considerations (e.g., structure, style, argumentation, quality of writing, spelling and grammar) will be considered in the evaluation of essays.

Journal:

Several times a week, if not each day, students are expected to write in an online journal and discuss questions posed throughout the schedule of the course. Journal questions are related to the material but intend to stimulate a student’s more personal reflection. Besides the individual student, only the instructor will have access to the journals. He may occasionally make a comment. At the end of the course journals will be graded based on the general care, regularity and quality of thought that went into them.

Because one function of journaling is to prepare for class discussion, students are expected to post an entry prior to each class to the question posed for that class and have a hard, printed copy of entries in class to share, as appropriate, with small groups. Follow-up entries throughout the quarter are highly encouraged.

For technical directions on how to access your journal, see below after “Instructions for using Angel.”

Final Project/Presentation:

In the last weeks of the course, students will create a “life story” or “spiritual autobiography” in a form appropriate to the individual. A written autobiography of 10 to 12 pages is the most common medium. Other forms of expression, such as video or podcasts are also possible. The final project will build on journal entries and the thought processed there. In the first few weeks of the course, the instructor will invite students to make proposals both on the form and general direction of the “spiritual autobiography.” It should include careful reflection on one’s own development, especially in the last several years. Furthermore, it should consider how the discovery of various patterns of value and other personal skills will help the student discern the next step more carefully.

Projects, in their final form, will be submitted in finals week. The last several class meetings, however, will be devoted to presentations and discussion of the final projects. Although a project may not be entirely completed at the time, individual students will present either a 10-minute reading of a draft or show other forms of the “life story.” In addition to content, final projects will be evaluated on how well they demonstrate satisfaction of the course goals and objectives as articulated above. In addition, all formal considerations appropriate to the medium will be considered in the final assessment.

After the end of the course, students are encouraged to keep and to continue revising the project.

A note on films:

The viewing of great films is a crucial element of this course, and students are fully expected to see and reflect on them prior to coming to class. Most films in the syllabus are easily rented at stores such as Blockbuster, Hollywood Video, or via Netflix. In addition, films may be screened at times listed below in the Media Services viewing rooms. In the week prior to their being due, they may also be viewed individually in the library, but under no circumstances may they be borrowed.

My real hope, however, is that this course will provide the occasion for a variety of “viewing communities” to form. Individuals may rent movies and suggest times to watch them together with other students. I highly encourage you to post times and places by using the “Communication” function on ANGEL. Let me also encourage you to view films together around food and drink, so as to encourage natural conversations of various types. Please tell the professor if there are ways he can support a “film culture” in this class. He may even occasionally invite groups to the Jesuit Residence simply to enhance their viewing pleasure and sense of companionship.

Media Services will show films according to the following schedule:

Tues. 4/1	2:00; 6:00	<i>The Graduate</i>
Wed. 4/2	2:00	
Fri. 4/4	2:00	<i>L'Enfant (Recommended)</i>
Sun. 4/6	6:00	
Mon. 4/7	2:00	
Tues. 4/8	2:00; 6:00	<i>It's a Wonderful Life</i>
Wed. 4/9	2:00	
Fri. 4/11	2:00	<i>Tender Mercies</i>
Sun. 4/13	6:00	
Mon. 4/14	2:00	
Fri. 4/18	2:00	<i>Painted Veil</i>
Sun. 4/20	6:00	
Mon. 4/21	2:00	
Tues. 4/22	2:00; 6:00	<i>Kolya (Recommended)</i>
Wed. 4/23	2:00	
Fri. 4/25	2:00	<i>Romero</i>
Sun. 4/27	6:00	
Mon. 4/28	2:00	
Tues. 4/29	2:00; 6:00	<i>Fight Club (Recommended)</i>
Wed. 4/30	2:00	
Fri. 5/2	2:00	<i>Dirty Pretty Things</i>
Sun. 5/4	6:00	
Mon. 5/5	2:00	
Tues. 5/6	2:00; 6:00	<i>When Did I See You Hungry?</i>
Wed. 5/7	2:00	
Fri. 5/9	2:00	<i>Wings of Desire</i>
Sun. 5/11	6:00	
Mon. 5/12	2:00	
Fri. 5/16	2:00	<i>Blue</i>
Sun. 5/18	6:00	
Mon. 5/19	2:00	
Fri. 5/23	2:00	<i>Water (Recommended)</i>
Sun. 5/25	6:00	
Mon. 5/26	2:00	
Fri. 5/30	2:00	<i>Red</i>
Sun. 6/1	6:00	
Mon. 6/2	2:00	

Instructions for using Angel:

A detailed syllabus and many other important items for this course will be available at the following Internet address: <http://angel.scu.edu>. You must create an account immediately, if you do not have one already. To do so, on the URL <http://angel.scu.edu> click the **Request an account** tab and provide the information. This should provide you the proper access for logging on (your initial password will be sent to you by e-mail). After you have logged on, click on the **Find a course** tab under **My courses**. Search for the course, using any of the following keywords: **TESP 132, McCarthy, Discern**. When you find the course, enroll in it by using this PIN: **Discern**. You should then have “Telling Your Story” tab every time you log on. Logging on frequently will be essential for checking study questions, finding assignments, viewing announcements, joining in occasional discussions, keeping up on notes from the instructor, and finding out your grades.

Weekly Essays on Angel:

Each Monday by 6:00 PM, students are to submit into the appropriate Drop-Box on Angel (under “Lessons”) an essay set for that class. Angel will run the essay through the TurnItIn.com service, so all protocols on academic integrity will be followed. In the hour prior to Monday’s class, the instructor will read the essays in order to prepare for class discussion. Besides submitting an electronic copy to the Drop-Box, students must also bring a hard copy to class for discussion and submission.

Technical Directions for Keeping Journal on Angel:

On the course Angel site, open the “Lessons” tab. Under “Lessons” open the folder entitled “Journal.” When you open your journal you will see the history of your entries, beginning with the most recent. To add an entry, hit “New Post” and write in the appropriate space. You may write as much as you like. In the subject box, please indicate which question you are reflecting on by giving the abbreviated title. This is noted in the syllabus by the WORDS IN CAPITAL LETTERS. After you have made your entry, hit “Post.”

You may return to make further postings to this question as often as you like, but please make an entry at least for each date/question. Besides yourself, only the instructor will have access to your journal. I will be able to see the time and date of posting (so don’t get behind!!!). I will read all postings and occasionally make a brief comment or reply, but mostly the journal is for yourself. At the end of the quarter I will carefully delete all content from your journal. On the other hand, I strongly encourage you to keep hard copies of what you write for your own use, both during the quarter and beyond the completion of the course.

Additional Course Readings

Occasionally readings may be accessed only electronically over the course website (Angel.com). To access them, simply look under the “Lessons” tab for the appropriate week, and click on “Readings.” You should find the readings there. You must print them out. On the days when we will be discussing extra readings in class, you will be expected to have printed the text and have it with you in class.

Disability Accommodation Policy:

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahnann Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

Final Comments:

Although class meets around the dinner hour, I would ask that no one eat in class. Also, because we are trying to encourage an interactive dynamic, I will discourage the wearing of hats and ban all use of laptops, cell-phones, and text-messaging units. I do not mean to be a killjoy nor do I have Victorian sensibilities, but I do think these issues of classroom etiquette are important, especially in a course such as this.

SCHEDULE

Week I: Callings and Seductions

M 3/31 “Telling My Story” and Other Introductions

W 4/2 *The Graduate*

Mick McCarthy, S.J. “Confessions”

Genesis 3 (Recommended)

Selections from Robert Greene, *The Art of Seduction* (Recommended)

Journal Question: SEDUCTION—How have I been, how am I seduced? What are the typical patterns of seduction? What makes me vulnerable to seduction? Why do I want to be seduced? What kind of victim am I? What is the difference between “seduction” and “calling”?

Week II: Life with Others

M 4/7 Wendell Berry, *Hannah Coulter*

L’Enfant (Recommended)

Essay Topic: “The shiver of the altogether given passes over me from head to foot.” In the context of the novel, what does Hannah mean by this line?

Journal Question: GIVEN—What story from my childhood reflects the “altogether given”?

W 4/9 *It’s a Wonderful Life*

Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Parts 1 & 2

Journal Question: I-THOU 1—“[T]he *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* is a different *I* from that of the primary word *I-It*.” Describe this difference with reference to significant *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships I have had in my life. How does *I-Thou* frame the life of George Bailey?

Week III: Sin and Salvation

M 4/14 *Tender Mercies*

Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Part 3

Karl Rahner, Readings on Sin

Essay Topic: How does the “I-Thou” relationship save Mac?

Journal Question: I-THOU 2—Return to the previous journal entry. From adolescence to the present time, what specific *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships have helped and/or harmed me?

W 4/16 Augustine, *Confessions*, Books 1-5

Journal Question: SIN—Describe the major mistake(s), sin(s), or misdirection(s) of my life.

Week IV: Revelation, Part I

M 4/21 *The Painted Veil*

Augustine, *Confessions* Books 6-8

Essay Topic: How do the lives of others contribute to the “conversion” of Augustine, Walter, and Kitty?

Journal Question: MENTOR—Describe someone whose personal example, goodness, and/or care revealed different possibilities to me.

W 4/23 Augustine, *Confessions* Book 9

Kolya (Recommended)

Guest Panel: Mike and Jeanne Moeschler

Journal Question: LOVE—What concrete experience of love has contributed to my “conversion”?

Week V: Revelation, Part II

M 4/28 *Romero*

Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* pp. 9-166

Essay Topic: What does Day mean when she writes that “All my life I have been haunted by God”?

Journal Question: GOD 1—What encounters have I had that intimated “God”?

W 4/30 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* pp. 167- 286

Fight Club (Recommended)

Guest Panel: Scott Santarosa, S.J.; MaryAnne Dakkak; Christine Rodgers

Journal Question: GOD 2—How has God haunted me?

Week VI: Eyes on the Margins

M 5/5 *Dirty Pretty Things*

Essay Topic: Interview a person who may be considered “at the margins.” What can we learn from him/her?

Journal Question: INTERVIEW—How did the experience of the interview move me?

W 5/7 *When Did I See You Hungry?*

Journal Question: MAN/WOMAN FOR OTHERS—How does “my vocation” keep from being narcissistically fixated on me?

Week VII: A Method for Discernment

M 5/12 *Wings of Desire*

Pierre Wolff, *Discernment: The Art of Choosing Well* pp. 3-57

Essay Topic: What does Wolff mean by “discernment”?

Journal Question: DISCERNMENT 1—Name some important issues for discernment in my life right now.

W 5/14 Pierre Wolff, *Discernment: The Art of Choosing Well* pp. 58-77, 108-142

Journal Question: DISCERNMENT 2—How has the discussion of “discernment” illuminated concrete choices that I myself face?

Week VIII: Memory and Loss

M 5/19 *Blue*

Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X

Mary Catherine Bateson, “Composing a Life Story”(selection)

Wendell Berry, “Jayber Crow” (selection)

John Steinbeck “East of Eden” (selection)

Dan McAdams, “An American Life Story” (selection)

Essay Topic: Why is memory so important to Augustine?

Journal Question: MEMORY—Why is memory so important to me?

W 5/21 To be discerned

Water (Recommended)

Week IX: Telling My Story

M 5/26 MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY

W 5/28 To be discerned

Week X: Telling My Story

M 6/2 To be discerned

Red

W 6/4 To be discerned

FINALS WEEK

To be discerned