

Teaching Narratives and Narrative Teaching

The APA Committee on the Teaching of Philosophy (CTP) and the American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT) seek presenters for a session of the AAPT-APA Teaching Hub on **Teaching Narratives and Narrative Teaching** at the 2023 Eastern Division Meeting.

The theme of this session is the various roles narratives play in philosophy classrooms, particularly in terms of (1) the philosophical narratives deployed in syllabus creation and class presentation, and (2) in terms of how students form narratives about themselves as thinkers and learners in a broader world. This topic is inspired by recent talks by Omowumi Ogunyemi (Pan-Atlantic University), Stacy Doore (Colby College), Fernando Nascimento (Bowdoin) and William Cochran (Harvard) at the 2022 Ethical Issues in AI and Computing Conference hosted by Harvard & MIT.

Storytelling is among the most basic and central modes of human learning and communication. As Fraser Hannam writes, “curriculum can be understood as a certain way of telling a story about the world. By contextualizing units of work within a narrative, lessons become more meaningful, dynamic, and engaging for the learner” (2015). Whether in selecting readings, connecting topics, directing class conversations, or designing assignments, teachers of philosophy are consummate storytellers, and are always engaged in teaching through rich and detailed narratives. Curated reading lists, case studies, and thought experiments are mini narratives that help build ideas and intuitions which then function as characters in the unfolding narrative of the class. Teachers must also situate the class itself within the broader cultural narrative arc of both the academic world and the educational lives of students. Similarly, students find themselves in the midst of a variety of unfolding narratives of their own, perhaps most critically about who they are, the world they find themselves in, and in their capacities to direct their own futures.

There is a vast array of philosophical resources on narrative available from which we might draw lessons about teaching narratives and narrative teaching. The most obvious are the narrative branch of ethics (e.g., Martha Nussbaum and Alasdair McIntyre), Existentialism (e.g., Kierkegaard and de Beauvoir), and Narrative Theory (Ricoeur, Bakhtin, Prop, etc.), but there are also many other fruitful points of departure, including Ancient Greek Philosophy (particularly Plato), German Idealism (Hegel, Schelling, and Schiller), and innumerable incredibly fruitful non-western sources and contemporary discussions of narrative teaching.

This section will be focused on a set of questions about narratives and narrative teaching. These include, but are not limited to:

1. What are the unique benefits and challenges of taking a narrative approach to teaching?
2. How can we deploy narratives that are inclusive and empowering while mitigating the potential tyranny of privileged, myopic, or monolithic narratives?
3. How can we use narratives to empower student learning and growth? What are the dangers involved in teaching through narratives, and how can we mitigate them?
4. What social elements of narrative teaching and teaching narratives are especially valuable to students as learners, thinkers, and actors in society?

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of drawing student attention to the narrative features of the class?
6. How can we use narratives to help students prepare themselves for the challenges of a rapidly changing and increasingly technological world?

Guidelines for submissions:

- Anonymized proposals of 400-700 words should be sent as attachments to Jordan Kokot (jdkokot@bu.edu) or Rebecca Leiby (rleiby@bu.edu) by **Sunday July 31st**, with the subject line **“Teaching Hub Proposal.”**
- In the body of the email, please include your name, institutional affiliation (if any), position (if any), and contact information. The organizing committee will select participants for the session in early August.
- Proposals should be for 15-20 minute presentations including some concrete **interactive element** which demonstrates your techniques and welcomes wisdom from the audience
- Strong proposals discuss the concrete challenges you have faced, the concrete steps you took to address them, and the effectiveness of those steps.
- Proposals should specify the texts, assignments, modules, or other approaches you used to facilitate these objectives and outcomes
- Supporting material such as syllabi or handouts are welcome and may be attached.

For any questions about the details of the session, please contact Jordan Kokot (jdkokot@bu.edu). For questions about the Eastern APA Teaching Hub more generally, contact the 2023 Eastern Division Teaching Hub Co-Chairs, Kiran Bhardwaj <kbhardwaj@andover.edu> and Jerry Green <jgreen67@uco.edu>.