



Narrative Legal Writing Course Description

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Welcome to this short course on Narrative Legal Writing. Lawyers rely heavily on narrative in the persuasive presentation of facts, but narrative is also a strong element in legal reasoning and judicial decisions. This course examines the role of narrative in the law, considers why narrative is such an effective tool of legal persuasion, and explores techniques of narrative writing.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students should:

1. Be familiar with the definition of narrative and its general role in human understanding and the law;
2. Understand the qualities of a strong legal narrative, and be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of particular legal narratives; and
3. Acquire introductory level macro and micro skills of narrative legal writing.

Class Structure & Assessment

The course begins with a “secret survey” before class, in which students observe the use narrative in everyday conversations. We then meet for a series of 4-hour classes in which we cover different aspects of legal narrative. We will also explore and practice application of narrative principles together, using the sample case of *Ng Yang Sek v. Public Prosecutor* [1997] 2 Sing. L.R.(R) 816 (C.A.). After class meetings, students will submit their assignment, a narrative analysis of the case *Lim Chen Yeow Kelvin v. Goh Chin Peng* [2008] 4 Sing. L.R. 783 (HC). Students conclude the course with a tutorial on their paper, with feedback from the professor.

Narrative Legal Writing Topics

1. *Homo Narrans*: narrative in life and law, and what lawyers do with narrative
2. Qualities of strong legal narrative: coherence, correspondence and fidelity
3. Narratives for good and bad parties
4. Narrative Legal Writing Techniques:
 - Use of detail to emphasize & de-emphasize facts
 - Time: the crucial issue of when to start and end a story, which indicates what the story is all about
 - Point of View: using perspective to provide insight and intimacy

Representative Reading Material

H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press

Hühn, Peter et al. (eds.), *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (Hamburg: Hamburg University (2013), <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de>

Gerald P. Lopez, “Lay Lawyering” (1984) 32 *University of California Los Angeles Law Review* 1-21

J. Christopher Rideout, “Storytelling, Narrative Rationality, and Legal Persuasion” (2008) 14 *Legal Writing* 53, pp. 53-78

Ruth Anne Robbins, “Harry Potter, Ruby Slippers and Merlin” (2006) 29 *Seattle University Law Review* 767, pp. 767-787

Valerie Vogrin, “Point of View: The Complete Menu”, in *Writing Fiction*, Alexander Steele, editor (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), pp. 77-95, 97-103