

# VBBB THEO 2521.01 CAPSTONE : TELLING OUR STORIES, LIVING OUR LIVES

FALL 2017

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Mondays 4:30 -6:50 Stokes 105 S Office Hours Wednesdays 2 -4 and by appointment  
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*Was Du erlebst, kann keine Macht der Welt Dir rauben*

"What you have experienced , no power on earth can take away from you."

- from Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

"If you want to know your past, look at the present . If you want to know your future, look at the present."

- Pahmasambhava , 8C. Tibetan Buddhist sage.

"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives."

- Annie Dillard, author *Pilgrim at Tinkers Creek*

## READINGS

- *A Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education –Boston College*
- Sharon Salzberg *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience* (Riverhead Books, 2002)
- Paul Rogat Loeb (ed), *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear* (Basic Books, 2004).
- Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Washington Square, 1997)
- Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (Jossey Bass, 2000).
- Greg Boyle SJ *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (Free Press, 2010)
- Elizabeth J. Andrew, *Writing the Sacred Journey: The Art and Practice of Spiritual Memoir* (Skinner Books, 2005).

## MATERIALS

- Capstone Three Ring Binder & Journal (bring to class weekly)
- Jon Kabat-Zinn meditation tape or CD

**Warning: This course is not about getting a job, it is about getting a life.**

This Capstone Seminar intends to sponsor a process and not a specific content .It involves a highly personal and yet collaborative process of bringing a heightened and sustained attention to the narrative structure of our lives By that I mean the kinds of stories which shape our sense of ourselves, our roles in society, our ideas about what constitutes meaningful work, worthy and life giving relationships, responsible public living, and what we think of as the "Ultimate Environment" – whatever we come to name as most ultimately worthy of trust and faith.

The fundamental premise of this Capstone process is that only in so far as we become self-aware of these organizing narratives do we have the freedom to intentionally choose them , modify them or reject them. We shall do this by experimenting with and cultivating various disciplines of attention or mindfulness: learning to take seriously our own inner wisdom as we become aware of our experience through exercises of breathing , writing, close attention to text and to conversation, reading, and listening.

Our circle of attention expands outward from our immediate sensate and affective experience, to the interaction of the classroom, to points of view and perspectives offered by our dialogue partners in books and in bodies, to the personal change that has taken place over the whole of our formal "schooling" culminating in the past four years at Boston College, to the events within our environment, world wide and history long.

All Capstone Seminars, while reflecting the different scholarly interests of the instructor, are invitations to pay attention to four dimensions of human life:

1. *What is worth doing with my single, unrepeatable life? What brings me to joy? what am I good at or have a talent for? What genuinely needs to be done? (the sphere of work)*
2. *Who are my companions in this life, how do I choose them and how shall I be faithful to them? (the sphere of relationships)*
3. *How do I responsibly take my place in the larger community that is my nation/ city/ state/ world? (the sphere of citizenship)*
4. *Finally, to whom or to what am I ultimately accountable and in relationship with? We refer to this as our relationship to an ultimate environment, or the sphere of faith/spirituality. Thus the course has an intentionally spiritual dimension to it. The seminar aims to provide the space and structure within which we can reflect on how our own personal stories are related to the Story of Whoever or Whatever they may identify as God/ the Holy/ the Ground of Being.*

#### **REQUIREMENTS [Mutual responsibilities in the Capstone Process]**

1. **BEING THERE.** (i.e. Attendance Policy) [10% of final grade]. Woody Allen commented that "nine tenths of life is just showing up", and in a course where our mutual education is a key element this becomes especially critical. Course participants will be expected to notify their colleagues in advance if there are serious conflicts (job interviews etc.) which preclude their attendance on a given day and will be accountable for explaining any other absences to the instructor. There is **only one "unexcused" absence permitted in the semester.** Attendance policy extends to the two evening meetings of the course. letter grade off for each unexcused absence.

#### **FACILITATION OF CLASS.**

Students working in teams of two persons will several times through the semester take responsibility for leading the class discussion around particular assigned texts. Teams are asked to meet the week before with the professor (preferably either on Thursday or Friday) to talk about how they plan to conduct the course. Each team will assign a reading from Rogat Loeb for their class and do so no later than the Tuesday before their class.

At the beginning of that class these two students team is a responsible for choosing a poem, short reflective reading or piece of music (lyrics also supplied as a hand out) to begin the class. They will share their own reflections & responses to the Paul Rogat-Loeb text and invite their colleagues to share theirs. They will then facilitate an hour of conversation about the class reading for the week.

2. **THE WEEKLY PROCESS** [30% of final grade]. These weekly reflections should be put up on CANVAS where they can be read by your colleagues in the class by no later than midnight the day before the class (ie. by midnight on Sunday). If one of the weekly writing assignments is such that you would rather it be read only by the instructor you can submit it by hard copy or by email attachment. I would like to ask that each week you read to at least ONE of your classmates' submissions, preferably a different colleague each week.

a) **Mindfulness Practice** - Beginning week four students will be asked to experiment with at least three periods of some form of intentional mindfulness practice through the course of the week of any length. The Jon Kabat Zinn CD on mindful sitting practice will be a helpful foundation, but it is expected that you will experiment with how to integrate this kind of awareness into the rhythm of your own unique life circumstances, and develop the practices that deepen awareness in your life. One paragraph description of your experience.

b) **One paragraph response to the Rogat Loeb AND at least one of the writing exercises “Writing the Spiritual Journey” if it has been assigned for that week** - (1 – 2 pages– typed, double space) You can also choose to respond to Andrews text in addition to experimenting with the prompt.

c) One paragraph response to the assigned reading (if other than “Writing the Spiritual Journey”.)

Evaluation: To receive an “A” for this portion of the course you will need to have done all the assignments at a satisfactory level for at least 10 of the 12 weeks of the course. 1/2 letter grade off for each missing assignment.

(3) **“ MEANINGFUL WORK/CAREER INTERVIEW”** [25% of final grade] 7 – 9 pages typed The interview must be conducted by November 30<sup>st</sup>. and the final written form by call November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Select someone who seems to you to be doing meaningful work and/or whose whole composition of life is personally inspiring to you and interview them about why they do what they do, how they came by doing it, and what sustains them. What you are listening for is the story which they tell themselves about their work and how that story of work may or may not be integrated with other dimensions of their lives and other stories. You are also listening for HOW they make sense of their work. Is it a job, a vocation, a means of self-actualization, a reflection of ambition?

You may interview anyone you like, subject to the following restrictions: (1) they should have been working for at least 5 years after finishing their highest level of schooling; (2) your write up should include quotations from your interview, so you may want to tape record it with permission; (3) your analysis of what you learned and how you responded to the experience of the interview should draw explicitly upon the readings and discussions from this class, and any other scholarship you find relevant.

#### 4. **FINAL INTEGRATIVE PROJECT :**

**A SPIRITUAL/ INTELLECTUAL MEMOIR** [ 35 % of final grade ] 10 pages, typed, double spaced. This work is the culmination of all of the experiments in spiritual memoir that you have been doing all semester and should be accompanied by a representative folio of those exercises that you feel ready to share with the instructor.

5. **"BACK FROM THE FUTURE" (A LETTER TO MYSELF).** Due with final project, a letter to yourself with "what I do not want to forget. or what I want to remind myself of". Sealed in a self-addressed and stamped envelope (recommend a permanent home address). Letter will be mailed to you by the instructor, one year to the day of your graduation from BC.

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### **Week One: Monday August 28<sup>th</sup> Setting Forth from the Quay**

- The principles and foundation of the course. *A Pocket Guide to Jesuit Education – BC*
- Why are we here and what do we hope to accomplish. Beginning with Attention. Mutual responsibilities, What makes genuine conversation possible? Why tell stories?
- David Loy – *“The World is Made of Stories”*
- What kind of Classroom?

**Week Two: Sept 4<sup>th</sup> LABOR DAY**

**Week Three Monday Sept 11<sup>th</sup> Coming Home to One's True Self, or What is Faith?**

- Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer*, Seamus Heaney Poem and Diane Ackerman's "A Slender Thread".
- Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (excerpt).
- Sharon Salzberg: *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience*
- Elizabeth Andrew: *Writing the Spiritual Journey* introduction and "Why We Write", "the Attributes of Spiritual Memoir" and "Getting Started". (pp. 3 - 26)

**Week Four Monday Sept 18<sup>th</sup> Social Innovation and Narrative at Ground Zero: The Story of Greg Boyle (and everyone else) Facilitators:**

- Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_
- Greg Boyle SJ, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*
- Elizabeth Andrew: *Writing the Spiritual Journey* pp, 27 - 44

**Week Five : Monday Sept 25<sup>th</sup> Beginning to Explore the Spiritual Memoir & The Language of Vocation**

**Facilitators:**

- Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_
- Elizabeth Andrew: *Writing the Spiritual Journey* pp 45 -64. "The Dilemma of Memory"

**Week Six Monday October 2<sup>rd</sup> Letting Your Life Speak**

**Facilitators:**

- Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_
- Parker Palmer, "Let Your Life Speak"
- Elizabeth Andrew: *Writing the Spiritual Journey* "Your Spiritual Life as Subject Matter: Describing the Indescribable and the Power of Epiphany" (pp. 67 -81).

**Week Seven: Sunday Oct 8 or 9<sup>th</sup> CLASS DINNER - Chez McDargh-Dunn**  
Discuss the Meaningful Work Assignment

**Week Seven: October 9<sup>th</sup> COLUMBUS DAY No Class**

**Week Eight Monday October 16<sup>th</sup> Focusing (the Body's Way of Making Meaning)**

**Facilitator:** John McDargh

Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_

- Joan Klagsbrun – *Finding Sanctuary in a Stressful Environment*
- Instructions on Focusing (handouts)

Elizabeth Andrew: *Writing the Spiritual Journey* “Being in the Body” pp, 100 – 111

**Week Nine: Monday October 23<sup>th</sup> What is the Meaning of Meaning?**

**Facilitators:**

- Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_
- Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* .

**Week Ten Monday November 30<sup>st</sup> Eve of All Hallows**

**Meaningful Work Interviews (conducted and discussed in class)**

**Facilitators**

- The Rev. George Regas (Basement People and Balcony People).. A Sermon at All Saints Pasadena, CA
- Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_

**Week Eleven : Monday November 6<sup>th</sup> . Continuation of sharing Interviews**

**Week Twelve Monday November 13<sup>th</sup> Exploring the Power of Metaphor**

**Facilitators:**

- Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_
- Elizabeth Andrew: *Writing the Spiritual Journey* “Symbols and Metaphors” pp. 82 – 87 and “The Vividness of Childhood”

**Week Thirteen Monday November 20<sup>th</sup> Leading Lives That Matter: To Whom Should I Listen?**

**Facilitators:**

- Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_
- Mark R. Schwehn & Dorothy Bass (eds) *Leading Lives That Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be*. (Erdmans, 2006). pp. 359 – 426.
- Elizabeth Andrew: *Writing the Spiritual Journey* “Honoring Teachers” pp. 112-122.

**Week Fourteen : November 27th Crafting Our Stories.**

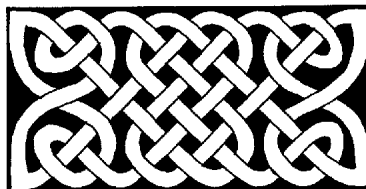
**Facilitators:**

Rogat-Loeb, *The Impossible Will Take a Little Longer* \_\_\_\_\_

A writing and mindfulness retreat based on Natalie Goldberg's *The True Secret of Writing: Connecting Life with Language*. (Atria , 2013).

**Week Fifteen: Monday Dec 4<sup>th</sup> Final Meeting of the Class: What do we carry forward into the future?**

Breakfast meeting : Student Apartment or Dorm TBA



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- **FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE: Wednesday Dec 13<sup>th</sup> 12:00 noon**

**Directions to McDargh Dunn Home**

- Coming up Beacon Street from Boston College (heading west)

Take a left at the traffic light at Langley Road, just before you get to Newton Centre.  
[Landmarks: on the right, Appetito's Restaurant; on the far left corner "Zoots" dry cleaners).  
Go up over the Riverside Greenline, and the second right is Chase Street. Take a right.  
The first left is Ripley Street, take a left.

57-59 is about the 9<sup>th</sup> house on the right hand side of the street, a two family yellow house with green trim at the top of a flight of tall stone stairs. It shares a drive way with the house to its right. Door way is to the left.. we are on the top floor.

Phone number: 617 928-6003

- Coming down Beacon Street towards the City (heading east). The same as above but when you get to the light at Langley it will be on your right rather than your left.