

St. Thomas University Welcomes Clive Baldwin, Canada Research Chair in Narrative Studies

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NARRATIVE WORKS
Issues, Investigations, & Interventions

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St. Thomas University is pleased to announce the establishment of a Canada Research Chair (CRC) in Narrative Studies as part of its developing research strategy. This Research Chair can be seen as an example of the recognition by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of the increasing importance and influence of narrative in the humanities and social sciences. Through this post, STU hopes to be able to contribute to the development of narrative theory and method on the international research stage.

The new CRC is Dr. Clive Baldwin, who until recently was Senior Lecturer in Social Work (Mental Health) at the University of Bradford, UK. His professional background is in social work and community development work, and his academic background in narrative cuts across several subject areas. His doctoral thesis was on Munchausen syndrome by proxy, analysing how competing narratives vie for privilege in child protection investigations and legal proceedings. His post-doctoral work focused on the ethical issues facing family caregivers of relatives with dementia. More recently, he has been exploring the use of narrative in mental health and the role of rhetoric in professional and expert reporting.

During his CRC tenure, Clive will be working on three main research projects—each designed in some way to contribute to narrative theory and method. The first will be an institutional ethnography of a social care programme, seeking both to analyse and develop the concept of narrative care with older people and to develop a political economy of narrative. Drawing on Plummer's sociology of stories, the project will look at the nature, production, and consumption of stories within social care, and explore the strategies of storytelling and webs of interlocution within which narratives are constructed.

The second project will take a more personal approach, and explore the concept of narrative literacy among social work students and its impact on professional practice. During their training, students will be introduced to narrative concepts and practices that they can learn to apply both to themselves and to service users. While the use of narrative has been evident in the field of education for some time, and narrative therapy is increasingly popular in the human services, there seems to be little structured research into the impact of narrative literacy on professional development and practice. Students will be encouraged to write creatively, keep audio and video diaries, engage with

literature and film, and develop autoethnographies and narrative reflective journals about their own development and practice. It is hoped that this project will have an international aspect through Clive's retaining links with his previous department, where Creative Writing sits alongside the social sciences.

The third project focuses specifically on narrative ethics. For some time, narrative ethics has been developing a unique perspective on social and health care practice but little empirical work has been conducted to explore the nature and impact of narrative ethics. It is proposed that a narrative ethics training programme for social and health care agencies be developed and evaluated which, if successful, can be rolled out across New Brunswick.

As part of his research programme, Clive is looking to develop the research capacity of local people—training and supporting them in the collection and analysis of data. Social and health care workers, family caregivers, and friends will be encouraged to engage actively in the research: not just as participants, but also as co-researchers. Students will hone their research skills through becoming their own research subjects and engaging in collaborative analysis with their peers.

Finally, Clive is hoping to build on the work already achieved by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative, and organise interdisciplinary seminars on the understandings and uses of narrative across disciplines. Clive's interests span the social sciences, law, theology, and philosophy, and he will be looking to draw in others not only from these disciplines, but also other humanities disciplines and the sciences. Narrative is, for Clive, a collaborative enterprise, and he warmly invites you to join him in the above explorations.