3 Minute Thesis presentations, Elevator Pitches, and Seminars: Narratives Work

For MCB graduate students
Mondays, 4-5 pm in Biology/Physics 201
January 22 – March 5
Presented by Prof. Kenneth Noll

“Communications skills” tops most lists of what employers look for in job candidates. Career advancement requires effective and memorable communication of your work. When talking about your work, it is too easy to fall into the pattern of listing your activities and accomplishments in a pointless manner. This may be fine in some occasions, but you won’t stand out and you will be forgotten.

Theodosius Dobzhansky, noted geneticist, commented that the story of evolution makes biology “the most satisfying and interesting science.” “Without that light,” he continued, “it becomes a pile of sundry facts some of them interesting or curious, but making no meaningful picture as a whole.” This latter quote can describe many science presentations.

A narrative is a person searching for the solution to a problem. Sound like your thesis work? So why not use narrative structure to tell your stories?

We are all attuned to pay attention to stories. Studies show that when narrative structures are used to communicate information, listeners comprehend better, are more engaged, and are better able to remember what they have heard.

This workshop will show you how to construct stories about your achievements for use with colleagues or public audiences. We will examine what narrative structures look like and look for examples of this in science communications. You’ll take your past and current activities and construct compelling narratives structured for different situations.

By the end of the workshops, we will have accomplished the following tasks:

• Constructed a presentation for use at UConn’s Three Minute Thesis competition this Spring
• Created an elevator pitch useful for job interviews and conversations at meetings
• Constructed a narrative framework for a seminar presentation

There is no cost to attend and registration is not necessary. To give me an idea for how many might attend, please send me an email if you want to join us. Even if you don’t let me know, come anyway.