NACADA Webinar: NACADA Reads Goes to the Movies: Narratological Advising & Strictly Ballroom

Hello and Welcome everybody we’re glad you could join us this afternoon or this morning, depending where you are coming in from. This is a series called NACADA reads and are very honored to be asked to participate in the series, Richard and myself, and Jennifer asked us we do something on NACADA Reads because we had done a Webinar on “Narrative Advising” so what would make more sense. Except we threw a curve ball and said, “well could we do a movie instead”, and graciously she said yes. So, welcome to the first of a new series about NACADA goes to the movies! Today we’ll be looking at a 1992 Australian film called, “Strictly Ballroom”, directed by Baz Luhmann. So, who am I, I am Peter Hagen I am the Director for the Center of Academic Advising and Associate Dean of General Studies here at the Stockton University in South Jersey, close to Atlantic City, and we are in the midst of a heat wave out East here so, welcome we’re am glad to be here. Richard would you like to introduce yourself. Sure, my name’s Rich Trama, I’m assistant director of advising here at Stockton, welcome. Ok, so who is Baz Luhnmann anyway? Why would we pay any attention to his films.

Peter, “Richard”.

Richard, “Sure, Luhnmann is a very prominent Australian film director who began his career in theatre and his first big production over in Australia was of Love Bowan at the Sydney Opera House. So, what characterizes his narrative style is his distinctly opulent and acrostic use of music sound track, exaggerated camera angles, and rich saturated colors. To, and he describes as a heightened and created world. There is at no time during his films that you are not aware you’re in a movie or you’re in some sort of production. In particular he’s well known in the United States for his red curtain trilogy which are comprised of “Strictly Ballrooom”, “ Romeo and Juliet”, and “Mulan Rouge” over a course of nine to ten years, and an important aspect that he wants the audience to come away with is to look at cinematic language where the audience participates in the form. Where, they are at all times aware that they are watching a movie and that they should be active in their experience and not pass it.

Peter, “So Richard you might not know this about me, but I was actually invited to join Netflix, and isn’t that wonderful I know, I know. But, premiering this month on Netflix is Luhnmann’s most recent work called the, “Get Down”, which is the television series about the verse of hip hip in 1970’s New York City.

Richard, “and just a commentary on that, the concept of Hip Hop and the theatricality that goes along with it is right up Luhnmann’s alley.

Peter, “Ok, can you dig a but deeper into Baz Luhnmann for us”?

Richard, “Sure, [He] grew up in Australia. He was a trained ballroom dancer and his parents participated in ballroom dancing. So, a lot of what you see in the film is based on personal experiences. Luhnmann’s mother was a ballroom teacher, a ballroom dance teacher. His father, actually, ran a gas station in the small town where they grew up and he also ran the movie theatre and Luhnmann attributes a lot his experience in dealing with the public and listening to people’s stories or narratives threw working at the gas station as a young person and the experience of watching the movies and interacting with the guests in the movie theatre.

Peter, “So if you were to create a movie like, “Strictly Ballroom”, this was the best background to have. Maybe, almost inevitable.

Richard, “For him, a lot of how he makes films is to pay tribute to the films he experienced. Specifically, when they would come through small towns like the one he grew up in Australia. Leftovers from the 40’s and 50’s even though that’s not when he grew up but this is what he was experiencing in that movie house.

Peter, “ Well in fairness to our viewers, we should lay out some of the claims we wish to make. And so, among those, is the first one, we, Richard and I, and perhaps others out there listening claim, that narrative is perhaps the main modality that we have. The we advisors have to understanding the lives of our students and for them to understand us. One of our favorite authors is Umberto Echo, an Italian novelist. And there’s a beautiful little line in one of his novels that reads, “To survive, you must tell stories”. And we feel that very strongly every day with our students. Now, it’s not literally true that students must tell stories in order to survive. But they certainly must tell stories in order for us to understand them, to understand what it is like to be them in the world. And if they don’t tell us their stories, we have a hard time really understanding how we can advise them well. And of course, they lie on us telling the story of our lives to some extent so they can understand and come to trust us. To understand us as a person who has a life in the world and meaning of our own. So that’s one claim we make and I think this Webinar depends upon that claim being at least understood you don’t to accept it, but you have to understand the importance of this possible claim. So, a second claim is that, we advisors can be thought of as creating the stories of education, the stories of education for our students and with them. We co-create, you might say the story of their education, which is a very important chapter in their own autobiographies, maybe it’s chapter two, a chapter in which I go off and experience the world on my own. I go to college. So, we regard our work as advisors as very importantly helping students create this story, making coherence out of their education. It is a progression, it has a plot, it has meaning (let’s hope), and so we see ourselves as helping students create the stories of their education. And if you like we can throw the German word for stories of education. It’s “Erzahlungen”.

It means a story of acculturation, or of education. Some quick examples from American, rather, British literature would be a portrait of (inaudible) as a young man or Emma by Jane Austin. Both of these can be thought of as stories of education, where the protagonist comes to be educated, to be acculturated. And then thirdly, we, claim that as advisors, if we encounter what we refer to as engaging narratives, not just the easy ones but really engaging narratives that advisors can enhance their narratoligical skills. And, sort of embedded into this claim, is a sub-claim that they are already there. You already possess and use your skills as a narrator as a narratological advisor. And, we’re doing this today with you. We’re engaging together in an engaging narrative and encountering an engaging narrative, Strictly Ballroom and in fact, you could do this at your home institution rather easily if you choose a narrative. Almost any work of fiction will do. NACADA Reads books, NACADA goes to the movies, and these are important things. So you could actually do this at your institution and could be something like this at your institution. But because this is a dialogue because we are in a narrative together we really really want to hear from you and hope you will type in some questions or comments for us as we go along.

Richard, “For this reason, Strictly Ballroom, at least Peter and I consider this an engaging narrative. It doesn’t necessarily have to be fiction or a story out a novel, per say, but narrative in the sense that there is a plot, there is something going on from point “A” to point “B”. Where there is often a problem that should be solved. So in this presentation we will show how to engage with the challenging narrative, how we approach the ways we read the film, basically ways advisors can hone our own narratoligcal skills and approaches in our everyday encounters with students of varying degrees.

Peter, “So, we sent out a couple of questions to you all in advance. And, the first of those questions has to do with Scott Hastings. Overall, Scott Hastings, protagonist of the film finds himself in a rural-bound environment where one’s steps are highly prescribed. Yet, Scott is driven to discover or create his own steps. So, what might be the parallels to academic advising? And this is the part where you, viewers at home write in with your questions and your comments. We don’t want to let the crickets chirp to long. This presentation, is its to survive and flourish requires you on the other side on this course to write to us. Hearing none.

Peter,”Alright so why don’t we, Richard you and I take a shot at answering the question we have post.

Richard, “Not a problem. For example, if we view Scott Hastings as symbolizing our advisee these possible answers could include something along the lines of exploring the possibilities of self-designed majors and they exist. For example, just this morning before the webinar began a potential transfer came in and just said, “alright this is what I’m doing at the local county college and I want to come over and get a degree in Humanities”, and after going over the pros and cons of this kind of a program especially with the mother sitting (inaudible) going, “what are you going to do with this”, I explained the idea that a liberal arts degree or humanities degree involves a certain part of participation on the student’s to design a program and work with what ive done, what are my future goals, and how can I get there in between.

Peter, “But it’s ok to be rule-bound, ya know Scott, if you have seen the film. We hope you have viewed the film. Scott could have made the choice of, “I’m going to knuckle under and go in accordance with the approved steps of the Australian Dance Federation”, and our advisees can do that too. It’s not a bad choice. It’s not a morally wrong choice. It’s just that you have to do it with open eyes. And, if you choose to conform to whatever curriculum you’re in, even though it mat cause you to be rule-bound, it’s ok to say, “well that’s who I am, that’s what I want”.

Richard, “This also implies the idea, and so does Scott that he’s not the only one in the film that does this, but it’s through him that we see the idea of taking risks in the parameters of rules. As an advisor you’re not necessarily literally on the dance floor but you’re suggesting taking certain courses to satisfy requirements that may be out of the students comfort zone. Or suggesting taking classes that are related to the required classes or the “rule” classes but also open up the student to other aspects of what their rules are telling them.

Peter, “And, Maybe Scott Hastings could be thought as of a metaphor for us advisors. Sometimes we feel rule-bound as well and it’s ok to conform to whatever rules you’re bound by but it’s also ok to lobby for something new at your university. Jennifer.

Jennifer, “Yea, Peter and Richard I wanted to let you know we have some audience participation-

Peter, “Great”

Jennifer, “and one of our participants is answering your question with the phrase, “parents prescribing why students are coming to college.”

Peter, “Good heavens, yes,

Jennifer, “Leaning towards popular careers and them some other comments, “students enter a college or university environment where on the surface there are strict and prescribed rules but if their encouraged to delve deeper they find their own way”

Peter, “Yes, indeed”, “Yea those prescribed steps can come from parents, can come from society at-large and so on, friends. That’s a difficult”. “How long do we have? Three hours to answer this question. Natalia, thank you for asking it. But, indeed, when parents prescribe these plans if you will, it becomes very difficult indeed to help a student, either get away from those prescribed steps or conform to them doing so with open eyes.

Richard, “and this is actually is illustrated in ways the film through the dance competition and the idea that you have not one couple on the dance floor at a time. There are times during dance competitions where you have several couples showcasing what they all do and they have to be sure that they are not conflicting, meaning, bumping into or blocking the path. That’s what initially starts Scott on this track of trying to reconcile the dance steps that are prescribed and the dance steps that he understands or that he sees and when he’s blocked he under the under couples and showcases what he knows. This is a big step in a student’s life where the student can turn around and say, “I understand this, I get this, what about this”. And, sometimes, it takes a lot of patience and understanding to work within that framework, the parents and the students discovering him or herself.

Peter, “I see a comment from “MPHusky”. Thank you for writing in. You’re absolutely right. In Scott’s case he’s not only breaking with convention that is to say the prescribed steps of the Australian Dance Federation, but also breaking with his parents at the same time. Well, at least one of his two parents. I’m pretty sure he’s becoming united, finally with his father, but certainly becoming at least for a time, disunited with his mother as to break away from her, and, in order to dance his own steps as well as break away from the dance federation.

Richard, “But this also brings in another issue Peter, the idea that for a student, it’s the breaking away. When Scott is trying to break away from his mother, his mother is focusing too much on the end product. Win the competition. A student is told, “this is your job, this is the diploma and as someone also already commented the idea of delving deeper and where the development of meaning of the student (Inaudible) itself is at stake that delving deeper and finding a deeper meaning also uncovers a lot more than just a job and or just a diploma but can lead to so many other areas. And, this is by no means a process that is easily accomplished in a two hour film, so to speak.

Peter, “If it’s alright with you all, let’s move on to the second question that we’ve posed for you in advance and that question says, “Show us your paso doles”, one of my favorite lines in the movie. I think its possibly one of the more important lines in the film it’s spoken by Richo and Richo is Fran’s father and how might we see this invitation to the dance as an invitation to narrative now before we move on, let’s look at a short clip to remind you about this scene in the film.

(Lines from the movie), “Just drunk hey pap?,

“Ave!”

\*Dancing\*

“What?!”, “What’s so funny?”

“Paso Double’? Paso Double.”

\*Dancing\*

Peter, “One of my favorite scenes in the film. So friends, write to us and tell us what you think of that. What does Richo have to do with advising? What foes the Paso Double’ have to do with advising? \*Pause\*. While you’re gathering your thoughts and writing to us, we can throw in a couple of answers.

Richard, “Well, I’de like to make a comment in the sense that Richo in this situation is metaphorically an advisor or preceptor. And his challenge, this is part of our responsibility, at least I believe, and it’s part of the narritalogical approach to advising to challenge the student that’s opposite us. And this is exactly what he does to Scott. Show, show me what you know but then he challenges him by, by doing the Paso Double’. How are you feeling this how are you seeing this. Show me what you know but also take this into consideration, because as you know everybody just happens to be dressed as a matador sitting in their backyard waiting for an opportunity like this.

Peter, “well you know we could see the, lets try a different metaphor. We could see the Paso Double’ as a metaphor for the curriculum itself and Richo if we want to cast ourselves in the role of Richo and showing Scott, our young advisee, the deeper possibilities of the curriculum. Richo shows Scott the deeper possibilities for meaning in a dance that Scott thought he knew about already. And do I think this highlights for us the need within advising to always search for meaning and understanding which is only available to us through the narrative act of interpretation. So,

Richard, “ And there’s a comment from “Lindsay” at Saint Edwards University in Austin Texas, “this reminds me of requiring our students to come to advising meetings with a list of courses they are considering for each term. This acts as both a carrot to get them cleared for registration and to get them involved as a partner in the process versus advising just becoming prescribing. Which is a really good point.

Peter, “Right, move them from that awful stilted dance that they were doing to something more smooth and more meaningful for them”.

Richard, “And also, that meaningfulness is very important because it gets, this is a step to get them involved and it is a form of challenging like, bring to me to the table something that is important or what you think is important.

Peter, “Well now we move into a territory in which we hadn’t prepared you for. We’re going to throw some questions at you for which you had no time to prepare, and so the first of these regards Fran and Scott. Fran teaches Scott with an old Spanish saying that translates to, “a life lived in fear is a life half lived”. So how can we as the audience apply this mantra. “A life lived in fear is a life half lived”, to academic advising? If we may could we view another short clip to remind you about this part.

\*Movie Scene\*

Peter, “Okay, so what can we make of this, A life lived in fear is a life half lived. I want to snag a little bit of a comment that just went off of my screen I think it’s at least is going to answer online but one person had wrote in and said, “When she heard the phrase, “Show us your Paso Double’”, she is hearing show me your passion and I love that. That’s a great thing to say, that’s a great comment, show me your passion. And I guess it ties in with this slide as well, A life lived in fear is a life lived without passion. Richard. Richard I believe you are muted, sorry in interrupt but we want to hear you.

Richard, “ I thought I had it off. I apologize. His ability, Scott’s ability to face the fear of telling his story that is of dancing his dance becomes a model narrative for all the characters in the film but none more so I think than his father, Doug who claims at one point toward the end of the film having watched his son either directly or through the films he takes of him that we had a chance but we’re scared. We walked away we lived our lives in fear and this then becomes another challenge for Scott. Get out there show me what you have known or have developed since this point.

Peter, “Yea I life lived in fear. It’s a sad way to negotiate life. That’s what Paula Dollarhide has just written in. Thank you for that Paula. It’s a sad way to negotiate a life. Let’s maybe bring Umberto Echo back in. Remember at the beginning of this presentation we quoted him as saying, “To survive you must tell stories”. And in this scene we’ve just queued we think it in terms of self-authorship, which is a concept of writing a crest of the wave right now in academic advising research. Scott is approaching a crossroads in his life and he’s about to start dancing his own steps to live a life without fear about to live out his passion and that’s what we think of as self-authorship. We go down to the crossroads and you become utterly changed by it. So, let’s move on to another question that is in the unfair category because we didn’t throw this out to you in advance. And this looks at the difference between dancing on the rooftops and dancing in the studio. In the studio Scott feels very confined but up on the roof with Fran, he feels so much more unshackled. Why, and we also ask, well what does this have to do with advising as well. So, Jennifer if we may, could we view this short clip.

\*Movie scene\* @ 26:55

Peter, “And they dance off into the sunset. What could be more beautiful? Richard do you want to comment on that scene?

Richard, “Absolutely”

Peter, “And talk about what this has to do with advising”

Richard, “Every time I see this scene it’s adding more and more to what this goes along and everything that we’re trying to profess. We notice that Scott and Fran are on the rooftop while Scott’s father is in the studio below. The film composition way, at least I see it is Luhnmann is composing this suggests that the freedom Scott experiences on the rooftop with Fran is similar to the freedom Doug feels in the studio below. However, Scott and Fran are in an open area where Doug’s sense of freedom is so much more limited and no one else is around to experience it. At least Scott has Fran there. This also by the way is also reflected in the choice of the version of Time After Time that Luhnmann uses. You have a duet singing it. There is a single voice, there is another single voice, male female, to match the couple dancing on the rooftop and then you have a verse coming in where they’re both singing. Where there is finally that connection where the dance is going. Things are starting to jive. Doug’s freedom of expression though is still suppressed, he’s still downstairs. Only to be seen in that small circle of light. Regradless though, he feels alive in that circle of light notice the dancing he’s doing is not necessarily a structure and as methodical as Scott and Fran’s dance. It’s a little more off the cuff and more of his generation’s music. Where Scott’s moves in the company of Fran who’s also outside culturally misunderstanding no one knowing that she can dance, Scott starts to see, “wait a minute this ugly duckling in the beginning of the film really does have something to offer and starts to nurture that in the way he puts his hands around her face and the angles and encourages her in a much more naturalistic setting up on the roof, laundry, sitting in the background. The concept of this scene is also mirrored in other scenes in the film but culminates in the final competition where Scott can be free in his dance in the confined area in the arena but it’s an open confined area this merging the private self with the public self.

Peter, “Friends, can you see why students love taking courses with Mr. Trama?! Looks like folks are hitting on all cylinders here. Natalia, Becky, Paula, Yauna, I think you’ve got it we advisors need to help our students find a space that is metaphorical perhaps but, like that space on top of the roof where they can unfetter their thoughts. They can dance freely, they can share with us, they can share thoughts, they can open up to themselves if need be to understand what their thoughts are. This is a space not literally necessarily but a discursive space, an emotional space where they are safe and can speak without fetters. Now by the way folks, did you know notice the huge red curtain sign in the background I’m nat saying the words of the product but you’ve got to ask yourself why was that enormous product placement their. It is satirical but Luhnmann is talking about the red curtain and we’re going to get to that later in this presentation but wanted to put that in your memory a huge red curtain in the background. Well let’s move on to another question that we’ve not prepared you for and this has to do with multiculturalism. One of the themes of the film has to do with multiculturalism in Sydney Australia of course, multiculturalism in general. How does exposure to the Spanish community change Scott? How does exposure to the Anglo-Australian culture change Fran? How might we use the idea of narrative to understand the impact of and integrate the aspects of multiculturalism in the lives of our students? Now, as we go into this next clip watch for the crossroads. It appears almost literally.

\*Movie scene\*

Well, the clear inference we can draw from this scene is if you want to lead a student to self-authorship all you have to do is put on that belaro jacket with spangles, and you can do it.

Richard, “And your crossroads with the railroad tracks are merging and the spinning as it keeps building up and gets closer and closer. The spinning Scott is doing by himself and as he gets more and more into it he is joined and crosses over into the arms of Yaya and Richo as Fran watches from behind and the idea of that crossing and merging is very important symbolically and metaphorically to what’s going on and what Scott’s experiencing.

Peter, “Yaya by the way is the name of the grandmother character, her name is Yaya. I don’t think you get a clearer example of self-authorship happening than that scene in this film. It’s really quite clear to me. All of a sudden he is no longer rule bound. All of a sudden he can make judgements on his own and does later on in the film. They have consequences but at least he can do so as a fully enfranchised self-authored adult.

Richard, “And the idea that those consequences he fully adopts, he accepts the responsibility of those consequences. This is the concept that is begun in this scene, it culminates in the last scene of the film which is in the next slide.

Peter, “Which we may as well transition to this point. So, another question we had for you is that, on other levels of thinking, how does Scott and Fran transcend barriers, rather than break down or tear down barriers? Let’s look at another short clip.

\*Movie scene\*

Peter, “And the red curtain comes down. Very important we’ll get to that in a moment I want to talk about some comments that Yauna has written in with.

Richard, “These are great comments.”

Peter, “Really, I am glad you joined us today. Jennifer can everyone else see those comments or just us? I’ll summarize them quickly. Yauna says, “As a dance, instructor, and choreographer I always feel that structured classical technique rules combined with innate skill usually results in more accomplished performance and she wants to her students find this as well.” In this scene is a grand reunification melding of cultures but as I was watching it this time I thought, finally we see a possibility of Scott reuniting with his father and possibly more remote was a possible reunion with his mother. Which we could say Yauna, write in if you think that I’m just spouting forth nonsense but in a sense the father symbolizes the innate skill and the mother symbolizes, I’m getting back to your comments, the classical structure technique and what I think Scott has done has found is a union of those two motives.

Richard, “We see that can also be defended that observation on several different levels with the composition of this scene also. Number one, is that it is a crowded arena floor now and no one is concerned about bumping into everybody else because they’re so aware of the dance now that they just do it. That the meaning becomes the action itself and is defined through that action and everybody has somebody. The only two outlying people now are Berry Fife and his crony or his friend who are not part of that. They are not needed. That kind of structure goes way beyond what the comment of what Yauna is saying. So that in this situation Fran and Scott are not breaking down barriers as much as transcending them and that’s even seen with people stepping over the wall to get onto the dance floor rather than rushing right through it or breaking things down. There’s that sense of transcendence with the merging of the different cultures the Anglo-Australian and Spanish in a way they interpret their own Paso Double’ in that situation and also merges, this goes along with the comment again with the structure and the innate skill the beating that Yaya does on Scott’s chest, the idea that it’s something from the heart what you feel but it also translates and is necessary for the structure. The structure needs some rhythm and the rhythm needs the structure to exhibit that rhythm.

Peter, “I like what Rick Godwin has written in, “One reason people resist change is that they focus on what they have to give up rather than what they have to gain. We see that with the character of Scott’s mother. She focuses on what she would have to give up she would give up a career as a dance instructor if she had followed her husband’s proclivity towards his own steps rather than what they have to gain. Who knows what she might have gained maybe the possible losses outweigh the gains but still”. well done Rick, that’s true.

Richard, “Can I make a comment on that too Peter, that’s a really good timely observation that I find when I go overseas and I’m discussing the concepts of curriculum in academic advising let’s say in the UK. They’re obsession with the United States not understanding the idea that there could be something beyond the individual that everything is just focused on the power of the individual where they’re looking at how can this work within the interrelation where’s there’s more than just the individual at stake here and in a dancing situation especially a two dancer dance situation one must be aware I am not the only one.

Peter, “ Yauna talks about again Fran’s reinvigorated relationship with her grandmother and father I’m not sure if the grandmother is father’s mother or the mother’s mother still she gains an enhanced relationship with her parental figures as well. As does Scott. Again, well done all. I’m really relishing this discussion

Richard, “One more comment to defend what you were saying and what Yauna was saying earlier with Scott’s father and Scott’s mother the natural ability and the innate ability is how he puts his hand out to her, Scott’s mother and she just takes it. There’s no bitterness or anything like that, this is a natural merger if you will and it’s so lovingly done, the merging of the innate and structure is such a logical combination .

Perter, “Jen”

Jennifer, “I had this thought that some of the, at most institutions there are rules to earning a degree and at most institutions they do have to take so many hours of common core perhaps there are specific courses for a degree so that combination of, in many cases, not all you can craft your major. But, to earn a degree from the institution students have to follow some rules. So I was just coming back to that I worked with a student once who approached the gen eds. by asking a big question. There was no buffet gen eds, and his question was, “what is faith” and “what is the nature of the human relationship to the divine? So, every gen ed he chose was to ask and answer those questions. So he completed, ya know, his liberal arts education but he approached it to ask answer his own big question. I thought that was incredibly creative.

Peter, “Absolutely, that’s a wonderful story”

Richard, “Very much so.”

Peter, “Yea, I’m a little at a loss for words because you know, we all operate within those rule-bound conventions of the general education requirements. You have to take one from column “A” and one from column “B”. But, within those rules you can often find some exciting challenging course. I love the fact that the student came up with a theme and pursued courses in accordance to that theme. That’s a thing we could search for as advisors by asking deep questions like, “what motivates you?”, “what are you reading and why are you reading it?”, “What’s your passion?”. Show us your Paso Double! And if we find that Paso Double’ that can provide one with a good liberal arts education even within a rule-bound society like the bachelorette degree. Excellent. Excellent. So, notice the shirt that Jennifer Joslin is wearing today, could you stand up a little higher there, this is the red shirt. It’s a red curtain and I’ve been talking about the red curtain for a while now. So this is so an unfair question, we are going to answer it for you. Why does Baz Luhrmann start the film by opening a red curtain and actually ends the film by closing the red curtain. Why does he have that huge billboard on the rooftop. Why is it red? Not just because of the product. It’s because it’s part of the red curtain. Richard”

Richard, “ Given Luhrmann’s love of the theatricality of what he does. He has explain this is several different interviews. One of the reasons, is to give the story the shape of a myth and in this situation one could see many different myths, the ugly duckling, conquering the monster, the idea of facing one’s demons, these are human experiences that are retold and experienced over and over again generation by generation by generation in and out, since the beginning of time.

Peter, “Alright Richard, I’m going to assume a character who has a point of view that I don’t exactly espouse but, “Cmon! Myth? Are you telling us that advisors should become conversant with myths? What does myth have to do with advising, I mean you can see it in the film but cmon!”

Richard, “No matter what student the student is facing us there is that mythic quality we all encompass which is the human factor the idea of being human is mythic this is where, if myths are created through the human mind to metaphorically explain the human experience then in fact they are in parcel of being human. So that student who is, and I know you like bringing up this example because it’s a very salient example. The engineering student, how does this apply to engineering when I only have 15 minutes to meet the student and converse about everything that you have to do prescribed, here, here and here. The idea is not that this is a beginning and end in one 15 minute unit that this myth goes on and can take many different paths. It’s a heightened created world. These are Luhrmann’s own words, “The curtain reflects and emphasizes the fact that we are entering a heightened, created world and any insular world, specifically academe for us the institution is a created world. These are curriculum, “curricula” that are developed, that’s created. There are prescriptions. There are regulations. There are these structures that prescribed steps. That’s a created world. And it’s heightened by the fact of, likes, dislikes, “why do we have to do this?”, creating one’s own approaches to gen ed studies. And the third point that Luhrmann brings up in using the concept of the red curtain, theatricality and imaginary, is to keep the audience aware that they are participating in this story. Which by the way is an exhausting process. Because it makes the advisor and the student aware of the here and now. That you are present in this process and not only this process but when you go beyond this insulation, you’ll be in the present in any arena, if you will.

Peter, “By highlighting this red curtain idea he keeps us he keeps before us as the audience members the notion that we are part of a story and the creation of that story. And that is the message that we as advisors need to take to heart. We are parts of stories, we create stories, we help students create their stories and indeed myth is a very important part of this. For some students we think Beauwolf slaying Grendel in the swamp and after they conquer organic chemistry along comes Grendel’s mother physical chemistry and now it’s even worse. Some students regard getting through their curriculum as if though they were cleaning out the Augean Stables as Hercules does. These things are not just extraneous niceties that we can put on top of advising they are at the core at the heart of what we do.

Richard, “And even one of the commenters makes mention of the job of, our job as advisors to teach students to become dragon slayers. You even have movies like How to Tame your Dragon or whatever. I do, can I make a comment about the other concepts of curtains in the film too?

Peter, “yea, keep it somewhat brief; we have about five minutes left”

Richard, “Ok, just be aware as a viewer and building up these narratological skills and how to read that that red curtain is not the only curtain in the film. We see this metaphorically with the string curtains in Fran’s bodega in the back, we see the windows as curtains as the camera pans down to Doug dancing by himself in the studio and how narrow those windows, because a window within a window means. So you get smaller and smaller so somebodies curtains are very confining some open up to a larger world but the idea that Luhrmann uses this curtain imagery over and over again in different ways emphasizes his three points, I think.

Peter, “And Mary out in Indiana University she’s spot on when she says, “I think part of our job is to teach students to become dragon slayers to first of all decide what’s the dragon and how to go about slaying it. There’s other myths, there’s other metaphors that work just as well we could say well no it’s actually we teach our student to become dancers and they dance their way through the curriculum. Certainly, myth is extremely important to the idea of stories and the power of story belongs to us as advisors we do need to become comfortable with myth. Well, Richard I’m going to let you put the benediction on this because of this quote.

Richard, “Give the background”

Peter, “Ok, background to this quote, Isadora Duncan a very famous choreographer and dancer in the 1920’s had some innovative steps she had her own steps people loved it. And she had quite a following of admirers at the stage door every time she performed. On one such occasion one of her admirers said to her, “Oh Ducan, I simply adore your dances but can you tell me what they mean?”. And she said,”

Richard, “No, I can’t explain the dance to you; if I could tell you what it means, there would be no point in dancing it. And in this concept it’s the idea as an advisor to a student part of our job is not only to predict and to control to prescribe but to teach how to find meaning. Meaning in one’s self, meaning to the curriculum to imbue and to find meaning. And that, I think, is a vital thing that’s what Duncan was doing that dance is its own meaning. It defines itself and by the way, another perfect example of someone who was very trained and structured as a dancer but was also very innate in understanding the idea of movement and freedom.

Peter, “And this is what we espouse when we put forth the idea of narratological advising. It’s not about doing studies and coming up with predictability and control. It’s about narrative, it’s about stories it’s about finding meaning. The meaning that the student has for himself or herself, what their education means to them it’s about meaning and understanding. So, if we could already tell students what it meant we would be no point in going through it, dancing it. So, we are all about narratological advising we are very glad you have invited us into your computers today and hope you have got something out of this and so there’s one last thing to say which is, “ and they lived happily ever after”

Ricahrd, \*laughing\*

Peter, “Thank you”

Jennifer, “Thank you so much Peter and Richard, my movie popcorn is almost done! We are at the end of our time. I had a blast and hopefully there is no video evidence of my dancing to the music in the background. Thank you so much. I really appreciate your consciousness you were taking time from the beginning of school to get this started and thank you to all our participants. You questions were spot on and a lot of fun. And, I hope as you see Peter and Richard at region conference, state conferences, and the annual conference and maybe international conferences you will take an opportunity to bend their ear and talk myth and mythology and all those good things.

Peter, “That’s a line from the film isn’t it Jennifer. I might bend your ear for a tick. Yes please take us aside. We make house calls; invite us to your campus. Friends, this is something you can do at your campus without some expert narratologaical guru’s. Pick a text, pick a fun book, a fun movie and then dig deep into it and find out what it has to say about advising.

Jennifer, “And that is a great Segway to remind everyone that all of a resources are available on the webpage that we will archive this video and google Doc. and google questions will be there along with our other NACADA Reads materials so you can use anyone of these on your campus anytime to start a really great conversation among your colleagues.

Richard, “And if anybody out there has any questions about test materials, what about this, what about this or where would I find this, this, and this, just get in contact with either one of us. We are more than willing to share ideas and hear others.

Jennifer, “Terrific, we’re going to sign off. Thank you so much for everyone who participated and thank you again Peter and Richard we’ll, I can ask you to stay in the room for a little bit and then we’ll ask our audience members to slowly exit out of the room and thank you again for participating.

Peter, “Thank you”

Richard, “Thank you”