

**Narrative Theory: Literary Studies****(ENPS27)**

(7.5 credits)

Autumn 2024

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Course description

This is a course about modern narrative theory, with a focus on key concepts such as plot, narrator, narrative perspective and fictionality. Particular emphasis is given to theories of fictional and possible worlds. The course also includes different critical perspectives on narrative as an ideological form. While the course is primarily concerned with literary narratives, other forms of narrative are part of the discussion. Learning fundamental tools of narratology, students will develop independent, critical, and theoretically informed ways of analyzing narrative.

Intended learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- Give an account of central concepts and issues within narrative theory
- Use narratological approaches and concepts in independent analyses of the literary texts read in the course
- Critically discuss and employ different perspectives on different forms of literary narrative

This is what we aim for. The means for this is conscientious preparation for each seminar, active participation in seminar discussion, focused responses to given assignments, and the independent production of written work.

Course format and activities

The course will take place in the form of seminars, where students will enter a dialogue aimed at understanding and critically judging critical texts in the field of narrative theory, partly by considering their usefulness for the analysis of assigned literary texts. Students will practice narrative analysis and the use of critical concepts developed in this field. Seminars are intended to be active, hands-on opportunities for students to practice the skills they will learn throughout the course; for this reason, the students should bring the assigned text(s) with them to every seminar.

The course consists of the following activities:

- Seminars (pre-seminar instructions for each seminar will be posted on Athena);
- Before each seminar, students are expected to finish the assigned reading, and carry out any accompanying tasks. It is recommended that students meet in groups to discuss the reading before the seminar. Students are expected to be well prepared to discuss the reading at the seminar, showing that they have read the assigned texts carefully, with consideration given to instructions and study questions;
- Students are expected to complete all the tasks assigned by the teacher.

Grading

The course adopts the 7-grade SU scale (A–F). To receive a final grade, students must have completed all the examination assignments (if all examination assignments have not been done, no grade will be given). To receive a passing grade (A to E), students must complete and pass all the examination assignments, and thus demonstrate that they achieved all the learning outcomes at least at the minimum level (see “Course grading criteria” below).

Examination

Students are required to complete the following written assignments:

- Reflective portfolio (graded A-F): 1600-2000 words, 40% of the final grade.
- Structured Essay (graded A-F): 2000 +/- 10% words, 60% of the final grade.

Reflective portfolio

This assignment will consist of the collection of mini-responses to each seminar. Before each seminar, you are asked to upload a response to the readings assigned for this seminar. This response should consist of applying one or more related ideas from one or more theoretical texts assigned for this seminar to one of the literary texts or films. Please use different literary texts or films for different responses. In other words, point out relevant narratological concepts and distinctions that will be helpful for analyzing one of the literary texts you have selected. Do not repeat any exact analysis already present in the critical material: pick your own examples/make your own points that demonstrate your understanding of narratological concepts. This response should be 200-250 words; and as such a short assignment, it cannot be formally structured as an argumentative essay. But you might want to structure it as a coherent paragraph for the ease of communicating ideas. At the end of the course, put your responses together into one portfolio and submit as one of your written assignments

Structured essay

The second written assignment is a research- and argument-led structured essay of 2000 +/- 10% words. In this essay, you are asked to discuss how a literary text or film chosen from the ones assigned for this course confirms, offers possibilities, or raises problems for a certain type of narrative analysis or narrative problematic studied in the course. Does the text or film invite or complicate the use of particular narratological concepts? Does the theoretical framework under consideration help uncover interesting patterns or meanings within your text or film? You are allowed a great deal of freedom in how you interpret this assignment. You can use one of the questions for discussion for inspiration. Be selective and look both for challenges and confirmations that the text presents for narrative theory. You do not have to cover all the different concepts and approaches: avoid making this too broad and unfocused and aim instead for a cogent discussion of a few, select ideas that reward further reflection. Submit as MS Word document on Athena. You are welcome to consult with me about your ideas and selections.

Required reading

The five films, play, and a selection of short stories listed below will function as points of reference and material for analysis for all the seminars, and will be discussed to varying degrees depending on their relevance for the focus of the individual seminars. Our main critical text is Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction*, which is supplemented by a selection of other texts, placed on Athena. In

addition to obligatory stories, I am placing a number of optional stories and novellas on Athena in case you want to have a wider choice of literary texts as a basis for your written assignment.

Literary texts

Atwood, Margaret. "Happy Endings."
Beattie, Ann. "Janus."
Bunin, Ivan. "The Sunstroke."
Chopin, Kate. "The Story of an Hour."
Duras, Marguerite. *The Lover*. Pantheon Books, 1998.
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper."
Ishiguro, Kazuo. "Crooner."
Ishiguro, Kazuo. "A Village after Dark."
Lawrence, D.H. "The Odour of Chrysanthemums."
Murnane, Gerald. "The Battle of Acosta Nu."
Okorafor, Nnedi. "Sunrise."
O'Neill, Joseph. "The Poltroon Husband."
Pinter, Harold. *Betrayal* (play).

Additional short stories and novellas (optional reading)

Baldwin, James. "Going to Meet the Man."
Barthelme, Donald. "The School."
Chopin, Kate. "The Storm."
Hemingway, Ernest. "A Day's Wait."
James, Henry. "The Turn of the Screw." Available online at www.henryjames.org.uk/tots/home.htm
Joyce, James. "Araby."
Le Guin, Ursula. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."
Nabokov, Vladimir. "Signs and Signals;" "The Vane Sisters."
Salinger, J.D. "For Esmé – with Love and Squalor."
Williams, Joy. "The Farm."
Wolff, Tobias. "Hunters in the Snow."
Woolf, Virginia. "Kew Gardens." Available online at <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/kew-gardens-by-virginia-woolf-1927>

Films

Aftersun by Charlotte Wells.
Bad Education by Pedro Almodóvar.
Blind Chance by Krzysztof Kieślowski .
Paradise: Love by Ulrich Seidl.
My Uncle by Jacques Tati.

Critical texts

Bakhtin, Mikhail. "Forms of time and of the Chronotope in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: U of Texas press, 1981.
Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. U of Toronto Press, 2009.
Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot*. Harvard UP, 1984.
Chatman, Seymour. *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. Cornell UP, 1990.
Currie, Mark. *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time*. Edinburgh UP, 2007.
Flesch, William. *Comeuppance*. Harvard UP, 2007. "Narrative and Noncausal Bargaining." *Novel*, 45 (1), 2012.
Gans, Eric. "Originary Narrative." *Anthropoetics*, 3 (2), 1997. *The End of Culture*. U of California Press, 1985.
Genette, Gerard. "Order, Duration, and Frequency." *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*. Ed. by Brian Richardson. Ohio State UP, 2002

Girard, René. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. Stanford UP, 1987. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1976. *The Girard Reader*. Crossread Herder, 1996.

Lanser, Susan. *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*, Cornell UP, 1992.

Meretoja, Hanna. "Metanarrative Autofiction: Critical Engagement with Cultural Narrative Models." *The Autofictional: Approaches, Affordances, Forms*. Palgrave MacMillan (2022).

Prince, Gerald. *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative*. Mouton, 1982.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction*. Routledge, 2002.

Ricoeur, Paul. "Narrative Time." *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*. Ed. by Brian Richardson. Ohio State UP, 2002

Ryan, Marie Laure, Kenneth Foote, Maoz Azaryahu. *Narrating Space /Spatializing Narrative: Where Narrative Theory and Geography Meet*. Ohio State UP, 2016.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. Indiana UP, 1991.

Schmid, Wolf. *Narratology: An Introduction*. De Gruyter, 2010.

Vermeule, Blakey. *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* Johns Hopkins UP, 2010.

Walsh, Richard. "Human Cognition and Narrative Form." *The Routledge Companion to Narrative Theory*. Routledge, 2022.

Schedule

| Unit | Set reading/Build up your written portfolio for assignment 1 |
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| <p>1. Narrative Form and Fictional Worlds</p> | <p>Before the first seminar, read Gerald Prince, <i>Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative</i>: "Introduction;" Marie-Laure Ryan, <i>Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory</i>: "Possible Worlds and Accessibility Relations;" Richard Walsh, "Human Cognition and Narrative Form."</p> <p>Stories: Nnedi Okorafor, "Sunrise;" Margaret Atwood, "Happy Endings."</p> |
| <p>2. Narrative Desire</p> | <p>Theory: Peter Brooks <i>Reading for the Plot</i>: "Narrative Desire;" René Girard (selections); Eric Gans (selections).</p> <p>Play: Harold Pinter, <i>Betrayal</i>. Short story: Joseph O'Neill, "The Poltroon Husband."</p> |
| <p>3. Setting and Fictionality</p> | <p><i>The Dialogic Imagination</i>: "Forms of time and of the Chronotope in the Novel;" Marie-Laure Ryan, <i>Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative</i>: "Narrative Theory and Space;" Mieke Bal <i>Narratology</i>: "Setting."</p> <p>Stories: Katzuo Ishigoro, "A Village after Dark;" D. H. Lawrence "The Odour of Chrysanthemums." Film: Jacques Tati <i>My Uncle</i>.</p> |

| Unit | Set reading/Build up your written portfolio for assignment 1 |
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| <p>4. Narrative Temporality and Plot</p> | <p>Theory: Rimmon-Kenan, Chapter 2 and 4; Mieke Bal <i>Narratology</i> (“temporality and rhythm” – excerpts); Gerard Genette, <i>Narrative Dynamics</i>: “Order, Duration, and Frequency;” Paul Ricoeur, <i>Narrative Dynamics</i>: “Narrative Time.”</p> <p>Play: Harold Pinter <i>Betrayal</i>. Short story: Ann Beattie, “Janus.” Film: Krzysztof Kieślowski <i>Blind Chance</i>.</p> |
| <p>5. Characterization</p> | <p>Theory: Rimmon-Kenan, Chapter 5; William Flesch “Narrative and Noncausal Bargaining;” William Flesch <i>Comeuppance</i> (excerpts); Blakey Vermeule <i>Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?</i> “The Fictional among Us” and “Epilogue.”</p> <p>Short: Kazuo story Ishiguro, “Crooner.”.</p> |
| <p>6. Narrative Perspective and Focalization</p> | <p>Theory: Rimmon-Kenan, Chapters 6 and 7; Wolf Schmid, <i>Narratology</i>: “Model of Communication Levels” (excerpt); Seymour Chatman, <i>Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film</i>: “The Cinematic Narrator.”</p> <p>Short Story: Gerald Murnane, “The Battle of Acosta Nu.” Films: Pedro Almodovar <i>Bad Education</i>; Ulrich Seidl <i>Paradise: Love</i>.</p> |
| <p>7. Rhetorical and Feminist Approaches to Narrative Theory</p> | <p>James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz, <i>Narratology: Core Concepts and Critical Debates</i> (the rhetorical approach to narratology – excerpts) ; Susan Lanser, <i>Fictions of Authority: “Feminist Poetics of Narrative Voice.”</i></p> <p>Short stories: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper;” Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour.”</p> |
| <p>8. Autofiction, Memory, Narrative Retrospection</p> | <p>Mark Currie. <i>About Time</i>. Hanna Meretoja. “Metanarrative Autofiction: Critical Engagement with Cultural Narrative Models.”</p> <p>Short story: Ivan Bunin, “The Sunstroke;” Novel: <i>The Lover</i>. Film: Charlotte Wells, <i>Aftersun</i>.</p> |

**Deadlines for submission and resubmission of the final assignment: January 19;
February 23.**

Please note that there may be occasional changes to seminar dates/times and rooms. Check Time Edit regularly for updates.

Grading criteria: The two written assignments

| | A | B | C | D | E | Fx | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | excellent skills in | very good skills in | good skills in | satisfactory skills in | adequate skills in | fail | fail |
| Knowledge of concepts and issues (ILO 1) | The ability to give an account of central concepts and issues within narrative theory | The ability to give an account of central concepts and issues within narrative theory | The ability to give an account of central concepts and issues within narrative theory | The ability to give an account of central concepts and issues within narrative theory | The ability to give an account of central concepts and issues within narrative theory | The student has displayed some, but not all, of the skills of the level of the criteria for E | The student's work does not achieve the course outcomes |
| Use of narratological approaches and concepts (ILO 2) | Using narratological approaches and concepts | Using narratological approaches and concepts | Using narratological approaches and concepts | Using narratological approaches and concepts | Using narratological approaches and concepts | | |
| Analysis (ILO 2) | Independently analysing literary texts read in the course | Independently analysing literary texts read in the course | Independently analysing literary texts read in the course | Independently analysing literary texts read in the course | Independently analysing literary texts read in the course | | |
| Critical perspective (ILO 3) | Displaying a critical perspective on different approaches in narrative theory | Displaying a critical perspective on different approaches in narrative theory | Displaying a critical perspective on different approaches in narrative theory | Displaying a critical perspective on different approaches in narrative theory | Displaying a critical perspective on different approaches in narrative theory | | |
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