

Masters Programme in Literature, Programme-specific course 2

Narrative Theory, Literary Studies

Spring 2020

Instructor: Marina Ludwigs; E894; Office Hours – by appointment

Schedules are available in Time Edit and on www.english.su.se.

Dates	Seminars	Readings
		See detailed list below for the full titles and bibliographic information.
Seminar 1	Introduction to narrative theory	Before the first seminar, read Peter Goldie <i>The Mess Inside</i> (“narrative thinking” – excerpt on Mondo); Gerald Prince <i>Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative</i> (excerpt on Mondo).
Seminar 2	Narrative Desire	Theory: Peter Brooks <i>Reading for the Plot</i> (“narrative desire” – excerpt on Mondo); René Girard (selections on Mondo); Eric Gans (selections on Mondo). Play: Harold Pinter <i>Betrayal</i> . Short story: Joseph O’Neill “The Poltroon Husband.” (Mondo)
Seminar 3	Setting and Fictionality	Theory: Bakhtin, “Forms of time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” (excerpt on Mondo); Mieke Bal <i>Narratology</i> (“setting” – excerpt on Mondo); Marie-Laure Ryan “From Parallel Universes to Possible Worlds”(on Mondo). Fiction: all assigned stories (Mondo). Film: Jacques Tati <i>My Uncle</i> .
Seminar 4	Plot, Time, and Fictionality	Theory: Rimmon-Kenan, Chapter 2 and 4; Mieke Bal <i>Narratology</i> (“temporality and rhythm” – excerpt on Mondo); Ruth Ronen <i>Possible Worlds in Literary Theory</i> (“fictionality and plot” – excerpts on Mondo) Fiction: all assigned stories (Mondo).

		Film: Krzysztof Kieślowski <i>Blind Chance</i> .
Seminar 5	Characterization	Theory: Rimmon-Kenan, Chapter 5; William Flesch "Narrative and Noncausal Bargaining" (Mondo); William Flesch <i>Comeuppance</i> (excerpt on Mondo); Blakey Vermeule <i>Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?</i> (excerpt non Mondo). Fiction: all assigned stories (Mondo).
Seminar 6	Narrative Perspective and Focalization	Theory: Rimmon-Kenan, Chapters 6 and 7; Wolf Schmid "Model of Communication Levels" (excerpt on Mondo); Seymour Chatman "The Cinematic Narrator" (excerpt on Mondo). Fiction: all assigned stories (Mondo). Films: Pedro Almodovar <i>Bad Education</i> ; Ulrich Seidl <i>Paradise: Love</i> .
Seminar 7	Rhetorical and Cognitive Approaches to Narrative and Fictionality	James Phelan "Rhetorical Narratology" (excerpt on Mondo); David Herman "Cognitive Narratology" (excerpt on Mondo); Richard Walsh "Rhetoric of Fictionality" (Mondo). Fiction: all assigned stories.
Seminar 8	Summarizing, repeating key points.	No assignment.
5 June	Deadline, written assignment	

Course description

This course offers a survey of modern narrative theory. It provides an overview of the uses of narrative theory as well as a focused attention to key concepts. The concepts include narrator, focalisation, characterization, plot, temporal dynamics, setting, perspective, fictionality, narrative desire, rhetorical approach to narratology, and cognitive approach to narratology. The course also includes different critical perspectives on narrative by narratologists and philosophers. Learning fundamental tools of narratology, students will develop independent, critical, and theoretically informed ways of analysing narrative.

Reading List

The four films, play, and 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 Mondo. In addition to obligatory stories, I am placing a number of optional stories and novellas on Mondo 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."
Ishiguro, Katsuo. "Crooner."
Joyce, James. "Araby."
Lawrence, D.H. "The Odour of Chrysanthemums."
Murnane, Gerald. "The Battle of Acosta Nu."
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."
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper" (available online, University of Virginia etext, Cornell University facsimile).
Hemingway, Ernest. "A Day's Wait."
James, Henry. "The Turn of the Screw." Available online at www.henryjames.org.uk/tots/home.htm)
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

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*.
Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot*.
Chatman, Seymour. *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*.
Fleisch, William. *Comeuppance*; "Narrative and Noncausal Bargaining."
Gans, Eric. "Originary Narrative"; *The End of Culture*.
Girard, René. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World; Deceit, Desire, and the Novel; The Girard Reader*.
Goldie, Peter. *The Mess Inside*.
Herman, David, James Phelan, et al. *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates*.
Prince, Gerald. *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative*.
Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction*. Routledge, 2002.
Ronen, Ruth. *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*.
Ryan, Marie-Laure. "From Parellel Universes to Possible Worlds."
Schmid, Wolf. *Narratology: An Introduction*.
Vermeule, Blakey. *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?*
Walsh, Richard. "Rhetoric of Fictionality."

NB: This reading list may be subject to minor changes once the course has started.

Assignments

This course has two types of written assignments, a journal and a final essay.

You will post your reflective journal of 300-500 words on Mondo before each seminar, with the exception of the last seminar. Your journal for the first seminar could be shorter (150-200 words). This is an unstructured piece of writing (no need to have an introduction and conclusion) where you respond to your theoretical readings and relate some of the ideas to some of the assigned stories or films. Your responses will be graded, as a whole, based on your critical understanding of the ideas under consideration and your ability to apply them to literary texts. It's not the quantity, but the quality.

The written assignment is a structured essay of 2.500-3000 words. In this essay, you are supposed to discuss how a literary text or film of your choice confirms, offers possibilities, or raises problems for a certain type of narrative analysis or narrative problematic studied in the course. Does the text invite or complicate the use of particular narratological concepts? Does the theoretical framework under consideration help uncover interesting patterns or meanings within your text? You are allowed a great deal of freedom in how you interpret this assignment. Be selective and look both for challenges and confirmations that the text presents for narrative theory. You are welcome to consult with me about your ideas and selections.

Course aims

At the end of the course, students should

- Identify and characterize concepts that are central narratological concepts and problematize their use within narrative theory.
- Use narratological perspectives and concepts in independent analysis.
- Be able to critically discuss and apply narratological perspectives to different texts and narrative genres.

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 requirements

To achieve the goals of the course, and be given a passing grade, you will be required to

- Attend the seminars. Notify the seminar instructor **by e-mail** ASAP if for some reason you will be/have been absent. For each seminar you miss you will be given an extra assignment to make up for your absence. However, note that you have to attend at least 80% of the seminars in order to complete the course.
- Prepare for the seminars by reading the assigned texts in a critical and active manner. Also prepare by carrying out any other tasks that you have been assigned.
- Participate actively in class discussion. During the seminars every one of us will take part in a discussion that aims at finding and probing the difficult questions that come up when we analyze narrative form. Come well prepared and be ready to contribute to constructive and critical exchanges. Since at each seminar you will communicate your main findings and questions to others, it is important to be prepared for this task.
- Write and upload reading responses before each seminar. Late homework is not accepted. You need to upload a minimum of 4 reading responses in a timely manner (i.e. before the seminar) to receive a passing grade. But not submitting all of the homework assignments will lower your grade.

Contact info

Marina Ludwigs: E894; Marina.Ludwigs@english.su.se; office hours by appointment.

Assessment and assessment criteria

You will be continually assessed according to your performance in class, and according to the quality of your submitted assignments: essay (60%), seminar discussion (20%), reading journals (20%). But keep in mind that there is an inevitable holistic element involved in grading a course in the humanities.

OUTSTANDING

For a grade of **A** the student should ...

- Display wide-ranging knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as a profound familiarity with the texts we have read.
- Show the ability, in written work and in active class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works in a manner that is on occasion innovative and often illuminating, consistently deploying appropriate critical concepts in an elegant way.
- Present his/her arguments in a persuasive and coherent manner, in correct, fluent and idiomatic English, in a consistently academic style of writing and spoken delivery.

EXCELLENT

For a grade of **B** the student should ...

- display a broad knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as a solid familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works in a manner that is on occasion illuminating, with frequent and correct use of appropriate critical concepts.
- present arguments in a solid and coherent manner, in correct and fluent English, in an academic style of writing and in an acceptably formal register of spoken delivery

GOOD

For a grade of **C** the student should ...

- display considerable knowledge of most of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as an adequate familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works, with at least occasional and correct use of appropriate critical concepts.
- present arguments in a coherent manner, in adequate English with only minor errors, with only some lapses from an academic style of writing and with a correct and fluent spoken delivery

SATISFACTORY

For a grade of **D** the student should ...

- display basic knowledge of most of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as some familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze literary works and theoretical arguments, with some, basic use of appropriate critical concepts.
- present his/her arguments in a largely coherent manner, in adequate English with only minor errors, in a consistent, formal register of writing and with a largely correct and fluent spoken delivery

ADEQUATE

For a grade of **E** the student should ...

- display basic knowledge of some of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as a basic knowledge of some of the elements of plots, characters, settings and narrative structure in most of the texts we have read.
- show some ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze literary works and theoretical arguments, with at least a minimal employment of technical terms.
- present his/her arguments in an intelligible manner, in adequate English, in a largely formal register of written or spoken delivery, with some fluency and few errors.

INADEQUATE

A grade of **F** will be set if the student

- fails the attendance requirements or fails to hand in assignments in time.
 - shows scant or no knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations; likewise shows very little or no familiarity with the texts we have read.
 - fails to reach a satisfactory level of critical analysis in written assignments and in class discussion, a failure that includes inability to properly use critical concepts.
 - fails to communicate adequately in English, with many errors and no sense of stylistic register.
- Any of these failures is enough for an overall fail.

INCOMPLETE

The **Fx** grade is set if the student has reached most of the Learning outcomes of the course, but must hand in revised or supplementary material in order to fully meet the requirements.