

Course syllabus: Introduction to Narrative Theory

Prof. Elana Gomel

Course no.: 0626120801

Academic year: 2018/19

Semester: 1st

Number of hours weekly: 4

Class will be held on: Sun, Wed 12-14

Reception hours: by appointment

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Course Description

We live our lives surrounded by stories. Novels, movies, video games, and newscasts are narratives, and so are biographies and autobiographies. The concept of narrative is crucial not only to literature but also to psychology, history, legal and political science.

In this course we will learn about the basic and fundamental concepts of narrative theory, such as author, reader, plot, setting, character, and point of view. We will study the classic narratological theories of Boris Tomashevsky, Gerard Genette, Seymour Chatman and others. But we will also discuss the recent and exciting innovations in narrative theory, connected to the rise of the Internet, the changing media landscape, and the influence of cognitive and evolutionary science. The aim of the course is to equip you with the necessary analytical tools for understanding both literary and non-literary narratives.

Goals:

1. Familiarity with major theoretical approaches to narrative.
2. Ability to apply the theoretical tools provided by the course to a variety of narrative texts.

3. Independent and creative thinking about narrative.

Online Resources:

OSU Project Narrative <https://projectnarrative.osu.edu/>

The Living Handbook of Narratology [LH]

<http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/>

Manfred Jahn, *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative* [N]

<http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.htm>

Course Requirements

Attendance (mandatory); quizzes; an essay assignment; a midterm; a take-home final exam.

Final grade: 40% final; 20% midterm; 30% essay; 10% class participation (including quizzes)

Unit 1. What is narrative?

Oct. 14. Introduction

Oct 17. Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (excerpt)

Oct. 21. "Narrative genres" (N2 in Jahn); Jack Zipes, "Fairy Tales"

Oct. 24. Charles Perrault, "Cinderella; or the Glass Slipper", The Grimm Brothers, "Ashputtle"

Oct. 28. Tanith Lee, "When the Clock Strikes"; Sara Maitland, "The Wicked Stepmother's Lament"

Unit 2. Fictional and non-fictional narratives

Oct. 31 Jean-Marie Schaeffer *Fictional vs. Factual Narration* (in LH), Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality"

Nov 4. Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact"

Unit 3 Narration and Focalization

Nov 7. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart", Uri Margolin, "Narrator" (in LH);

Nov.11. Ambrose Bierce, "The Moonlit Road"

Nov.14. N3. Burkhardt Niederhoff, "Focalization" (in LH)

Nov. 18. Wayne Booth, "Distance and Point of View: an Essay in Classification"; Ryunosuke Akutagawa, "In a Grove"

Unit 4. Story and plot

Nov. 21. Karin Kukkonen *Plot* (in LH), Seymour Chatman, "Story: Events"; Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band"

Nov. 25. Gerard Genette, "Order, Duration and Frequency"; Agatha Christie, "Witness for the Prosecution"

Nov. 28. N4; G.K. Chesterton, "The Invisible Man"

Unit 5. Fictional Worlds

Dec. 2. N6; Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of Chronotope in the Novel"

Dec. 5. H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*

Dec. 12. Wells, *The Time Machine*

Dec. 16. Marie Laure Ryan, "Possible Worlds" (in LH)

Unit 6. Character

Dec. 19. Fotis Jannidis, "Character" (in LH)

Dec. 23. Mary Wilkins-Freeman, "Luella Miller"

Unit 7. Cognitive Approaches to Narrative

Dec. 26. Marina Grishakova, "Fiction as Cognitive Challenge: Exploration Into Alternative Forms of Selfhood and Experience"

David Herman, "Cognitive Narratology" (in LH)

Dec. 30. Daniel Keyes, "Flowers for Algernon"

Unit 8. Narrative in Other Media: Visual Culture and Digital Media

Jan. 2. Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of an Image"

Jan. 6. Marie-Laure Ryan, "Narration in Various Media"

Jan. 9. Frank Zipfel, "Fiction Across Media: Toward a Transmedial Concept of Fictionality"

Jan 13. Conclusion

Note: This schedule is tentative and may change as the course progresses.