

THE NARRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF 'THE REAL'. THE FACTUAL NARRATIVE
IN DIFFERENT SOCIO-DISCURSIVE FIELDS: FROM JOURNALISM AND HISTORY
TO MEDICINE AND THE NATURAL SCIENCES.

Type of activity: seminar

Teacher's name: Martín Ignacio Koval (CONICET/UNAJ, Argentina)

Contact email: martinignaciokoval@gmail.com

Date: March 13th, 14th and 15th 2024

Number of hours: 12 h

Modality: Presential, at UPO, Vercelli, Italia.

SEMINAR RATIONALE

Narration is perhaps the most elementary form of organising discourse and thought. This does not mean that it is devoid of complexity, but rather that it is often primary in relation to other textual types or modes such as explanation or argumentation, insofar as it constitutes, in part, its condition of possibility: it is not unusual that, in order to explain something or defend an argument - even if only in our minds - we must perform a narrative reconstruction, assemble a "script", a "story", so that a series of facts acquire, in the first instance, an internal coherence.

When studying the way in which narrative texts are constructed and interpreted (myths, legends, stories, novels, historical sources, historiographical texts, journalistic news, chronicles, autobiographies, anecdotes, gossip, films, documentaries, biblical parables, confessions, political discourses, illness stories and so on), it is necessary to start from a certain conception of the limits and relations between factual and fictional discourse.

This distinction, which is a presupposition of classical studies in narratology and literary theory, has only belatedly developed into a specific theoretical reflection. In the case of the factual narrative, the interest in its study is even more recent than the theorisations on fictional narrative, traditionally privileged as the object of narratology and literary studies.

The emergence of the linguistic turn in the late 1960s (Richard Rorty), especially in the fields of historiography and journalism, was an initial step in the direction of recognising the importance of narrative textuality in extra-literary spheres. The metahistorisation proposed by Hayden White in texts such as *Metahistory* (1973) and the emergence of the "New Journalism", conceptualised by Tom Wolfe in his famous article "The New Journalism" (also 1973), are undoubtedly fundamental milestones in the recognition of the centrality of narrative, and continue to be the subject of heated controversy.

In the same years (1967), William Labov and Joshua Waletzky carried out their famous sociolinguistic studies on oral narration in everyday life. Their contributions led to the development of narrative studies in hitherto unsuspected areas. A very illustrative case in this regard is that of medicine, which in the 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of a "narrative turn" based on the idea that the narration of the experience of illness plays an important role in the doctor-patient relationship and, therefore, in medical diagnosis and treatment.

In the field of literary theory, in 1990 Gérard Genette introduced the category of "factual narrative" (*récit factuel*) and distinguished it from that of "fictional narrative", on the basis of the reading pact that is established in each case. He thus enshrined the relevance of the factual narrative for narratological study. Some recent theoretical developments, such as those brought together by Christian Klein and Matías Martínez (*Wirklichkeitserzählungen*, "Narratives about the real world", 2009) and those compiled by Monica Fludernik and Marie-Laure Ryan (*Narrative factuality. A Handbook*, 2020), recover Genette's initiative from various perspectives of post-classical narratology.

In this vein, the purpose of the present seminar is to develop an introductory study of narrative textuality in factual environments. Our proposal consists of a survey of the uses and functions of factual narration in different social spheres of textual production. The panoramic view of these forms of narrative textuality will privilege the articulation between theory and practice, promoting the critical appropriation of the tools provided by narratology and their operationalisation in the analysis of diverse textual materials. The corpus to work on will be composed of textual fragments produced in Latin America and/or that refer to its historical and contemporary reality.

OBJECTIVES

General objective:

The general objective of this seminar is to introduce students to the field of factual narratives and to trigger a reflection on its main problems and dimensions, both in a theoretical and practical sense.

Specific objectives:

1. Introduce a set of problems linked to the narratological approach to the factual narrative.
2. Propose a series of tools for the analysis of factual narratives, articulating the reflection on the theoretical scope of these tools with their implementation in the study of different texts.
3. Analyze the factual narrative in its specificity, weighing up the scope and limitations that classical narratological approaches, centred on the fictional narrative, pose for its analysis.
4. Analyze factual narratives in terms of the modalities they adopt in different areas of social life.
5. Expose some historical and contemporary aspects of the political, social, media and everyday reality of the Argentine and, more generally, Latin American geographical space.

CONTENTS/THEMATIC UNITS

Unit 1: Narrativity and Factuality: An Introduction

Basic definitions of narrativity and factuality. The narrative text from the perspective of text linguistics. Minimal narrative and narration. The functions of narrative. Degrees of narrativity. Factual narrative as the other of fiction. Terminological distinctions: factual, factual, non-fictional. Syntactic, semantic and pragmatic definitions of the factual/fictional. "Strong" and "weak" factuality. Theoretical perspectives on the factual/fictional pair: autonomism, panfictionalism, compositionism. Factual narratives and interdisciplinarity. The diachronic variability of conceptions and practices of narrative factuality.

Unit 2: Some basic notions of narratology and their applicability in factual settings

Narrative constitution. Story and discourse. Narrated time and narration time. Narrative rhythm: order, duration and frequency. Distance or narrative mediation. Perspective and focalisation. Typologies of the narrator. Unreliable narration. Diegetic levels. Narrated worlds. Narrative action. From character to agent or participant. The processes of direct and indirect characterisation. The mental construction of the agent in factual texts.

Unit 3: Factual narration and socio-discursive domains

The "highly" narrative genres of journalism and history. The question of truth: from the effect of objectivity to "post-truth". Narrative representation of the past: history and memory. Narratives of personal experience: from everyday life to the doctor's surgery. Argumentative uses of narrative in face-to-face interaction. Illness and narrative identity: the "turning point" as a rupture in the continuity of life. Autobiographical narratives. Areas of "low narrativity": from the natural sciences to law and beyond. The problem of narrative explanation. The attribution of intentionality in factual texts with and without human agents.

METHODOLOGY

Each of the three classes will be divided into two parts: a theoretical-expository part and a practical workshop. During the first, there will be a discussion of the suggested bibliography, which the students will be expected to read beforehand. In the second part, teacher and students will work with a module of factual texts produced in diverse environments and with very heterogeneous themes (although referring to the Argentine and Latin American reality), in order to analyse them on the basis of the concepts acquired in the theoretical part.

Schedule

	Date	Contents / Activities
1	<u>Wednesday 13th March</u> 14:00 - 18:00	Seminar presentation / Unit 1
2	<u>Thursday 14th</u> 14:00 - 18:00	Unit 2
3	<u>Friday 15th</u> 14:00 - 18:00	Unit 3

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unit 1

- Fludernik, M. y Ryan, M.-L. (2020). Introduction. In Fludernik, M. & Ryan, M.-L., *Narrative Factuality. A Handbook* (p. 1-26). Berlin / New York: De Gruyter.
- Genette, G. (1991). Fiction and Diction. In *Fiction & Diction* (p. 1-29). Ithaca/London: Cornell U. Press.
- Ryan, M.-L. (2007). Toward a Definition of Narrative. In Herman, D. (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (p. 22-35). Cambridge U. Press.

Unit 2

- Genette, G. (1972). *Discours du récit*. Paris: Editions du Seuil. (Selection. English translation will be provided)
- Koval, M. (December 2021). Del personaje a la persona. Una contribución al estudio de la caracterización de personas reales en textos narrativos factuales. *Noésis. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 31, 61, 226-242. (Selection. English translation will be provided)
- Schmid, W. (2010). Point of View. In *Narratology. An Introduction* (p. 89-117). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Martínez, M. & Scheffel, M. (2019). Das 'Was': Handlung und erzählte Welt. In *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie* (p. 115-166). München: Beck. (Selection)

Unit 3

- Charon, R. (January 2001). Narrative Medicine: Form, Functions, and Ethics. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 134, 1, 83-87.
- Klein, Ch. & Martínez, M. (2009). *Wirklichkeitserzählungen. Felder, Formen und Funktionen nicht-literarischen Erzählens*. Stuttgart: Metzler. (Selection. English translation will be provided)
- Norris, S. P. *et al.* (2005). A theoretical framework for narrative explanation in science. *Wiley InterScience*, 535-563.
- Vanoost, M. (2013). Defining Narrative Journalism Through the Concept of Plot. *Diegesis 2.2*, 77-97.