

Call for papers

Narrative Matters 2012: Life and Narrative

The American University of Paris

CONFERENCE DATES: May 29th to June 1st 2012

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ABSTRACTS: November 15, 2011

The American University of Paris, The University of Paris Diderot-Paris 7, and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative at St. Thomas University, invite scholars from all disciplines to reflect upon the productive interplay between life and narrative.

What is the relationship between life and narrative? As noted by Jerome Bruner in his article on "Life as Narrative" (1987), this is one of the central intellectual questions facing narrative inquiry and narrative practice across multiple disciplines – psychology, narratology and literary theory, digital media, sociology, history, sociolinguistics, philosophy, medicine, education, gerontology, communications, social work, ethics, religious studies, etc. Indeed, there is broad agreement that narrative representations (from novels to histories, biographies, websites, films, museums) and life are essential to each other. Narrative draws upon life for inspiration to create an imagined world that has substance, color, texture, and meaning. Meanwhile, life draws upon narrative for resources to imagine our identity and to interpret others, situations, and the "real" world. Both are involved in an intricate exchange, playing off one another, informing and creating one another. However, the relationship between life and narrative – between experience and story - is not merely theoretical in nature but practical as well. Narrative has a profound impact on our understanding of what it means to be human; of the choices we make as persons; of the nature of health and wellness, teaching and learning; of the meaning of history; of how social groups work through conflict; and of how the cultural and political world is ordered.

Panels and papers

Scholars are invited to organize panel sessions and present papers on various aspects of the broad theme of "Life and Narrative." Possible questions include:

- What is the relationship between telling and living?
- How can the narrative concept help us to better understand experience, interpretation and action?
- What does literature teach us about aspects of life, experience, mind, and social relationships?
- How can narrative research have a greater impact on the lives of real persons and institutions? How can narrative theory and practice better inform one another?
- Can there be a "true" narrative? What are the boundaries between fact and fiction, between autobiography and autofiction?

- How is identity storied, restoried, even de-storied across the lifespan?
- What is the effect of the media (new and old) on identity?
- What is the relationship between what is archived in individual memories and social institutions and the stories that we tell?

Conversations

Two plenary sessions will ask prominent scholars from different disciplines to present a short paper and discuss a central question related to life and narrative. Time will be given for debate and interaction between the presenters and the audience.

Confirmed Plenary speakers

Mark Freeman, College of The Holy Cross
Alexandra Georgakopoulou-Nunes, Kings College London
James Phelan, Ohio State University

Comparing interpretations

A final plenary will compare and contrast approaches to the study of narrative. Our plenary speakers will discuss approaches to the study of research interviews and literature. The audience will be provided with the texts in advance of the plenary and will be given ample opportunity to exchange ideas with the panelists.

Language

Although the language of the conference will be in English, papers delivered in French are welcome. Scholars presenting papers in French are requested to bring a translated copy of their paper to the conference for distribution to the audience.

Workshops

Preconference workshops will be organized, principally for graduate students and beginning scholars, along the following themes:

1. Translating narrative theory
2. Doing narrative inquiry
3. Digital narratives
4. Narrative and social change

Guidelines for submissions

We welcome proposals for individual papers (20 minutes plus ten minutes for questions) and panels (90 minutes). Submissions should be in the language of presentation (English or French). Please submit your proposal, including an abstract of less than 250 words, on-line at: <http://my.aup.edu/conference/narrative-matters-2012>

Abstracts are due on November 15, 2011.

Publications

An edited book will be published including the best submissions from the conference. If you would like your paper to be considered, please submit a complete draft no later than May 30, 2012.

Conference website

Coming soon.

Contact information

If you have questions, please email us at narrativematters2012@aup.fr.

Organizing committee

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