

COURSE SYLLABUS

Disruptive Narratives: Reconstructing the Truth in the Age of Multimodal Propaganda



ONLINE COURSE

CEU SUMMER UNIVERSITY 2021

BUDAPEST 2021

Faculty:

Director: Túry, György (Hungary)

Co-Directors: Bozóki, András (Hungary) and Lobo, Gregory (Colombia/USA)

Coordinator: Groza, Mihaela (Romania)

Buruma, Ian (Netherlands/USA)

Ousmanova, Almira (Belarus)

Poblete-Alday, Patricia (Chile)

Zdovc Merljak, Sonja (Slovenia)

Guest Speakers:

Jászberényi, Sándor (Hungary)

Martinez, Oscar (El Salvador)

Szablowski, Witold (Poland)

Turati, Marcela (Mexico)

Vágvölgyi B., András (Hungary)

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE AND ITS STRUCTURE

An international group of scholars, representing three continents, and including world-renowned author Ian Buruma, will give a five-day summer university course for advanced B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. students in fact-based narratives, also known as literary journalism in English language scholarship, reportage in the former Soviet area, or *crónica* in Latin America. At first glance reading like fiction, the genre seeks however to be informative, to give an account of reality based on epistemologically objective data, mixing the intransigence of facts with the passion of narrative.

The course responds to the fact that we live in an age of multimodal propaganda and misinformation, which scholars have shown is related to political populism and resurgent authoritarianism. Research also suggests that the best way to disrupt the effects of propaganda is through the construction of disruptive narratives that give readers routes towards new understandings of the world, others in the world, and their relation to them.

Participants in the course will be introduced to i) the history, ii) the characteristics, iii) the major topics, and iv) the reality-transforming potential of the genre by surveying some of its groundbreaking representatives and achievements. To do this we will engage with historical and contemporary examples of the genre itself, but also with theoretical and philosophical texts that explore the relationship between (accurate) representation and/of (empirical) reality. The research and the curriculum are interdisciplinary, involving literary studies, political science, psychology, sociology, journalism and media studies, international relations, and history.

Each of the **five days** of the course will have from three to five 60 – 80-minute synchronous activities that include i) live lectures by faculty; ii) small group and individual work slots; iii) class discussions; iv) Q&A sessions; v) one-on-one consultations with faculty, and vi) participant presentations. Asynchronous activities will form a crucial element of the course, both before and during it: i) readings will be made available prior to the course; ii) readings will be accompanied by specific questions formulated by faculty that are expected to be answered by participants before the given session (either in written or PPT or video format); iii) both faculty members and participants will have the chance to introduce themselves in video format, using the platform Panopto, if they wish; iv) participants will work in small groups on specific learning activities.

COURSE STRUCTURE

DAY 1: JUNE 21st, 2021 – INTRODUCTION

Session 1: Introductory session, 14:00 – 16:00 (short breaks will be included)

Faculty members: Lobo, Gregory; Ousmanova, Almira; Túry, György

The introductory session includes presentations from faculty member Almira Ousmanova, course co-director Gregory Lobo, and course director György Túry. Each will introduce themselves and give an account of their interest in and perspective on the genre of literary journalism. Additionally, students will be asked to present themselves. There will hopefully be time for an initial set of questions to build trust and establish our dynamic of engagement and debate.



Required readings

- Gilbert, Daniel T. “How Mental Systems Believe.” *American Psychologist*, no. 2, American Psychological Association (APA), 1991, pp. 107–19. *Crossref*, doi:10.1037/0003-066x.46.2.107. Please feel free to limit your reading to pages 107-109 and 116-117.
- Soares, Isabel. “AT THE INTERSECTION OF RISK: When literary journalism and sociology study urban problems by means of akin methodologies.” *SOCIOLOGIA, PROBLEMAS E PRÁTICAS*, no. 84, 2017, pp. 63-80. DOI:10.7458/SPP2017843466

Short description of the Soares paper: The intersection of literary journalism, or long-form reporting and sociological research at the methodological level occurs when analysing urban problems. To establish the connection between literary journalism and sociology, we focus on the influence early literary journalists had on the sociological and narrative construction of social problems and how literary journalism continues to be a tool in the unveiling of risk-related issues such as the exploitation of cheap labour and the degradation of urban environments. We examine a corpus of literary journalism texts to conclude that literary journalism and sociology resort to the same data gathering methodologies, interviews, surveys, and statistics, while narratively exposing life at the socioeconomic peripheries.



Preparation questions

The questions below refer specifically to the text from Isabel Soares:

1. In what sense can long form reporting be seen as a powerful ally of social science research?
2. What kind of “gaps” can long form reporting fill in, “left” by quantitative research methods in the social sciences?
3. Can you provide examples from your own culture of long form reporting that played similar roles to the ones referred to by Soares?
4. What do you think the “secret” is about long format fact-based narratives that make them seem indispensable in learning about “reality”?
5. What factors contributed to the birth of long form reporting?

The questions below refer specifically to the text from Daniel Gilbert:

1. The article suggests that in the act of understanding something, we accept it as “true” or accurate or real. Why would this be so? What are the consequences of this acceptance as true for critical thinking and accurate perceptions of the world?
2. How would you relate the analysis and description of belief presented in this article to the issue of propaganda and polarization? What light does this shed on our inability to talk to each other and not past each other? On our inability to “change our minds” or change someone else’s?

Session 2: Practice in focus, 17:00 – 17:50

Faculty member: Buruma, Ian



Required reading

Please read carefully the text provided by Ian Buruma and formulate at least 5 questions or comments based on the text. Please send and upload the questions to Teams (in the chat section for the session in question), at least 72 hours before the session starts.

- Buruma, Ian, “The Joys and Perils of Victimhood”, *The New York Review of Books*. 46 (6), 1999, pp. 1-11.

Session 3: Practice in focus, 18:00 – 18:50

Faculty member: Zdovc Merljak, Sonja

Many Slovene readers and journalists have never heard of literary journalism. Those who have are still often confused about the form. Yes, it is interesting to read a good story! But if it is well written, so as to be engaging and not just informative, is it still journalism? To complicate things further, the modifier ‘literary’ in the phrase literary journalism is seen by some as an excuse to fabricate. Isn’t that what fiction does—make up things? But great journalism cannot be fabricated. Are there any literary journalism writers in Slovenia? Who are they and why – although only for a moment in time – some of them were encouraged to file stories that aimed for the level of journalistic depth routinely achieved at the *New Yorker*? Why is literary journalism crucial for contemporary journalism? How can we become literary journalists? Why is it that some texts work and some do not? Where can we begin? How do we report, how do we improve our writing, and why do we sometimes need to kill our darlings? During this hour we will try to answer all these questions and work with excerpts from Slovenian literary journalism and with works by different literary journalism experts from around the globe.



Required readings

- *The Economist* (2021): “Dominic Cummings takes aim at the British state”, last accessed on June 2nd, 2021. (Read only the beginning.) URL: <https://www.economist.com/britain/2021/05/26/dominic-cummings-takes-revenge-on-boris-johnson-at-last>
- Franklin, Jon. *Writing for Story*. Berkley, 1987, (Read page 1.) URL: <http://www.risingpress.org/kelly.pdf> <https://archive.org/details/writingforstoryc00fran>
- Anton LaPeter L., Braga, M., Cormier, A., (2015) “Insane, invisible, in danger,” *Tampa Bay Times*, (Read first few paragraphs.) URL: <https://projects.tampabay.com/projects/2015/investigations/florida-mental-health-hospitals/cuts/>
- Zdovc, S., (2010) “Wind in Hands,” *Mediterranea online*. URL: <https://www.mediterraneaonline.eu/wind-in-hands/>
- Zdovc, S., (2010) “Many faces of poverty,” *Mediterranea online*. URL: <https://www.mediterraneaonline.eu/many-faces-of-poverty/>
- Wright, L (2020) “The Plague Year,” *The New Yorker*. URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/01/04/the-plague-year>

Additional course material:

1. Sting on stories (clips will be provided during the class)
2. The Beatles: Eleanor Rigby



Preparation questions

1. Are all topics suitable for literary journalism?
2. Which literary journalism texts do you find inspiring for your work? Are there any texts that make you doubt in it? Provide examples.
3. Could you use it in a project? How? Think about an example.
4. What would you need to begin creating a literary journalistic project?
5. Why is literary journalism on the list of remedies to widespread current business problems?

DAY 2: JUNE 22nd, 2021 – PRE 1989 EASTERN EUROPE

Session 1: 09:00 – 09:50

Faculty member: Bozóki, András

This session investigates the state of public sphere before 1989, or more closely, in a post-totalitarian communist regime in the 1980s. We will argue that the change of the regime was preceded by the change in the public sphere, specifically in discourse. The writings of Antonio Gramsci, Alvin Gouldner and Adam Michnik helps us understand late communist public sphere and the dynamics of discursive change. Particularly useful is the notion of a „Culture of Critical Discourse” elaborated by Gouldner. The two readings are excerpts from two chapters of my forthcoming book, *Rolling Regime Change: The Political Role of Intellectuals in Hungary, 1977-1994*. These chapters partly cover the structure of the public sphere and partly the topics of samizdat journals by which authors attempted to offer an alternative narrative for politics, history and society in a non-democratic regime.



Required reading

- Excerpts from Bozóki, András, [Rolling Transition: The Political Role of Intellectuals in Hungary, 1977-1994](#), Budapest –New York: CEU Press (under review)



Preparation questions

1. How did the censorship work?
2. What were the levels of public sphere?
3. How political differences within the leadership of the communist party reflected upon their policies towards the public sphere?
4. Which were the 1. supported, 2. tolerated and 3. forbidden narratives by the regime?
5. How could dissident intellectuals organize themselves around samizdat periodicals?
6. What were the major differences between the official narratives and the narratives of the democratic opposition on politics, democracy, contemporary history, social change and economic situation in a Soviet-type society?

Session 2: 10:00 – 10:50

Faculty member: Zdovc Merljak, Sonja

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the media in Slovenia supported the socialist authorities. Many journalists were teaching, informing, explaining, and politically educating the public in the socialist self-management spirit. They considered themselves social-political workers. However, Slovenian journalism was not as rigid as that in Hungary, Romania, or Soviet Union where the media was completely controlled.

A group of journalists from the magazines *Tovariš*, *Tedenska tribuna* and *Mladina* turned away from the one-dimensional definition of journalism. They started to cultivate freer forms of expression, among them literary journalism. They turned to novelistic techniques because the analytical, factographic reporting was not possible. Contrary to the situation in the USA, where New Journalism emerged at the same time because journalists could no longer adequately react to the contemporary social phenomena in a traditional way, journalists in Slovenia turned to novelistic techniques because they could not write about the situation in Slovenia directly. They could not for example directly write about how communists emptied rural parts of Slovenia and forced people into the cities to create a more powerful working class. Such facts could only be told subversively through metaphors, personal stories, and in a literary way.



Required reading

- Zdovc, S., “Željko Kozinc, the Subversive Reporter: Literary Journalism in Slovenia” in Zehle, Soenke, Sonja M. Zdovc, William Dow, Nikki Hessel, Maria Lassila-Merisalo, Peiqin Chen, Sonia F. Parratt, Isabel S. Santos, John S. Bak, and Bill Reynolds. *Literary Journalism Across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences*, 2012.



Preparation questions

1. What are the contemporary topics in your country or in other countries that could use literary journalism as a subversive form?
2. Do you know any other journalistic forms that could be used to tell forbidden stories?
3. Which journalistic genres do you find most useful to learn about the past?
4. Why are certain genres more able to go in-depth than others?
5. What stories from the past would you like to dive into?

Session 3: 12:00-12:50 - Representing the Unspeakable: women's war testimonies as history of feelings in the prose of Svetlana Alexievich.

Faculty member: Ousmanova, Almira

In 2015 Svetlana Alexievich, a prominent Belarusian writer, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature “for her polyphonic writings “which were described as “a monument to suffering and courage in our time”. In her books she addresses the dramatic points of Soviet history, such as the Second World War,

the Afghan War, the Chernobyl disaster and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Those events and their impact on individual lives are narrated through personal testimonies of individuals who lived through them.

In my presentation I will focus on Svetlana Alexievich's writing method: on how it relates to oral history, documentary literature and to journalistic writing; on which literary tradition it is based; what ethical dilemmas it reveals in the representation of traumatic memories of suffering and survival. We will also discuss what role her book on the "Unwomanly Face of War" (1985) played in deconstructing the official narratives of the war in the late socialist period, and how it contributes to the understanding of the "womanly face" of the Belarusian protests in 2020.



Required readings

- Alexievich, Svetlana. *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II*. New York: Random House, 2017.

Additional readings (optional):

- Gapova, Elena "‘Things Fall Apart’: The Moral Revolutions of Svetlana Alexievich", (http://srch.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no30_ses/p103-115.pdf)
- Bush, Daniel. "‘No other proof’: Svetlana Aleksievich in the tradition of Soviet war writing", *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 2017, 59:3-4, 214-233.

Video and film (optional):

- Svetlana Alexievich Interview: A Human is a Scary Creature (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJ5bOFwpz1s>)
- *Beanpole* (a film by Kantemir Balagov, 2019) <https://sovietmoviesonline.com/drama/beanpole>



Preparation questions

1. If you have read the books of Svetlana Alexievich, which of them made the strongest impression on you and why?
2. What are the main features of the "epic-choral prose" developed by A. Adamovich and S. Alexievich in their books on the traumatic experience of war and survival?
3. How would you characterize the presence of the author's voice in Alexievich books?
4. What does this type of literature have in common with ethnographic research and oral history? What constitutes its 'literariness'?
5. In which way do the female testimonies challenge the official narratives of the victorious war?

Session 4: 15:00 – 16:00. A Conversation about *Magyar Narancs*

Faculty members: Bozóki, András, Túry, György, Vágvölgyi B., András

We are excited to include this conversation about *Magyar Narancs* with András Bozóki and András B. Vágvölgyi, and moderated by György Túry. In this hour-long dialogue, the participants will discuss *Magyar Narancs*, the legendary political and cultural Hungarian magazine, focussing mostly on its founding and its early years. On the stage will be one of the founders and editor-in-chief of the magazine, along with a regular contributor from those early years (late 1980s, early 1990s).



Required reading

- Túry, György. „Mr. Ginsberg and Dr. Gonzo Do Hungary: Chapters in Journalism History from the Transition Years.“ Ed. Róka, Jolán. *Annales, Tomus III*. Budapest: Századvég, 2010. 159-164.

Food for thought: please take a look at the images of the magazine from the early days (available in MS Teams). Please check those images and come to the conversation prepared to talk about the associations you have with them.

Session 5: 18:00-21:00 - FILM SCRRENING

Faculty member: Ousmanova, Almira

Come and see (a film by Elem Klimov, 1985) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkkJZweYaLI>

The script was based on: Adamovich Ales *Khatyn* (1971).

DAY 3: JUNE 23rd, 2021 – POST 1989 EASTERN EUROPE

Session 1: 09:00 – 09:50

Faculty member: Bozóki, András

This session will be an introduction to post-1989 theoretical approaches to the meanings of regime change and its narratives. The two readings for this session focus on the notion of „imitation”. Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes argue that the post-1989 period in Central Europe was dominated by imitation, i. e. newly liberated post-communist countries aimed to copy the successful patterns of the West. However, Jan Kubik argues that the „imitation thesis” does not hold, because these countries have in some ways been original and innovative in their post-totalitarian periods thus far.



Required readings

- Krastev, Ivan, Holmes, Stephan, “Explaining Eastern Europe: Imitation and Its Discontents.” *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 3, 2018, pp. 117–28.

- Kubik, Jan, “Against the Imitation Thesis: A Critical Reading of *The Light That Failed* by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes” *Concilium Civitas Almanac*, 2020, 1-12.



Preparation questions

1. To what extent did East Central Europe imitate the West?
2. Which are those narratives that were dominated by the approach of imitation?
3. How would you characterize the novel contribution of ECE narratives to the ongoing discourse about democracy, development, dependency, and political initiatives?
4. What are the narrative legacies of 1989?
5. To what extent was the post-transition narrative elitist and to what extent could that narrative be seen as responsible for the populist, authoritarian reaction later on?

Session 2: 10:00 – 10:50

Faculty member: Túry, György

The Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe of 1986 was and still is seen by many not only as a powerful metaphor for how “really existing socialism” really worked, but also for how the half life of the Soviet system continues to contaminate the socio-scape of the formerly communist countries even after the formal end of state-sponsored communism. We will read excerpts from *Chernobyl Prayer* by Nobel Prize winner Belarussian non-fiction writer Svetlana Alexievich, in which she reconstructs the events and muses about their meaning.



Required reading

- Alexievich, Svetlana. *Chernobyl Prayer: A Chronicle of the Future*. [1997, 2013] Trans. Anna Gunin and Arch Tait. London: Penguin Books, 2016. Mandatory: pp. 1-5 and 24-33; recommended: pp. 6-23.



Preparation questions

1. One of the most powerful chapters in the book “A lone human voice” [pp. 6-23, not compulsory but highly recommended] starts with these sentences: “I don’t know what to tell you about. Death or love? Or is it the same.” In what sense could death and love be seen as “the same”?
2. Alexievich subtitles her book, *Chernobyl Prayer* as “A Chronicle of the Future.” How can one chronicle that which has not happened yet? In what sense might she mean it? Please provide relevant quotes from the text and also refer to (relevant) contextual data/information.
3. Please collect (and comment upon some of) the cultural and historical examples that are referred to in the chapter “The Author Interviews Herself...” (pp. 24-33).
4. The Chernobyl catastrophe represents, for Alexievich, something unprecedented in human history. Please explain.

5. Please choose a short excerpt from the chapter “The Author Interviews Herself...” (pp. 24-33) (a few sentences, a paragraph) and analyze it in depth, with special attention to the *way* the text is written (style, narrative strategy, use of tropes, point of view, embeddedness in the whole chapter/book, etc., etc.).

Session 3: 11:00-11:50 - The Power of the Powerless: the narratives of non-violent resistance from Prague spring to Belarusian #Evaluation 2020

Faculty member: Ousmanova, Almira

Until the summer of 2020, Belarus was mostly known in the world as "the last dictatorship of Europe", ruled by Alexander Lukashenko for 27 years. However, in 2020, Belarusian society woke up to political life. The nonviolent and mass protest of Belarusians against the illegitimate regime, violence and political repressions has been going on for almost a year. In my lecture, I will talk about the specifics of the Belarusian protests, forms of solidarity and the rallying of the “powerless” against the regime.

During the seminar we will discuss the main ideas of the famous political essay of Václav Havel, written in 1978, which is relevant for understanding the political situation in Belarus and some other post socialist countries. We will also read and discuss “the story of the Square of Changes” written by Boris Pasternak in June 2021.

For independent viewing, I propose we watch two films - a chronicle of protests and a film about the "woman's face" of the Belarusian #Evaluation.



Required readings

- Havel, Václav “The Power of the Powerless”, pp. 1 – 20, 29 – 41.

<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/1979/01/the-power-of-the-powerless.pdf>

- Boris Pasternak “Square of Changes in Belarus is Huge” (June 8, 2021)

<https://charter97.org/en/news/2021/6/8/425251/>

(for images of this story see here - <https://kyky.org/news/dazhe-ne-veritsya-chno-vse-eto-sluchilos-za-god-izdatel-napisal-zhutkuyu-no-geroicheskuyu-istoriyu-ploschadi-peremen>)



Preparation questions

1. How does Havel characterize the changes in the evolution of dictatorial regimes? What techniques of power are inherent in the post-totalitarian system?
2. How does “the case of the greengrocer”, narrated by Havel, allow him to reveal the purpose and function of ideology in authoritarian states?
3. What does Havel mean by the “the auto-totality of a society”?
4. How does Havel define the meaning and functions of “opposition” and “dissidence” in post-totalitarian societies?
5. What is the relevance of the analysis proposed by Havel in this essay for understanding modern dictatorships, such as the case of Belarus?

6. How does the story of one courtyard in Minsk, narrated by Boris Pasternak, depict the changes of Belarusian society in 2020-2021, namely, the "evolution" of the dictatorship, on the one hand, and the growth of citizens' solidarity, on the other?

Additional material

Documentaries on Belarusian protests):

The Sisters of Protest (film by 34mag.net) - <https://www.voiceofbelarus.com/the-sisters-of-protest/>

We did not know each other until this summer (film by Olga Abramchik, 2021) - <https://en.currenttime.tv/screening-room>

Session 4: 13:00 – 13:50

Faculty member: Zdovc Merljak, Sonja

In the 1990's, literary journalism started to appear more widely in several European countries, including the former Yugoslavia. One of the reasons for the expansion of such writing can be found in its popularity since readers clearly have an affinity for stories. Among the few journalists practicing the genre in Slovenia were Ervin Hladnik Milharčič, Sonja Merljak Zdovc, Mimi Podkrižnik, Uroš Škerl, and Boštjan Videmšek – all of them working for many years as reporters at the national daily newspaper *Delo*. They realised that narrative techniques could enliven the otherwise demanding financial, scientific, and political texts. They could see how readers identify with a topic more easily if they see it through the eyes of engaging protagonists who have personally lived in that world.

Many countries later successfully entered the second phase of the development of literary journalism, in which literary journalism asserts itself as a common, real, and living style of writing.

Slovenia, on the other hand, remained in the first, individual phase in which only a few journalists became excited about the possibilities offered to them by the genre. The journalist who is carrying the literary journalism torch even today is Boštjan Videmšek, who eventually left *Delo* to become a freelancer. He continues to write literary journalism stories on the global refugee crisis and effects of the war in former Yugoslavia, and is thus keeping this prestigious form alive even when many media organisations can no longer afford it.



Required reading

- Videmšek, Boštjan. *Dispatches from the Frontlines of Humanity*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018, xiii-xix & 1-12.

[Part of the book](#) is available through Google Books

Additional course material:

1. Trailer [The Miner](#)
2. BBC news report [The killing fields of Srebrenica - Newsnight archives](#) (1996)
3. Trailer [Quo Vadis, Aida?](#)
4. Interview [Jasmila Žbanić on Bosnian Oscar Nominee 'Quo Vadis, Aida?'](#),



Preparation questions

1. Why are less and less media outlets unwilling to publish literary journalism despite its proven ability to attract readers and convey important stories?
2. How does the narrative differ among news reports, literary journalism, documentaries, and movies?
3. What can be achieved by using different means of telling the same story?
4. Which means are more effective under what circumstances?
5. Which of the possible ways of telling the story would best suit a project you have?
6. How would you measure the effect of your project considering the narrative model you chose for it?

Session 5 by Witold Szablowski, 15:00-15:50



Required reading

Please read carefully the text provided by Witold Szablowski and formulate at least 5 questions or comments based on the text. Please send and upload the questions to Teams (in the chat section for the session in question), at least 72 hours before the session starts.

- Szablowski, Witold, and Antonia Lloyd-Jones. *Dancing Bears: True Stories of People Held Captive to Old Ways of Life in Newly Free Societies.*, 2018, NY, (Please read the chapter “Poland: Hobbits at the State Farm”)

Session 6: 16:00 –17:00

Faculty member: Jászberényi, Sándor



Required readings

Please read carefully the text provided by Sandor Jaszberenyi and formulate at least 5 questions or comments based on the text. Please send and upload the questions to Teams (in the chat section for the session in question), at least 72 hours before the session starts.

- JUST A LITTLE FAVOR , Translated excerpt by the author from *A varjúkirály-Nyugati történetek*, Jászberényi, Sándor, 2020, Pesti Kalligram, Budapest.
- Jászberényi, Sandor, The Mother Who Fought Isis to the Death, in *Wall Street Journal*, 2014, pp. 1-4.

DAY 4: JUNE 24th, 2021 – LATIN AMERICA (I)

Session 1: 14:00 – 14:50, Introducing Disruptive Narratives and Latin America.

Faculty member: Lobo, Gregory

This hour-long session requires pre-reading of the assigned text and engagement with the associated questions.

The first ten minutes of class will have the instructor situating the text within the course themes. The next 15 – 20 minutes will consist of students working in small groups to discuss the text and the idea of **remembering the future**, in relation to course themes. How, specifically, can you connect it with Alexievich’s notion of **chronicling** the future? The final half hour will be dedicated to a group discussion of disruptive narratives and their potential role in “innervating the imagination”.



Required reading

- Lobo, Gregory. “Remembering the Future.” Adapted from Lobo, Gregory J. Narrative Politics in Chile: under and after the Cold War. Diss. University of California, 2002. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304784592>



Preparation questions

1. What historical knowledge is necessary to understand the basic argument of this short text?
2. How would you explain the idea of “remembering the future”?
3. This is a question about exposition. What is your reaction to the use of Spanish in the main text? Even with the translations in the footnotes, does this ask too much of the reader?
4. A transcendental question: How are we to think about the phenomenon of violence in human affairs? Is it always going to be there? Is it an aberration or, sadly, intrinsic?
5. What questions do you have about this piece?

Session 2: 15:00 –15:50, From I to We, in Latin America and Elsewhere

Faculty member: Lobo, Gregory

This hour-long session requires pre-reading of the assigned text and engagement with the associated questions.

The session begins with some personal biographical comments from the instructor relating the topics implied by the title of this session (10-15 minutes). The next 5-10 minutes situate the text in the larger philosophical debates about the reality of groups and relate this discussion to the notion of disruptive narratives. There will then be 10-15 minutes of small group discussion of the text and the associated questions. The remaining time will be devoted to plenary discussion.



Required reading

- Gallagher, S. and Tollefsen, D. 2017. Advancing the ‘we’ through narrative. *Topoi*. DOI: 10.1007/s11245-017-9452-1.



Preparation questions

1. What new and useful concepts does this text develop, from your perspective?
2. How do YOU relate these concepts to class themes?
3. What, specifically, do you make of the discussion of “we-narratives”?
4. What tensions exist between these we-narratives and I-narratives? How do we arrive at We from I? Or, rather, is the correct way to conceive of the movement as one from We to I? Explain your perspective.
5. What questions do you have about this piece?

Session 3: 17:00 –17:50, Disruption in Practice

Faculty member: Lobo, Gregory

This hour-long session requires pre-reading of the assigned text and engagement with the associated questions.

This session is based on an analysis of the book *El Correo de Bagdad* de José Miguel Varas. Not available in English, the assigned reading presents the basic plot and structure of the book while analyzing it as a **disruptive narrative**. *El Correo de Bagdad* can be considered as something like meta political journalism insofar as the practice of political or narrative journalism is at its center, though in fictionalized form.

The session will consist in an initial 10-15 minutes focused on situating the text by Varas. The next 15-20 minutes will consist in small group conversations. The next 10-15 minutes will be devoted to a plenary discussion and the remaining time will attempt to draw some conclusions from the discussions that took place in sessions.



Required reading

- Lobo, Gregory J. “Disrupting Difference and the End of History.” Adapted from Lobo, Gregory J., *Narrative Politics in Chile: under and after the Cold War*. Diss. University of California, 2002. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304784592>



Preparation questions

1. Varas’ text connects radically different times, places and people. What is your reaction (emotional, critical, etc.) to this?
2. Is Latin America unique or idiosyncratic? Is anywhere? Is there a relationship between the particular and the universal?
3. Based on what you’ve been able to appreciate about Varas’ text, how does it compare with other narratives we have considered thus far?
4. What is its relationship to the genre of narrative journalism? Does it fall within or without, or at the limit, based on what you can appreciate about it?
5. What questions do you have about this piece?

Session 4: 20:00 –21:00

Faculty member: Buruma, Ian



Required reading

Please read carefully the text provided by Ian Buruma and formulate at least 5 questions or comments based on the text. Please send and upload the questions to Teams (in the chat section for the session in question), at least 72 hours before the session starts.

- Smith, Zadie, “Generation Why”, *The New York Review* (November 25, 2010 issue), last accessed June 11th 2021, URL: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2010/11/25/generation-why/>

DAY 5: JUNE 25th, 2021 – LATIN AMERICA (II)

Session 1: 14:00 – 15:00, Theoretical and methodological issues. Latin American *crónica* of violence: postmodern figures of horror.

Faculty member: Poblete-Alday, Patricia

In this session we will discuss the main theoretical concepts: *crónica* and evil, from a transdisciplinary perspective (literature, philosophy, historiography, communication, art) and how to narrate horror in fictional and non-fictional stories (examples).



Required reading

- Patricia Poblete Alday, “Postmodern monsters: immigration figures in contemporary Mexico” *Chasqui. Revista de Literatura Latinoamericana*. Arizona State University. Mayo 2018. XLVII(1): 249-258.
- Patricia Poblete Alday, “Contemporary narrative *crónica*: boundaries, theoretical approaches and methodological challenges” *Literatura Mexicana*. UNAM, 2020, 31 (1): 133-153.



Preparation questions

1. What is *crónica* in your country? What is called?
2. In your opinion, what are the essential “ingredients” for a literary journalism text?
3. Which processes/persons/phenomenon of your country could be depicted using classical horror motifs/tropes?
4. How can we avoid stereotypes or clichés in literary journalistic writing, considering our comprehension tends to depend upon predetermined narrative structures and tropes?
5. What ethical challenges do we face in narrating crime and violence stories?

Session 2: 15:30 –16:15, Group discussion on texts by Óscar Martínez

Faculty member: Poblete-Alday, Patricia



Required reading

- Martínez, Óscar (2013a). “Here They Rape, There They Kill: Chiapas”, in *The Beast. Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail*. Trans. Daniela Maria Ugaz and John Washington. NY: Verso.
- _____ (2013b). “La Bestia: Oaxaca and Veracruz”, in *The Beast. Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail*. Trans. Daniela Maria Ugaz and John Washington. NY: Verso.



Preparation questions

1. Which horror motifs/tropes can we identify in these texts?
2. How would you characterize the narrative voice?
3. Do you perceive any gender traces in the authorship? Which ones and where?
4. Materially speaking, what is required to produce texts like these?
5. As reader, which is your emotional response to these stories?

Session 3: 16:15 –17:00

LIVE Discussion with Oscar Martinez

Session 4: 17:30 –18:15, Group discussion on texts by Marcela Turati

Faculty member: Poblete-Alday, Patricia



Required reading

- Turati, Marcela (2020). “War made me a Feminist”, in *The Sorrows of Mexico*. Trans. Amanda Hopkinson. London: Hachette.
- _____ (2011). “The National Decay”, in *Proceso*, July 25. Trans. John Gibler.



Preparation questions

1. Which horror motifs/tropes can we identify in these texts?
2. How would you characterize the narrative voice?
3. Do you perceive any gender traces in the authorship? Which ones and where?
4. Materially speaking, what is required to produce texts like these?
5. As reader, which is your emotional response to these stories?

Session 5: 18:15 –19:00

LIVE Discussion with Marcela Turati

19:30-20:30: Conclusion and Goodbye (everybody)

Requirements for the certificate of successful completion of the course

Class attendance:

Class attendance is imperative: our pedagogical methodology is constructivist, which means we'll be learning together and each and every one of us will be contributing to our joint project of constructing and appropriating the knowledge in this course. When someone misses a class, everyone else misses the chance to learn from that person. Therefore, come to every class! Those who attend at least 20 of the 24 sessions will receive the certificate. If you must miss a session, please inform the course directors/coordinator about it in advance.

Active participation: Class participants are expected to contribute actively to class discussions, building on the comments from classmates and the class instructors to work towards understanding the issues, the problems, and indeed the knowledge related to the class and its themes. A contribution is considered meaningful if a participant added something new by sharing knowledge, asked a critical question, explained a tricky detail, raised a new possibility, synthesized from examples, or summarized arguments. Don't necessarily think of saying "but". Instead, say "and" or "additionally" or something similar. This will help us create trust and thus allow us to take risks and really lead to innovative discussions. What is also crucial (obligatory) is doing the preparatory assignments for the sessions: consulting the uploaded materials and answering, in written form, by indicated deadline, all the preparation questions as described in the relevant guidelines. An answer contributes to the session if it addresses discussion points, raises new insights, moves the discussion forward, offers relevant examples.

HOW TO PREPARE

How to prepare for the sessions? Under every session, you find an abstract, one or two readings, and some questions for the preparation. Please read the abstract and read the indicated texts. Then provide a brief answer to each of the questions, in writing (we recommend around 250-300 words per answer). Upload your answer to Teams in your personal folder. Again, an answer contributes to the session if it addresses discussion points, engages with the reading, raises new insights, moves the discussion forward, offers relevant examples. The faculty member hosting the live session will use your answers when preparing the session. The sessions will be discussions of the readings, the questions, and your answers, so your prepared and active presence is very much needed. Please upload your answers at least 72 hours before the relevant session. Thank you so much!