

# Narrative Research

<b>Final award</b>	MA
<b>Intermediate awards available</b>	PG Cert, PG Dip
<b>UCAS code</b>	N/A
<b>Details of professional body accreditation</b>	N/A
<b>Relevant QAA Benchmark statements</b>	Sociology
<b>Date specification last up-dated</b>	N/A

## Profile

### The summary - programme advertising leaflet

#### Programme content

- to familiarize students with narrative theories
- to train students in a range of narrative research methodologies
- to give students experience in applying their theoretical and methodological skills in narrative to concrete research issues
- to enable students to conduct an original and substantial piece of independent research in the MA thesis
- to teach a high level of transferable research skills including theoretical and empirical review, comparison and criticism; the planning, implementation and analysis of research; and individual and team research working

#### Main topics of study

Through a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives, the programme will address a number of questions including:

- How do we decide on a research question in narrative analysis?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of different modes of narrative inquiry?
- What are the benefits and difficulties of a range of methods of narrative analysis?
- What are the possibilities and limitations of narrative research for drawing conclusions of theoretical and practical significance?
- How do people come to see themselves as distinct subjects about whom a story can be told?
- What role do memory and ideology play in people's accounts of their lives?
- How do class, ethnicity, gender and other social characteristics shape the stories people tell?
- What is the relationship between the stories people tell about their lives, and the political framework which forms the context for those stories?
- How does culture intervene in the way narratives are produced?

#### MA in Narrative Research at UEL

Narrative research is growing in popularity within academic social science and applied social policy areas. Within cultural studies, too, there are increasing numbers of researchers and students who use narrative analysis. Other fields where this work is becoming more significant include health studies, computer studies (particularly in the development and theorization of narratively-based games), and biographically-based art work.

Within established social science research MAs, students rarely receive enough specific training to adopt a narrative methodological approach. This absence is even more pronounced within MAs in other areas. Narrative studies are however methodologically and theoretically very diverse, and students require academic experience in the area in order to be able to use them effectively.

No programme exists in the UK covering the area proposed. Internationally, while there are individual programmes which cover some of the same ground as some in the proposed MA, in particular in the US, Australia and Scandinavia, full MAs in the area do not exist. This MA would thus offer a unique student opportunity, both nationally and internationally.

### **Admission requirements**

Applicants should normally hold a first class or second class honours degree. This degree should be in a relevant field of study. Applicants holding an honours degree in a field of study which is not of obvious relevance may also be considered. Applicants who are not graduates but who have relevant research or professional experience may also be considered. All applicants with appropriate qualifications will be invited for an interview. In lieu of the interview overseas students may be asked to supply detailed written evidence of their interest in Narrative Research, together with evidence of research or writing or other work of a standard sufficient for successful postgraduate study.

### **Programme structure**

Core modules – Narrative Research, Narrative Practice  
Options: Life-course narratives; Subjects in Culture; Psychosocial Analysis of Forced Migration;  
Genealogical Research Strategies; Political Narratives; Feminist Postcolonialism;  
Orientalism; Gender; Sexuality

You will begin the Dissertation during Semester B and submit in September  
An alternative route is to take the dissertation in Semester A of the following year

### **Learning environment**

The programme uses a combination of lectures, workshops, small-group discussions, student presentations, and tutorials.

### **Assessment**

Assessment is by coursework and dissertation. Assessed coursework may include essays, seminar presentations, and reports, where appropriate.

### **Relevance to work/profession**

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## **Thesis/Dissertation/project work**

All students pursuing an MA degree undertake a supervised research project in an area of their own interest. The dissertation may be developed from a proposal undertaken in the Narrative analysis module.

The Dissertation should:

- be of approximately 15,000 words or in an equivalent audio/visual format;
- show evidence of understanding of theories and methodological approaches covered in Core Modules 1 and 2, and in the option modules.
- show evidence that primary source material has been mobilised in the course of research;
- show evidence of independent critical and evaluative abilities appropriate to the postgraduate level of study.

## **Added value**

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## **Your future career**

Using and applying narratives is a growing career field including amongst others: academic social science and cultural studies, applied social policy areas, health services, computer career pathways (particularly in the development and theorization of narratively-based games) and biographically-based art work.

## **How we support you**

Lectures identify key issues and debates and set out frameworks within which students may pursue specific topics.

Workshops are organised around skills exercises and group work, giving students an opportunity to think through specific research problems and to develop practical skills by means of hands-on experience. They are used to develop ideas encountered in lectures and in students' own reading and research. They encourage critical thinking and communicative abilities, and advance skills in group work.

Student presentations are based upon verbal presentation of an agreed topic. Students are encouraged to use audio-visual aids and to combine media. Presentations encourage development of independent thinking, collaborative and general inter-personal skills, and familiarity with specific media and with multi-media techniques.

Tutorials are conducted one-to-one or in small groups. They deal with specific issues including skills deficiencies identified by staff or by students

In addition students are invited to public seminars and research workshops organised by the Centre for Narrative Research in the Social Sciences. These seminars are open to academics,

students, professionals and practitioners in the narrative field. Here students are enabled to place research techniques and findings in the context of the complex and often competing demands of the academic environment and statutory and voluntary bodies.

### **Bonus factors**

East London environment offers unrivalled access to the most important creative resources, as well as good transport links and cheapest accommodation in London. There are also regular visits from important professionals who live and work locally.

## **Outcomes**

### **Programme aims and learning outcomes**

#### **What is this programme designed to achieve?**

The students will be expected to work within an advance academic environment and in the field to:

- to be familiar with a number of narrative theories
- to be able to apply a range of narrative methodologies
- to familiarize students with narrative theories
- to train students in a range of narrative research methodologies
- to give students experience in applying their theoretical and methodological skills in narrative to concrete research issues
- to enable students to conduct an original and substantial piece of independent research in the MA thesis
- to teach a high level of transferable research skills including theoretical and empirical review, comparison and criticism; the planning, implementation and analysis of research; and individual and team research working

#### **What will you learn?**

##### **Knowledge:**

- to have in-depth knowledge and understanding of traditions of narrative analysis in and relevant to the social sciences
- to apply narrative analysis to personal narratives
- to be familiar with the key areas of contemporary narrative research
- to identify major theoretical and methodological issues for understanding narrative

##### **Thinking skills:**

- to think analytically about the storied nature of human speech and action
- to have a deeper appreciation of the relationship between individual lives and social structures
- to be able to recognize different cultural genres and political discourses in the stories people tell about their lives.
- be able to reflect upon their potential as narrative researchers in a range of fields

## **Subject-Based Practical skills**

- to be able to design and implement questions for in-depth, semi-structured and unstructured interviews
- to be able to transcribe the spoken word and visual material to written text, with an appreciation of the complexity of this process
- plan and implement small-scale personal narrative research
- compare and contrast written visual and spoken narratives

## **Skills for life and work (general skills)**

- develop active listening skills
- enhance capacity for perspective role taking
- think about the way that cultural difference impacts upon the ways people represent themselves and in particular frame their life stories
- formulate practically-based research questions and ways to answer them

# **Structure**

## **The programme structure**

### **Introduction**

At the University of East London all programmes are credit-rated to help you to understand the amount and level of study that is needed.

One credit is equal to 10 hours of directed study time (this includes everything you do e.g. lecture, seminar and private study).

Credits are assigned to one of 5 levels:

0 equivalent in standard to GCE 'A' level and is intended to prepare students for year one of an undergraduate degree programme

1 equivalent in standard to the first year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme

2 equivalent in standard to the second year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme

3 equivalent in standard to the third year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme

M equivalent in standard to a Masters degree

### **Credit rating**

The overall credit-rating of this programme is **180**

### **Typical duration**

The typical duration of this programme is one year full-time or two years part-time. It is possible to move from full-time to part-time study and vice-versa to accommodate any external factors such as financial constraints or domestic commitments. Many of our students make use of this flexibility and this may impact on the overall duration of their study period.

## **How the teaching year is divided**

The teaching year is divided into two semesters of roughly equal length. A typical full-time student will study two 30 credit modules per semester and a typical part-time student will study one or two modules per semester

## **What you will study when**

### **Full-time mode**

Semester A:

Core module – Narrative Research (30 credits)

Options - you may study either, Life-course narratives (30 credits) Subjects in Culture, (30 credits) Psychosocial Analysis of Forced Migration (30 credits) (30 credits)

Semester B:

Core Module – Narrative Practice (30 credits)

Options - you may study either Genealogical Research Strategies, (30 credits) Political Narratives (30 credits), Feminist Postcolonialism (30 credits); Orientalism, Gender, Sexuality (30 credits)

You will begin the Dissertation during Semester B and submit in September

### **Part-time mode**

Year 1, Semester A: You may study EITHER

Core module 1 – Narrative Research (30 credits)

OR one of the following option modules:

Options - you may study either, Life-course narratives (30 credits), Subjects in Culture (30 credits), Psychosocial Analysis of Forced Migration (30 credits) Generation, Age and Meaning (30 credits)

Year 1, Semester B: You may study EITHER

Core module 2- Narrative Practice (30 credits) OR one of the following option modules:

Options - you may study either Genealogical Research Strategies (30 credits), Political Narratives (30 credits), Feminist Postcolonialism: Orientalism, Gender, Sexuality(30 credits)

Year 2, Semester A:

You may study EITHER

Core module 1 – Narrative Research (30 credits)

OR one of the following option modules:

Options - you may study either, Life-course narratives (30 credits), Subjects in Culture (30 credits), Psychosocial Analysis of Forced Migration (30 credits)

Year 2, Semester B: You may study EITHER

Core Module 2 – Narrative Research II (30 credits)

OR one of the following option modules:

Options - you may study either, Life-course narratives (30 credits), Subjects in Culture (30 credits), Psychosocial Analysis of Forced Migration (30 credits)

You will begin the Dissertation during Semester B of Year 2 and submit in September (60 credits).

Students must complete 60 credits in year one and 120 credits in year two, and must take the 2 core modules and the dissertation

<b>Year</b>	<b>Module title</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>status</b>
1 or 2	Narrative Research	30	Core
1or 2	Narrative Practice	30	Core
1or 2	Political Narratives	30	Option
1or 2	Genealogical Research Strategies	30	Option
1or 2	Life-course narratives	30	Option
1or 2	Subjects in Culture	30	Option
1or 2	Feminist Postcolonialism: Orientalism, Gender, Sexuality	30	Option
1or 2	Psychosocial Analysis of Forced Migration	30	Option
1or 2	Dissertation	60	Core

### **Requirements for gaining an award**

In order to obtain a Masters, you will need to obtain 180 credits at Level M. These credits will include a 60 credit level M core module of advanced independent research.

### **Masters Award Classification**

Where a student is eligible for an Masters award then the award classification is determined by calculating the arithmetic mean of all marks and applying the mark obtained as a percentage, with all decimal points rounded up to the nearest whole number, to the following classification

- 70% - 100% Distinction
- 60% - 69% Merit
- 50% - 59% Pass
- 0% - 49% Not Passed

## **Assessment**

### **Teaching, learning and assessment**

#### **Teaching and learning**

Knowledge is developed through

- Lectures
- seminars

- tutorials
- guidance to readings and literature surveys

Thinking skills are developed through

- Supervision of coursework and dissertation
- Encouragement in raising comments and questions in seminar series
- Facilitation of group work in research workshops
- Guidance into critical reading and writing

Practical skills are developed through

- Guidance in preparation of oral seminar presentations
- Training and feedback on the preparation and conduct of interviews
- Guidance in transcribing
- Field trips to research archives

Skills for life and work (general skills) are developed through

- Planning and timing of research projects
- Training in listening and interview techniques
- Training and feedback in perspective role taking
- Working with multiple targets simultaneously

### **Assessment**

Assessment is based upon credit accumulation. Successful completion of core modules and options will result in the allocation of 30 credits; successful completion of the dissertation will result in the award of 60 credits.

### **Core Modules**

Narrative Analysis (30)

Narrative Practice (30)

### **Options** (two required)

Genealogical Research Strategies (30)

Political Narratives (30)

Life-course narratives (30)

Subjects in Culture (30)

Psychosocial Analysis of Forced Migration (30)

Feminist Postcolonialism, Orientalism, Gender and Sexuality (30)

Dissertation (60)

Total required for award of MA: 180 credits

### **Knowledge is assessed by**

- Coursework and dissertation
- Seminar presentation



- Literature reviews

### **Thinking skills are assessed by**

- Coursework and dissertation
- Seminar presentation
- Contribution to group-work in research workshops

### **Practical skills are assessed by**

- Oral presentations
- Successful conduct of interviews performed for assignments
- Interview transcripts prepared for assignments

### **Skills for life and work (general skills) are assessed by**

- Oral presentations
- Keeping deadlines and other aspects of coursework organization

## **Quality**

### **How we assure the quality of this programme**

#### **Before this programme started**

Before the programme started, the following was checked:

- there would be enough qualified staff to teach the programme;
- adequate resources would be in place;
- the overall aims and objectives were appropriate;
- the content of the programme met national benchmark requirements;
- the programme met any professional/statutory body requirements;
- the proposal met other internal quality criteria covering a range of issues such as admissions policy, teaching, learning and assessment strategy and student support mechanisms.

This is done through a process of programme approval which involves consulting academic experts including some subject specialists from other institutions.

### **How we monitor the quality of this programme**

The quality of this programme is monitored each year through evaluating:

- external examiner reports (considering quality and standards);
- statistical information (considering issues such as the pass rate);
- student feedback.

Drawing on this and other information, programme teams undertake the annual Review and Enhancement Process which is co-ordinated at School level and includes student participation. The process is monitored by the University's Quality Standing Committee.

Once every six years an in-depth review of the whole field is undertaken by a panel that includes at least two external subject specialists. The panel considers documents, looks at student work, speaks to current and former students and speaks to staff before drawing its conclusions. The result is a report highlighting good practice and identifying areas where action is needed.

### **The role of the programme committee**

This programme has a programme committee comprising all relevant teaching staff, student representatives and others who make a contribution towards the effective operation of the programme (e.g. library/technician staff). The committee has responsibilities for the quality of the programme. It provides input into the operation of the Review and Enhancement Process and proposes changes to improve quality. The programme committee plays a critical role in the University's quality assurance procedures.

### **The role of external examiners**

The standard of this programme is monitored by at least one external examiner. External examiners have two primary responsibilities:

- To ensure the standard of the programme;
- To ensure that justice is done to individual students.

External examiners fulfil these responsibilities in a variety of ways including:

- Approving exam papers/assignments;
- Attending assessment boards;
- Reviewing samples of student work and moderating marks;
- Ensuring that regulations are followed;
- Providing feedback through an annual report that enables us to make improvements for the future.

### **Listening to the views of students**

The following methods for gaining student feedback are used on this programme:

- Module evaluations
- Student representation on programme committees (meeting 3 times year)
- Student/Staff consultative committee (meeting 3 times a year)

Students are notified of the action taken through:

- circulating the minutes of the programme committee
- providing details on the programme notice board

### **Listening to the views of others**

The following methods are used for gaining the views of other interested parties:

- Questionnaires to former students
- Annual student satisfaction questionnaire
- International advisory panel of the Centre for Narrative Research

## **Further Information**

### **Where you can find further information**

Further information about this programme is available from:

- The UEL web site (<http://www.uel.ac.uk>)
- The student handbook  
[http://webct.uel.ac.uk/SCRIPT/SSMCS\\_Noticeboard/scripts/serve\\_home](http://webct.uel.ac.uk/SCRIPT/SSMCS_Noticeboard/scripts/serve_home)
- Module study guides  
[http://webct.uel.ac.uk/SCRIPT/SSMCS\\_Noticeboard/scripts/serve\\_home](http://webct.uel.ac.uk/SCRIPT/SSMCS_Noticeboard/scripts/serve_home)
- UEL Manual of General Regulations and Policies <http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/>
- UEL Quality Manual <http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/>
- Regulations for the Academic Framework <http://www.uel.ac.uk/academicframework/>
- <http://www.uel.ac.uk/ssmacs/index.htm>
- <http://www.uel.ac.uk/cnr/index.htm>