Narrative Research by Distance learning

Final award	Postgraduate Associate Certificate
Intermediate awards available	None
UCAS code	N/A
Details of professional body accreditation	N/A
Relevant QAA Benchmark statements	N/A
Date specification last up-dated	31st August 2006

Profile

The summary - programme advertising leaflet

Programme content

This programme is designed to give you the opportunity to

- examine, discuss and critically evaluate a range of narrative theories
- be trained in a range of narrative research methodologies
- gain experience in applying theoretical and methodological skills in narrative to concrete research issues
- develop competence in comparing and evaluating different approaches to narrative work
- acquire 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:

*In this programme, we will provide students with an overview of the range of narrative research methodologies. Beginning with an exploration of the meaning of narrative, we will then outline discourse analytic methods, Labovian methods, and the Biographical Interpretive Method. We will then consider, more substantially, three key areas of narrative research: oral, personal narratives; written narratives (including autobiographies and letters); and visual narratives.

Through a range of theoretical perspectives, we shall be attempting to address a number of questions; for instance

- how do people come to see themselves as distinct subjects about whom a story can be told?

- what role do memory, ideology, sense of audience, etc. play in people's accounts of their lives?
- how do class, ethnicity, gender and other social characteristics shape the stories people tell?
- what do we look for when we analyze accounts of other people's lives?

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 distance learning programme exists in the UK covering the area proposed. Internationally, while there are individual courses which cover some of the same ground as some in the proposed programme, in particular in the US, Australia and Scandinavia, distance programmes in the area do not exist. This programme 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.

Technical requirements

It is essential for this programme that you have access to suitable computing equipment. You must have reliable internet access. You will need at least a 56K modem connection but a broadband connection is strongly recommended - so that you can effectively utilise online resources including e-mail, the World Wide Web, UEL Direct and our online student community.

Your computer should also have Microsoft Office software (Word, Excel and Access), or equivalent. You may be required to submit work to our university via UELPlus (see below). We use Microsoft Office and you must submit work in a compatible format. We will not take responsibility for marking any work that is not submitted in the correct format.

We use UELPlus (Campus edition 4.0) for this programme. To participate, you will need a supported Internet browser (see UELPlus's tune-up page at http://www.webct.com/tuneup/viewpage?name=tuneup_browser_tuneup_information). You will also need reliable email and access to a printer. You will be expected to spend approximately 2 - 4 hours online per week. The learning materials contain activities that will require you to go online to participate in discussions with your fellow students and with your module tutors. (You may find it beneficial to spend more time online to investigate more fully any areas that are of particular interest to you.)

UELPlus Campus edition 4.0 /UEL Plus (UELPlus Vista edition 4) is the platform used by UEL in delivering this programme.

Programme structure

Module – Narrative Research by Distance Learning

Learning environment

The course uses a combination of readings, self-directed exercises, including practical exercises, ongoing formative e-tutorial exchanges with tutors, 'seminar' type e-exchanges with other students, an assignment based on a single paper, and a comparative assignment.

The programme is delivered exclusively by distance learning, so it is essential that students have easy and regular access to the Internet and reliable email. Each module consists of reading material and a series of self-check and interactive tasks in which students discuss the issues raised in each module in the light of their own teaching context and educational background. In addition to online discussions, which involve the module tutor on a weekly basis, students also have access to the module tutor directly via UELPlus.

Assessment

Assessment is by coursework totalling 6000 words approximately.

Relevance to work/profession

-

Thesis/Dissertation/project work

-

Added value

-

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

The module guide sets out a programme of activities for each weekly session, identifies key issues and debates and set out frameworks within which students may pursue specific topics.

Students also receive comprehensive print and cd readers and have access to all module materials via webct and can communicate both in this way and through an elist

Activities are organised around skills exercises and exchanges with tutors and other students, 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 students' own reading and research. They encourage critical thinking and communicative abilities, and advance skills in collaborative working.

Student assignments are based upon developing ideas already emerging from considerations of module material. They encourage development of independent thinking, and may involve the development of cross-media skills,

Tutorials are conducted weekly online. 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. For distance learning students who cannot attend, sound files are posted on their programme webct page.

On enrolment, you will be provided with introductory materials on the use of UELPlus and UEL Direct.

During your studies, you will be supported by our team of Distance Learning Student Advisors in the School of Distance and E-Learning. These advisors act as a first point of contact for you, addressing the majority of student queries and referring only those that relate to academic matters to the module tutor. The Student Advisors will also contact students who seem to be falling behind and will offer advice and encouragement to them.

Students will receive academic support from their individual module leader. The role of the module leader is to monitor the effectiveness of the student's learning during the module for which they are responsible, providing feedback, encouragement and support, and any necessary remedial action.

Bonus factors

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Outcomes

Programme aims and learning outcomes

What is this programme designed to achieve?

This programme is designed to give you the opportunity to:

- examine, discuss and critically evaluate a range of narrative theories
- be able to apply a range of narrative methodologies
- gain experience in applying theoretical and methodological skills in narrative to concrete research issues
- to acquire 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 collective working

What will you learn?

At the end of this module students will:

Knowledge

- have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the narrative tradition
- apply narrative and discourse analysis to individual life histories
- identify major theoretical and methodological issues for understanding narrative

Thinking skills

- think more analytically about the storied nature of human identity
- have a deeper appreciation of the relationship between individual lives and social structures
- be able to recognise different cultural genres in the stories people use to frame the events of their lives

Subject-Based Practical skills

- be able to design and implement questions for in-depth interviews
- be able to transcribe the spoken word to written text, with an appreciation of the complexity of the process
- plan and implement small-scale life history research

Skills for life and work (general skills)

- develop active listening skills
- enhance their capacity for perspective role taking
- think about the way that cultural difference impacts upon the way people frame their life stories

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 typical duration of this programme is one semester

Typical duration

The teaching year is divided into three trimesters of roughly equal length, starting in January, June and September. A student on this programme will undertake this module during semester A, September to December.

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

Semester A:

Narrative Research by Distance Learning

Year	Module title	Credit	status
1	Narrative Research	30	Core

Requirements for gaining an award

In order to gain a Postgraduate Associate Certificate, you will need to obtain 30 credits at Level M.

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 decimals 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

- Guided reading and study
- E-seminars
- E-tutorials

Thinking skills are developed through

- Supervision of coursework
- Encouragement in raising comments and questions in tutorials and seminar series
- Facilitation of collaborative seminar discussions
- Guidance in critical reading and writing

Practical skills are developed through

- Guidance in preparation of assignments
- Training and feedback on the preparation and conduct of interviews
- Guidance in transcribing

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

- Planning and timing of formative research exercises during the module
- 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 the module will result in the allocation of 30 credits;

The Core Module - Narrative Research (30)

Knowledge is assessed by

- Coursework demonstration of content knowledge in the area

Thinking skills are assessed by

- Coursework's demonstration of critical comparative and evaluative knowledge

Practical skills are assessed by

- Coursework's demonstration of ability to understand, present and criticise empirical research

Skills for life in general are assessed by

- Coursework's organisation and delivery
- Keeping deadlines and other aspects of coursework organization

Quality

How we assure the quality of this programme

Before this programme started

Before this programme started we checked that:

- 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 convening a panel of academic experts including some subject specialists from other institutions. Each panel member scrutinises key documents and talks to the staff who will deliver the programme before deciding whether it should be approved.

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 our Quality and Standards Committee.

Once every six years we undertake an in-depth review of the whole field. This 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 to the University 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 e-representation on programme committees (meeting 2 times year)
- Student/Staff e-consultative committee (meeting 3 times a year

Students are notified of the action taken through:

- Individual responses to students as required
- Postings on our online discussion forums
- Circulating the minutes of programme committee meetings
- Providing details on the programme webct notice board

Listening to the views of others

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

- Annual student satisfaction questionnaire
- Questionnaires to former students
- 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://www.webct.uel.ac.uk/SCRIPT/SSMACS_Noticeboard/scripts/serve_home
- Module study guides
  http://www.webct.uel.ac.uk/SCRIPT/SSMACS_Noticeboard/scripts/serve_home
- UEL Manual of General Regulations http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/
- UEL Quality Manual http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/
- Regulations for theAcademic Framework http://www.uel.ac.uk/academicframework/
- http://www.uel.ac.uk/ssmacs/index.htm
- http://www.uel.ac.uk/cnr/index.htm