

# Europe as Narrative

## OSL Seminar 2019 @ University of Amsterdam

### Organization

OSL - The Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies (OSL@rug.nl)

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For questions regarding content, please contact either Margriet or Astrid.

For questions regarding practical matters, please contact the OSL office.

### Practicalities

Dates: Friday 1/11, 8/11, 15/11, 29/11, 6/12 from 1-4 pm. On Friday 13/12 there is an obligatory day-long excursion to the House of European History in Brussels. For this, a small individual financial contribution will be requested.

Venue: University of Amsterdam, room t.b.a. On 13/12 we meet “on location” in Brussels.

Open to: PhD Candidates and RMA students; OSL members have first access. Interested MA students are welcome to participate, but are not able to receive official credits for the course.

Format: Three-hour seminars, active discussion and participation

Credits: 5 EC

### Content

As Delanty (1995) reminds us, Europe is more than a geo-political reality, it is also an idea that is continuously reinvented as collective identities transform. In essence, ‘Europe’ is a signifier that different actors fill with competing narratives and meanings. But although the way in which Europe is given meaning has never been stable or unfold, in the contemporary political climate the debate about what and where ‘Europe’ is, and who Europeans are or should be, seems increasingly heated. In this debate two types of narratives about ‘Europe’ can be discerned, with some referring to Europe as a culture and as a civilization, and others primarily understanding Europe as a polity, de facto using it as a synonym for the EU. That these types of narratives can clash violently is clear, for example, from the populist rhetoric of politicians such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands or Victor Orban in Hungary.

In this seminar we will explore different narratives of/on/about Europe. For this, we will depart from a number of questions. Firstly, how are ideas about the past utilized, for example by constructing Europe as a teleological narrative with clear historical origins, or by rewriting history in order to serve a contemporary political agenda? Secondly, how do narratives of Europe function as a space of in- and exclusion, by formulating an ‘us’ in opposition to a range of specific and less specific ‘others’? Thirdly, what do narratives of Europe tell us about the way in which Europeans are perceived, either as a homogeneous group, or diversely as a social constitution of different identities that overlap or conflict? We will approach these questions by focusing on a number of concepts that are central to how Europe is narrated: heritage, citizenship, crisis, migration, and (trans)nationalism. In our discussions, we will engage with a selection of topical theoretical texts and we will close read different cultural objects that reflect, talk back, deconstruct and challenge specific narratives of Europe.

### Study material and costs

See programme. All other reading material will be made freely available via OSL.

## Assignments

- 1) Individual presentation (20%):** students give a 15-minute presentation in which they connect the theoretical texts of that session to a cultural object of their own choice. This cultural object is made available to the other participants in advance.
- 2) Group presentation (20%):** during our excursion to the HoEH in Brussels, students will be given a group assignment, resulting in a presentation at the end of that same day. Further instructions will be given during the first meeting.
- 3) Short paper of 2000 words (60%):** in this paper students engage with at least one of the sessions (theoretical readings and discussion) and use this to close-read one cultural object of their choice (to be consulted with the lecturers). They are also required to further develop their own theoretical framework with additional theoretical sources. The paper needs to contain a well-formulated research question/problem statement, as well as a convincing motivation of the relevance of the research. It needs to be situated within a broader framework of existing scholarship and to present a relevant analysis and interpretation of primary material. The paper needs to be written in English and it needs to follow in all respects the current MLA guidelines (re. footnotes, bibliography, citation, format). Papers will be checked for plagiarism. In order to receive the credits for this seminar, students need a minimum grade of 5,5 for the paper.

## Programme

**Session 1 (1/11): Introduction** (Margriet van der Waal, Astrid Van Weyenberg)

**Session 2 (8/11): Migration** (Florian Lippert, University of Groningen)

**Session 3 (15/11): Nationalism** (Sabine Volk, Jagiellonian University, Kraków)

**Session 4 (29/11): Crisis** (Liesbeth Minnaard, Leiden University)

**Session 5 (6/12): Citizenship** (Margriet van der Waal, University of Groningen/University of Amsterdam)

**Session 6 (13/12): Heritage** (Astrid Van Weyenberg, Leiden University) **Excursion to the House of European History in Brussels**

**Deadline paper (20/12 midnight):** submit as word.doc file via e-mail to Margriet and Astrid, with a CC to the OSL office (osl@rug.nl).