

## **Narrative, Cognition and Rhetoric: How Narratives Shape(d) Ancient Culture**

*This course is offered at the UvA for PhD-students and Research Master Students of all universities participating in [OIKOS](#). If you are not a member of OIKOS, but want to participate in this course, please send an email to the coordinator and motivate your request.*

Storytelling is an essential aspect of our lives as human beings. We constantly tell narratives in daily life, not least as a means of structuring our own experience, while narrative is also the most popular literary text-type, and historians avail themselves of narrative to present their reconstructions of the past – to mention only some obvious examples. Narrative has always been a topic of interest for literary critics and linguists, who have developed a refined set of tools for analysing its various forms. But recently other disciplines have started to pay attention to narrative aspects of their object of research, too. Scholars have shown how narrative has played a vital role in the evolution of mankind and the human ability to form and maintain complex societies. In Memory Studies narrative is regarded as perhaps the most important medium through which societies shape and remember collective experiences.

Classical antiquity offers rich opportunities to reflect on this ‘narrative turn’, and this course will offer an overview of the various ways in which narrativity is relevant to the disciplines assembled within OIKOS. Topics to be discussed include: how should we read Herodotus or Livy as historical source while taking into account their narrative shape, too? What story do the Parthenon frieze, Trajan’s column or depictions on coins want to tell? Can extreme experiences like war be properly represented in narrative? Is the medium the message, i.e. do oral, written, or visual narratives differ? What stories can landscapes tell? How do archaeologists construct narratives to make silent material remains ‘speak’? And what story-patterns underly modern scholarly publications on the ancient world?

Study load: 5 EC (6 EC for ACASA students, who do an additional assignment)

Intended for: ReMa and PhD students of OIKOS in the fields of Classics, Ancient Philosophy, Ancient History and Archaeology. A basic knowledge of Ancient Greek and Latin is necessary. (15-20 participants)

**Lecturers:** Rutger Allan (VU), Lidewij van Gils (UvA), Luuk Huitink (UvA)

**Contact:** Please, contact [l.w.vangils@uva.nl](mailto:l.w.vangils@uva.nl) to enroll in this course.

**Number of sessions:** 4 or 5. On offer: biannually Location: Amsterdam.

### **Programme Spring 2026**

- 13 April 2026, 13:00 – 17:00, UvA
- 11 May 2026, 13:00 – 17:00, UvA
- 18 May 2026, 13:00 – 17:00, UvA
- 1 June 2026, 13:00 – 17:00, UvA
- 8 June 2026, 13:00 – 17:00, UvA

### **Preparation**

This course is designed for ReMa and PhD students. We expect a high level of preparation as well as intense engagement with the narrative aspects of ancient Greek and Roman sources (especially literary sources). There are only four meetings, of which the last one is dedicated to student presentations. We will use the other three meetings to guide the participants through relevant secondary literature and primary sources in order to develop their analytical and academic presentation skills. Literature is made available through Canvas.

### **Assignments and assessment**

*There are 3 formative assignments meant to increase your analytical skills by applying new knowledge and getting feedback on it. Assignment 4 has the form of an oral presentation of a small research project. The final grades are based on this final presentation and the interaction during the q & a sessions of other presentations.*