



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Webinar

“Representing violence: (meta)narratives – memories – commitments”

February – April 2026

Within the framework of the NEOLAiA consortium, the University of Tours is pleased to invite you to participate in our next webinar **“Representing violence: (meta)narratives – memories – commitments”**. The aim of this webinar is to provide a space for transdisciplinary and transnational reflection, while promoting training and networking of young researchers who explore collective violence, its memory and representations across Europe. This online programme will be **followed by a six-day PhD university** (two-day doctoral conference + a set of methodological master classes and career trainings), organised at the University of Tours from the 18th to the 23rd of May 2026, **and a multilingual digital publication**.

PRESENTATION OF THE WEBINAR

The deployment of high-performance technologies for the authoritarian management of populations (exploitation of resources, wars, exterminations and forced displacement) and for the control of representations of this violence has brought the issue of organised violence and the presence of its memory in the public sphere (politics, media, art) to the forefront of the concerns of researchers in the humanities and social sciences. The webinar “Representing violence: (meta)narratives – memories – commitments” aims to reflect on the role of narrative in the individual and collective understanding of experiences of violence, namely:

1. The functioning of narratives (ordinary/life stories, professional or expert, artistic) as active memory, performative space and community archives: What role do narratives play in the formation of cultural memory as an alternative space for expression, particularly when the public sphere remains silent or repressive? How important can narrative accounts of situations of extreme violence and discursive responses to ongoing or unresolved conflicts be, especially when they do not trigger the mechanisms of institutional justice?
2. The psychological mechanisms underlying the poetics of extreme violence: How do stories of violence incorporate narrative and stylistic techniques such as fragmentation, silence, repetition, metaphor, and analepsis (narrative delay, flashbacks)? How do these linguistic processes relate to the cognitive and affective mechanisms highlighted by research in psychology (Caruth, 1996; van der Kolk, 2014), the philosophy of memory (Ricœur, 2000; Assmann, 2016) and literary theory? Can these traumatic experiences be grasped and thus overcome without resorting to narrative? Is there a relationship to violence that is not mediated by narration?
3. The reconfiguration of the relationship between individual and community in narratives of extreme violence: Post-industrial societies are communities of individual self-realisation, where the collective issues are seen as the antithesis of the personal (Beck, 2003; Gauchet, 2003).

However, the disruption of this behavioural and axiological framework in societies experiencing organised violence requires a profound review of the relationship between the individual and the community. What alternative forms do accounts of traumatic experiences offer for linking together the individual and the collective, the private sphere and the public space?

4. The pitfalls of representing violence: The publication of accounts of experiences of violence necessarily has a political and/or ideological dimension, particularly in contexts of unresolved and ongoing conflicts. Can the instrumentalisation of these experiences be avoided? Similarly, can their artistic treatment avoid the anesthetisation of suffering (Sontag, 1978 and 2003)? Is it not the nature of narrative to “domesticate” painful experiences, to mitigate their (self-)destructive potential by giving them meaning or beauty (Benjamin, 1928)? Can an ethic of writing/speaking and reading/listening overcome the pitfalls of narrative?
5. The polyphony of narratives and its epistemological and social implications: The plurality and diversity of narratives that coexist in a discursive field often lead to reactions of generalised mistrust, denial and/or unconditional and partisan defence of one version of events. What effect does the plurality of narratives of a traumatic event have on the truth regime of the society that experienced it? How can institutions and legal texts respond to this epistemic climate of suspicion?

This multidisciplinary webinar will consist of **8 sessions**, organised on Friday afternoon (2PM – 4PM, CET) between **20th February** and **10th April 2026**, allowing us to approach numerous aspects of our subject from the standpoint of different disciplines concerned with this issue:

1. Psychology: the avoiding memories and intrusive images of trauma; mechanisms of memory displacement and rewriting; traces, clues, symptoms in medicine or psychology and in narrative investigations of traumatic past, etc.;
2. Political science, affect theory approach in literary studies: testimonies, collective emotions and mobilisation, what place for literature? going public with personal account of organised violence and its political (mis)uses;
3. Political science, sociology: visibility/invisibility of certain social experiences; representativeness of voices and experiences in the social discourse; writers as “spokespersons” for “ordinary people”, delegation of speech and/or appropriation of personal narratives?
4. Visual arts: images and texts, complementarity or tension?
5. Media studies: the place of testimony in the mass media, its structuring and limiting role as a narrative device in the public sphere; literature and the media: writing after or writing against?
6. History: memoirs, archivists or creators of “events”? the validity of ego-narratives as a historical source; the rise of memoirs and their impact on historiography, etc.
7. Ethnology, anthropology: diversity of cultural responses to organised violence;
8. Concluding session: what contribution to literary studies? [session led by the organisers].

A detailed webinar programme could be sent to applicants on request starting from the 30th January.

APPLICATION DETAILS

All PhD students willing to participate in this PhD training are invited to submit their application by addressing a cover letter explaining the nature of their interest and, eventually, the connection with their PhD research before the **5th February 2026** to: representerlviolence@gmail.com. We would also kindly ask you to specify in your cover letter if your interest concerns:

1. only the webinar;
2. the PhD university and the subsequent online publication as well.

Please, consider that the webinar is aimed at fostering a common intellectual background necessary for investigation of this transdisciplinary object of study. That is why participation in it will be considered as a **strong point of your applications for in-person PhD university** combining a

two-day PhD conference with a wide range of methodological master classes, career trainings and social activities (Tours, France, 18th – 23rd May 2026).

The webinars will take place in **English**.

Scientific coordination: Liudmyla Harmash (Le Studium visiting fellow 2025-26 at the ICD research unit), Roxana Ilasca, Emmanuelle Séjourné and Anna Krykun (ICD, University of Tours).

Organising committee: Jacobo Centanaro (Gustave Eiffel University/University of Tours), Marta Mateo Segura (University of Saragosse/University de Cergy), Pako Sarambe (University of Cologne/University of Tours).

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