

FS 330 THE GOLDEN AGE OF ITALIAN CINEMA: IN BETWEEN AUTHORS AND GENRES

IES Abroad Milan

DESCRIPTION:

From the very moment it was invented cinema has played a key role in Italian culture. Indeed, Italian cinema has played a significant role in the world market, influencing even Hollywood, at least in 3 historical moments:

- 1) During the first and second decades of the twentieth century, when Italy was one of the leading countries in the new artform
- 2) After World War 2 - through the revolution introduced by Neorealism (mid 40s - early 50s)
- 3) In the 60s, through the emergence of a number of great authors who were to become famous and beloved all over the world

Today this last period is known as the Golden Age in Italian cinema, as Bondanella points out: "It was during the 60s that the Italian cinema achieved its greatest results either from an artistic or economical point of view. In the 60s the Italian cinema developed a larger number of trends of evolution and a much higher production which, for a moment, was even able to compete with Hollywood. It was the period of Fellini and it was the moment in which Hollywood moved lots of its production to Rome. As a matter of fact the production of the Italian film industry of the period contains all aspects and all genres the Italian cinema has ever developed, so, studying this period as deeply as possible is, according to me, the best way to approach the History of the Italian cinema."

Following Peter Bondanella's textbook, our course on the History of Italian cinema will deal mainly with the period of its greatest achievements, Neorealism and the 60s, dwelling upon Fellini in particular, but also with more recent and contemporary Italian authors and films, culminating with Sorrentino's award for best picture in a foreign language at the Academy Awards (2014).

To have a paramount view of Italian cinema we will attempt to combine the authors approach with the genre approach ("spaghetti" western, Comedy Italian Style), films that achieved great International critical and commercial acclaim and that had a great influence on the 7th art all over the world.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: none

ADDITIONAL COST: none

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Two lessons composed of two hours will be dedicated to each author or topic. Each author and movie will be introduced from narrative, historical and aesthetic perspectives and then the films which best represent the author will be analyzed in its narrative structure, *mise en scène* and linguistic style through the screening of clips and weekly discussions. Students will be expected to join in the debate and to bring their own critical points of view into the discussion. You'll also learn how to see reality through a lens, as well as film language, starting from Leonardo da Vinci's treaty on painting, "De pictura" and his comparison between the arts of space and time. The analysis of the visual aspects is fundamental in film studies: in order to deepen your perception, we'll approach the visual aspect of cinema also from the filmmaker's point of view, through the visualization of a story.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

Regular attendance and active participation in class will be fundamental for grade assessment. Students are required to assimilate the film glossary and information presented in class about each filmmaker and film and show how they are able to apply it in the discussions we'll have each week, in the film presentation and written exams.

Students will be required to watch **one film per week** (for a total of **9 mandatory movies**) which will be discussed the following week with the Professor and will be studied in depth for film analysis in your mid-term and final exam. Students can book DVDs for each film at the Student Help Desk, to watch the movie at IES, possibly in groups. Students can also watch the movies on their own, but it



is crucial that they do it before each film discussion. Students will be asked to watch at least **3 optional films** (a list of optional films will be provided during the first week). Each student **will present 1** of the **3 optional films** in class. This movie will be chosen by the Professor, while the other 2 movies will be chosen by the student, one for mid-term exam, one for final exam.

- Course participation and Film Discussions - 20%
- Film Presentation - 20%
- Midterm Written Exam on issues discussed during the first half of course - 30%
- Final Written Exam on issues discussed during second half of course - 30%

Course Participation and film discussions: Students are expected to keep up with class readings and to complete in time related assignments. Participation in class discussions is also a crucial element for a positive evaluation. Students will be required to watch **one film per week** which will be discussed the following week with the Professor. For each discussion of the 9 mandatory films there will be a leader (or more) among the students (rotating in this role each week). It is crucial that students watch the movie before each discussion.

Film presentation: Each student **will present 1** of the **3 optional films** in class, using slides and clips from the movie. This movie will be chosen by the Professor, according to the preferences expressed by the student in the questionnaire at the beginning of the course.

Midterm Exam: The exam will include:

- 1 film analysis from the 5 mandatory films (Roma città aperta; Ladri di biciclette; Rocco e I suoi fratelli; Divorzio all'italiana, A fistful of dollars) - picked by the Professor.
- 1 scene analysis (focusing on style, film editing and music) of a relevant scene from an optional film that you pick. **NOTICE** that you can NOT pick the movie that you are presenting.
- 1 essay question on the topics and slides discussed so far.

After completion of the exam, students will receive information on their grade breakdown and (on request) can discuss it with the professor.

Final Exam: The exam will include:

- One film analysis of one of the 4 mandatory films ("Otto e mezzo" (8 ½, 1962) by Fellini; "La vita è bella" ("Life is beautiful", 1998) by Benigni; "Mediterraneo" (1992) by Salvatores; "La grande bellezza"(2014) by Sorrentino) - picked by the Professor.
- Style analysis of a scene from the film that you chose from the list of optional films provided. **Notice** that you CANNOT choose the film that you have presented in class.
- One essay question on the subjects explored during the second half of the course (after mid-term exam)

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Know narrative techniques – both traditional and non-traditional
- Know the greatest achievements in Italian cinema during Neorealism, the 60s and contemporary cinema
- Watch a film critically and analyze it, appreciating subtle insights and skillful techniques of the best Italian filmmaking masters
- Know how to see reality through a lens, as well as film language

TRIGGER WARNING:

Students will be exposed to masterpieces that sometimes explore sensitive issues such as war, rape, violence, adultery, nudity and racism. Critical thinking is required to watch, analyze and discuss these films and is fundamental to the learning experience. While I will try to advise students in advance when content may be potentially upsetting, I cannot anticipate all student needs. Students experiencing difficulty with the content should inform the instructor.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are expected to be responsible for their own class attendance and to give academic responsibilities priority over other activities. Regular class attendance is mandatory. For physical and mental health reasons, IES Abroad Milano allows a maximum of THREE (3) absences in each Italian language course, TWO (2) absences in each Area Studies course, and ONE (1) absence in each Seminar course. Every absence beyond this allowance will automatically result in a penalty of 2 percentage points off the final grade. SEVEN (7) absences will result in a failing grade in Italian language and Area Studies courses. FOUR (4) absences will result in a failing grade in Seminar courses. Failure to attend a scheduled exam, test, quiz, or presentation will automatically result in an F grade on that assessment.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 1	Introduction to Cinema and Italian Cinema: film language, cinema as an art form Screening of clips of contemporary films	
Session 2	Cinema as Business The golden age of Italian cinema - The golden age of Italian cinema: Italian Cinema at the beginning of the century and during the fascist regime - Screening of clips of <i>Cabiria (1914)</i> by Pastrone - Comments from director Martin Scorsese - Guidelines to film analysis	- Chapter 1: "Background: The silent Era and the Fascist Period" (pg. 1-30), Bondanella - Watch <i>Rome Open City</i> [FILM 1] (1945) by Rossellini
Session 3	Guidelines to Film Analysis - About and around Neorealism: Roberto Rossellini - Discussion on <i>Rome open city</i> (Part 1) using the Guidelines to film analysis	- Chapter 2: "The Masters of Neorealism: Rossellini, De Sica, and Visconti" (focusing on Rossellini, from the beginning, pg. 31- 52) Bondanella - Chapter 3: "Exploring the boundaries of Neorealism" (focusing on Rossellini, pg. 90-93). Bondanella
Session 4	More on Neorealism - Narrative Techniques - Archplot, miniplot, antiplot - More on Neorealism and Roberto Rossellini - Discussion on <i>Rome open city</i> (Part 2) - Presentation and screening of clips of <i>Paisà (1946)</i> by Rossellini	- Chapter 4: "The break with Neorealism: Rossellini in transition, early Antonioni and Fellini" (focusing on Rossellini, pg. 103-107). Bondanella - Watch <i>The Bicycle Thief</i> [FILM 2] by De Sica

Session 5	About and around Neorealism: Vittorio De Sica Discussion on <i>The Bicycle Thief</i>	Chapter 2: The Masters of Neorealism: Rossellini, De Sica, and Visconti (focusing on De Sica, pg. 52-66). Bondanelli
Session 6	More on De Sica Presentation and screening of clips of <i>Umberto D.</i> (1951) by De Sica	- Chapter 3: Exploring the boundaries of Neorealism (focusing on De Sica, pg. 93-96). Bondanella - Watch <i>Rocco and his Brothers</i> [FILM 3] (1960) by Visconti
Session 7	Luchino Visconti and the passage to Realism Discussion on <i>Rocco and his Brothers</i>	Chapter 2: The Masters of Neorealism: Rossellini, De Sica, and Visconti (focusing on Visconti, pg. 66 -73). Bondanella
Session 8	More on Visconti Presentation and screening of clips of <i>The Leopard</i> (1963) by Visconti	- Chapter 3: "Exploring the boundaries of Neorealism" (focusing on Visconti's "Senso", pg. 96-100). Bondanella - Chapter 6: "The mature auteurs: new dimensions in film narrative with Visconti, Antonioni, and Fellini" (focusing on Visconti, from the beginning, pg. 196-210) - Watch <i>Divorce Italian Style</i> [FILM 4] (1963) by Germi
Session 9	Comedy – Italian Style Discussion on <i>Divorce Italian Style</i>	Chapter 5: "A Decisive Decade: Commedia all'italiana, Neorealism's legacy, and a New Generation" (from the beginning, pg. 142-159)
Session 10	More on Comedy Italian style Sergio Leone and the "Spaghetti" Western	Watch <i>A Fistful of Dollars</i> (1964) by Leone [FILM 5]
Session 11	More on Sergio Leone and the "Spaghetti" Western - Discussion on <i>A Fistful of Dollars</i> (1964) by Leone - Screenings of clips from <i>For a few dollars more</i> (1965) by Leone 2.	Chapter 7: "A fistful of Pasta: Sergio Leone and the Spaghetti Western" (pg. 253-274) Bondanella
Session 12	Midterm Exam	Watch <i>8 ½</i> [FILM 6] (1963) by Fellini
Session 13	Federico Fellini and the Triumph of Fantasy and Poetry Discussion on <i>8 ½</i>	Chapter 4: "The Break with Neorealism: Rossellini in transition, Early Antonioni and Fellini" (pg. 113-141) Bondanella
Session 14	More on Fellini - Film Presentations by students to be scheduled - Screenings of clips from <i>The nights of Cabiria</i> (1956) by Fellini Screenings of clips from <i>La dolce vita</i> (1959) by Fellini	Chapter 6: "The Mature Auteurs: New Dimensions in Film Narrative with Visconti, Antonioni, and Fellini" (pg. 228-252) Bondanella

Session 15	More on Fellini Screenings of clips from <i>Roma</i> (1972) Fellini Contemporary Italian Cinema Screenings of clips from contemporary Italian films	Watch <i>Life is Beautiful</i> [FILM 7] (1997) by Benigni
Session 16	Contemporary Italian cinema: Roberto Benigni - Discussion on <i>Life is Beautiful</i> <i>Intro to MIC</i>	Chapter 12: “The Italian Cinema enters the Third Millennium” (pg. 425-461) Bondanella
Session 17	Course-Related Trip: visit to Cinecittà Studios and the sets of Rome (DATE TO BE CONFIRMED)	Watch <i>Mediterraneo</i> [FILM 8] (1992) by Salvatores
Session 18	Contemporary Italian Cinema: Salvatores Discussion on <i>Mediterraneo</i>	
Session 19	Contemporary Italian Cinema: Sorrentino and Garrone Film Presentations by students to be scheduled	- Chapter: “The films of Matteo Garrone: Italian Cinema is not embalmed” (pg. 175-187) of <i>Italian Film Directors in the New Millennium</i>. Hope, William - Watch <i>La grande bellezza</i> [FILM 9] (2013) by Sorrentino
Session 20	Contemporary Italian Cinema: Sorrentino Discussion on <i>La grande bellezza</i> by Sorrentino	Chapter: “Character Engagement and Alienation in the Cinema of Paolo Sorrentino” (pg. 161-173) of <i>Italian Film Directors in the New Millennium</i>. Hope, William
Session 21	Contemporary Italian Cinema Film Presentations by students to be scheduled	Study for Final Exam
Session 22	Contemporary Italian Cinema Film Presentations by students to be scheduled	Study for Final Exam

COURSE-RELATED TRIP:

- Visit to Cinecittà Studios and the sets of Rome, with particular emphasis on the sets of “The bicycle thief”.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present*, F. Ungar Pub. Co., New York (the most recent edition);
- William Hope, *Italian Film Directors in the New Millennium*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2010 (chapters on Sorrentino and Garrone)

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Peter Bondanella, *The cinema of Federico Fellini*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey (1992) • Laurent Tirard, *Moviemakers’ masterclass*, Faber and Faber, New York, 2002
- Russel J.A. Kilbourn, *The cinema of Paolo Sorrentino – commitment to style*, WALFLOWER PRESS, 2020
- Giancarlo Lombardi and Christian Uva, *Italian Political Cinema – Public Life, Imaginary, and Identity in Contemporary Italian Film*, PETER LANG, 2016
- Chris Vogler, *The writer’s journey – mythic structure for writers* – third edition, Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City, CA, 2007.
- Robert McKee, *Story – Substance, structure, style, and the principles of screenwriting*, Regan Books, New York 1997



- Steven D. Katz, *Film directing – Shot by shot – Visualizing from concept to screen*, Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City, CA, 1991.

FILMOGRAPHY:

- *Cabiria* (1914) by Pastrone
- *Rome Open City* (1945) by Rossellini (mandatory)
- *Paisà* (1946) by Rossellini
- *The Bicycle Thief* by De Sica (mandatory)
- *Umberto D.* (1951) by De Sica
- *Rocco and his Brothers* (1960) by Visconti (mandatory)
- *The Leopard* (1963) by Visconti
- *Divorce Italian Style* (1963) by Germi (mandatory)
- *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) by Leone (mandatory)
- *For a few dollars more* (1965) by Leone
- *The nights of Cabiria* (1956) by Fellini
- *La dolce vita* (1959) by Fellini
- *8 ½* (1963) by Fellini (mandatory)
- *Roma* (1972) Fellini
- *Life is beautiful* (1997) by Benigni (mandatory)
- *Mediterraneo* (1992) by Salvatores (mandatory)
- *Happy family* (2010) by Salvatores
- *La grande bellezza* (2013) by Sorrentino (mandatory)
- *Youth* (2015) by Sorrentino
- *The hand of God* (2021) by Sorrentino
- *Gomorra* (2008) by Garrone
- *Pinocchio* (2020) by Garrone