

Italian Modern Culture (Italian 129)

Instructor: Cynthia Laura Giacotti

Spring Quarter 2019

Room: 260-301

Tu/Th: 1.30-2.50pm

Office hours: TBD

Course Description

This course is meant to offer you an introduction to Italian Modern Culture since the 19th century. Our goal is not to cover every author or literary movement of interest, but rather provide you with a comprehensive outlook on Italian Culture from the time: we will be spanning from memoirs, the opera tradition, the fine arts, the theatre, novels, short stories, pop songs, movies to poetry.

Literature, as a key to understanding society, will be our back-bone, but we will contextualize it to make sense of the historical and socio-cultural setting of the Italian peninsula, which was quite discontinuous and disjointed, compared to other European states. We will examine the making of Italy as a nation and its unmaking through the world wars and fascism.



I have chosen two broad but relevant themes to approach the 19th and 20th century. My purpose is to spark your interest in this beautiful culture and guide you into going beyond trite stereotypes of Italy that are commonly shared outside its borders. We will see Italy as it was and as it is from an Italian perspective.

For this reason, we will start with Giacomo Casanova (1725-

1798), the infamous Don Giovanni, whose life was already legend in his time. His memoirs are, as it happens, more than a lascivious manual of seduction, but contain a liberal philosophy quite in advance for his time.

After a taste of the Italian opera in the 19th century with *La Cenerentola* (1817) by Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868); a brief acquaintance with the exquisite melancholy of Giacomo Leopardi's (1798-1837) poetry; paintings from the Romanticism and the Risorgimento will depict closely the political stages of Italy's birth.



LE AVVENTURE DI PINOCCHIO



For the 19th century we will explore what I have called “The cycle of the humbly born”. In a country which was not yet a nation, each region interestingly shows the concern for the lower classes uniting authors from different cultural and social backgrounds. This motif will not only grant us the opportunity to approach the pillars of Italian literature such as Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) and Giovanni Verga (1840-1922) in a simpler way, but also show how the question of the destitute was in fact felt by the higher classes. Carlo Collodi (1826-1890), the author of *Pinocchio* (1883) and Grazia Deledda (1871-1936), the seldom remembered winner of the 1926 Nobel prize, will add, respectively, a magical tone and a feminine voice to our expedition.

Poetry at the beginning and the turn of the century will offer a transition between the two centuries. We will wander through 30 years or so of Italian poetry with Giosuè Carducci (1835-1907), Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863-1938), Dino Campana (1885-1932), Corrado Govoni (1884- 1965), Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888-1970), Eugenio Montale (1896-1981) and Salvatore Quasimodo (1901-1968).

For the 20th century we will explore the question of “humanity”. What does it mean to be “human” and more specifically be a “man” (not a woman, for that matter) in this time? Each author, artist, poet, painter, lives and sometimes, especially after the world wars, re-invents what it means to be human.



After the exhaustion of the futurist “new man”, in the early ‘20s Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) and Italo Svevo (1861-1928) scrutinize and dissect the question of identity and of the self. Elio Vittorini (1908-1966) and Cesare Pavese (1908-1950) propose two different ways of “being a man” during the war. In the aftermath of the world war and in the ‘50s, the years of the “Reconstruction” Italo Calvino (1923-1985) will re-construct in his trilogy *Our Ancestors* what being a full human means. With Primo Levi, an Auschwitz survivor, and his autobiography we will learn how a splintered self can find coherence in narration.

We will conclude on a lighter tone with Rino Gaetano (1950-1981), an independent pop singer from the 1970: the Italy he pictures is one of cynical reality, amongst terrorism, corruption, scandals, etc.

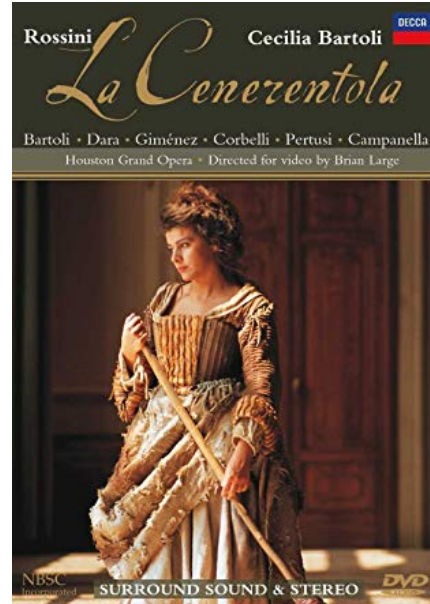
The last day of class we will watch together *Mine vaganti* (2010) by Ferzan Ozpetek, a Turkish director, deeply in love with Italy and its issues: “il mezzogiorno”, homophobia, attachment to the institution of the family, etc.

If the Special Collections at the Green Library have the availability we will spend one, possibly two sections at the archive, delving into

old but passionating journals, posters, notes, post-cards, focusing on Futurism and Fascism. In that case, you will spend half of the class digging into the materials, individually or in groups, and we will tackle the syllabus in the remaining time.



mineVaganti Il nuovo film di Ferzan Ozpetek
L'unica cosa più complicata dell'amore è la famiglia



Calendar

Prima Settimana: Libertini e Romantici

2 aprile Presentazione della Classe- Casanova, *Histoire de ma vie* (1789-1798)

4 aprile Rossini e Ferretti, *La Cenerentola* (1817)

Seconda Settimana: Leopardi e il Romanticismo

9 aprile Giacomo Leopardi:

Infinito (1819),

Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia (1831),

Dialogo della Natura e di un Islandese (1827)

11 aprile Pittori Romantici e Risorgimentali:

Francesco Hayez, *Il Bacio* (1859)

Giovanni Fattori, *Il campo italiano alla battaglia di Magenta* (1859);

Il Quarto Stato (1901)

Terza Settimana: L'ottocento e "Il ciclo della gente umile"

16 aprile Manzoni, *I promessi sposi* (1840) (First Chapter)

18 aprile Verga, *Rosso Malpelo* (1878) e *La roba* (1883)

Quarta Settimana: "Il ciclo della gente umile" (continua)

23 aprile Collodi, *Pinocchio* (1883) (Selections)

25 aprile Deledda, *Canne al vento* (1913) (Selections) e
Riflessione sul "ciclo della gente umile"

Quinta Settimana: Poesia: dall'estetismo, al futurismo, al crepuscolarismo, all'ermetismo

30 aprile Tardo Romanticismo, Estetismo e Orfismo

Giosuè Carducci, *San Martino* (1883)

Gabriele D'Annunzio, *La pioggia nel pineto* (1903)

Dino Campana, *I canti orfici* (1914)
(selections)

2 maggio Modernismo,
Crepuscolarismo, Ermetismo

Corrado Govoni, *Le fiale* (1903) (selections)

Giuseppe Ungaretti, *Porto sepolto* (1916) (selections)

Salvatore Quasimodo, *Ed è subito sera* (1930)

Eugenio Montale, *Non chiederci la parola* (1925)

Sesta Settimana: Il novecento e "l'umanità": il soggetto e l'identità

7 maggio La Metafisica, il Surrealismo e la Psicoanalisi

Giorgio de Chirico, *Le muse inquietanti*,

René Magritte, Opere con tema *L'uomo con la bombetta* (1924-1964)

Erich Fromm, *Escape from freedom* (1941) (selections)

9 maggio, Italo Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno* (1923) (selection(s))

Settima Settimana: In cerca d'identità- La negazione dell'umanità

14 maggio, Luigi Pirandello:

6 personaggi in cerca d'autore (1921)

Uno nessuno centomila (1925) (Selection(s))

16 maggio, Elio Vittorini, *Uomini e no* (1945) (selection(s))

Ottava Settimana: Calvino e il nuovo umanesimo

21 maggio, Pavese, *La casa in collina*, 1948



CONTEMPORANEA

ITALO CALVINO

IL CAVALIERE INESISTENTE





23 maggio, Calvino, *La trilogia degli antenati*:

Il cavaliere inesistente (1959)

Il visconte dimezzato (1952) (selections)

Il barone rampante (1957) (selections)

Nona settimana: Letteratura come ricostruzione dell'identità e Musica!

28 maggio, Primo Levi, *il sistema periodico degli elementi* (1975)

30 maggio, Rino Gaetano:

Ma il cielo è sempre più blu (1975)

Mio fratello è figlio unico (1976)

Gianna (1978)

Decima settimana: Omosessualità, cinema e modernità

4 giugno, Proiezione Ferzan Ozpetek *Mine vaganti* (2010)

Materials and Affordability

Since I believe in the importance of free education, I am committed to making this class financially accessible to all students, therefore: **all of the material for the class will be available on Canvas, you are not expected to buy anything.**

You are, on the other hand, expected to read all the material **in Italian** and for this you will be able to find the readings in the respective week-folders on Canvas. You can use English translations to help you understand the meaning (especially with poetry) and you can find English copies of the works **in the Cecil Green Library.**

You can also look for paper editions in Italian in the same library, there are usually several copies available of each work in the syllabus. Let me know if you need help identifying them!

Course Objectives and Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you will:

Language

- Strengthen your ability to express yourself orally in Italian, you will gain greater comfort in making short and longer presentations
- Gain some familiarity with academic reading and writing in Italian
- Become familiar with discussions in an academic setting in Italian (formulating and defending one's opinion, hypothesizing, use of the passive and the subjunctive)

Literary and cultural analysis

- Understand and learn Italy's peculiar historical, social, cultural and linguistical context
- Become more comfortable using the vocabulary of literary analysis
- Improve your use of scholarly material (in English and in Italian)
- Be able to name and discuss major Italian authors from modernity
- Analyze writings in Italian and be able to talk about them in an Italian academic setting

Evaluation

1. Weekly paper (25% of the grade)

One page written in Italian (3-500 words)

Due on Tuesdays, we will work on it on Thursdays in class, so that you have the time to read your class-mates' pages.

Content: thoughts on the week's reading(s)

Twice in the quarter (dates depending on your convenience) you are excused from the weekly papers.

To be uploaded on Canvas in the appropriate Week's Folder

Advanced possibility: find one bibliographical text in Italian and make a comment on it and on the work we are reading (+5% bonus grade each time)

2. Oral presentations (30% of the grade)

3 in total (length: 5min, 15 min, 20 min)

In Italian

On a topic to be decided together with the instructor

(The 20 minutes presentation should not be on the reading assignments, unless presented the day of the discussion of said reading assignment. Its purpose is: to help you develop critical skills, think on your own the materials you read and be able to present your ideas clearly and efficiently in Italian)

3. Final Exam (30% of the grade)

One of the following two.

Final Quiz

You will pick **5 essay questions** out of the 10 proposed and answer with 3-500 words to each one of them. You will have one-week time to do so. Spelling accuracy, good grammar, good structure and syntax are **fundamental**, considered the allotted time.

Available on Canvas **from June 5th to June 12th** (if there are graduating students-if not, dates can be extended)

Final written paper

5-7 pages single/double spaced **in Italian**. The length of the paper won't affect the grade, but its quality will. The subject of the paper is to be **discussed in advance with the instructor**: it can be on a work from the syllabus or another subject/work that you would like to explore.

Of course, the chosen work will be **in Italian**.

Final papers are **due on June 12th** (for graduating students); **on June 16th** (for non-graduating students)

4. Class participation: (15% of the grade)

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://oea.stanford.edu>).

The Honor Code:

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work. Examples of conduct that have been regarded as being in violation of the Honor Code (and are most relevant for this course) include copying from another student's exam paper or allowing another student to copy from one's own paper; unpermitted collaboration; plagiarism*; revising and resubmitting a quiz or exam for regrading, without the instructor's knowledge and consent; representing as one's own work the work of another; using another student's clicker or mastering physics account; and giving or receiving aid on an academic assignment under circumstances in which a reasonable person should have known that such aid was not permitted.

See <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/communitystandards/policy/honor-code>