

McGill University  
Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures  
Italian Studies

ITAL 477  
**Italian Eco-Cinema**



Prof. Paolo Saporito

E-mail: [paolo.saporito@mcgill.ca](mailto:paolo.saporito@mcgill.ca)

**Course delivery:** mostly asynchronous with occasional and pre-scheduled synchronous group activities (see below for further details). There will be no in-person meetings in this course.

**Communication Plan:** e-mail (within 24 hours); Zoom meetings by appointment; see note on student-instructor communication below for further details.

**IN THE EVENT OF EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THE  
UNIVERSITY'S CONTROL, THE CONTENT AND/OR EVALUATION SCHEME IN  
THIS COURSE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

**Course Description**

State commitments to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the erosion of habitats leading to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the 2019 environmental mobilizations across the globe are the most recent examples of how sustainability is central to scientific and political agendas. These issues unsurprisingly generated cinematic responses to ecological concerns and interest among scholars, who used the neologism eco-cinema to categorize films reflecting on the need to develop sustainable forms of coexistence with the environment. The aim of this course is to investigate how Italian eco-films articulated these forms of coexistence, from the representation

of industrial development boosting Italy's economic boom (1958-63) to present portrayals of endangered landscapes, polluted areas and sustainable forms of living embedded in Italian traditional lifestyles. By looking at masterpieces by both masters of Italian cinema (i.e., Michelangelo Antonioni, Pier Paolo Pasolini) and contemporary directors (e.g., Alice Rohrwacher, Matteo Garrone), this course will examine how the films self-reflexively address (or conceal) the problematic position of cinema and film production with respect to a sustainability-driven economy. On the one hand, as cultural artifacts, films are powerful instruments raising consciousness about and fostering the imagination of sustainable and post-anthropocentric forms of living. On the other hand, filmmaking produces a huge carbon footprint that will have to be reduced. Far from losing themselves in querulous self-commiseration about cinema's unsustainability, Italian eco-films criticize the anthropocentric frameworks grounding capitalist forms of development and explore possibilities of (non)human viable coexistence by delivering environmentalist discourses and engaging in sustainable film practices.

### **Course activities:**

The remote learning context presents new challenges for all involved, and student engagement is of particular concern. The instructor is strongly committed to fostering student engagement by acknowledging the challenges that they may be experiencing due to the pandemic. He will do his best to provide a supportive learning environment and give students the opportunity to interact with their peers. During this course we will adopt a hybrid instructional method mostly consisting of asynchronous activities that students are expected to complete independently on MyCourses and other platforms (see below for further details). Asynchronous learning will accommodate different time zones, it will allow self-paced assignment completion and alternative ways students can interact with content. Asynchronous activities are an essential part of the course as they are also meant to prepare students for synchronous tasks they will complete in occasional synchronous meetings. The instructor will organise these meetings (i.e. Zoom discussion groups) where students will be able to interact and discuss course content answering specific questions. The activities will be organised according to the course schedule posted on Minerva (Tuesday and Thursday 1:05 pm - 2:25 pm) and specific dates will be indicated in the course schedule. Any change to the schedule of these activities will be communicated to students no later than 2 weeks in advance. The attendance of these activities is not mandatory, but it is strongly recommended as it will help students receive insights from their peers and build a critical approach to the topics of the course. Students who will not be able to attend will not be penalised, but they will have to complete specific asynchronous tasks designed for those who could not attend class discussions. These tasks will be available on MyCourses in the Discussions section and will contribute to the Participation grade (see Evaluation). There will be no in-person meetings in this course.

### **Course Work**

Students will be responsible for:

- a. Participating in class discussions on Zoom **OR** completing asynchronous tasks designed for students who could not attend class discussions. Students unable to attend for time zone constraints, technical problems or personal issues will not be penalised, but are expected to complete specific tasks in replacement for class discussions.
- b. Completing the **asynchronous activities** posted on MyCourses at the beginning of the course. These activities will consist in watching pre-recorded video lectures; carrying out short quizzes about course content (including lectures);

interacting in forum discussions on MyCourses; and completing assigned readings on Perusall (more details about the use of this platform will be available on MyCourses).

- c. Delivering a **video project**: an original **video clip** (maximum length for individual submission: 4-5 min.) accompanied by a **commentary** (maximum length for individual submission: 1,000 words), due on **March 11, 2020** (11:59 pm, Montreal time). This project can be completed individually or as a group. Further instructions for this project will be posted on MyCourses by the end of January 2021.
- d. Writing a **final paper** (maximum length: 2,000 words) due on **April 20, 2020** (11:59 pm, Montreal time). A list of suggested topics for the final paper will be made available after the video project is marked and returned to students. Students wishing to discuss a topic of their choice must obtain the professor's permission.

All assignments **must** be handed in electronically through MyCourses. There is no final examination for this course.

### **Netiquette Statement:**

The University recognizes the importance of maintaining teaching spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all involved. To this end, offensive, violent, or harmful language arising in contexts such as the following may be cause for disciplinary action:

- a. Username (use only your legal or preferred name)
- b. Visual backgrounds
- c. "Chat" boxes
- d. Class discussions

To maintain a clear and uninterrupted learning space for all, you should keep your microphone muted throughout your class, unless invited by the instructor to speak. You should follow instructors' directions about the use of the "chat" function on remote learning platforms.

### **Evaluation**

Participation in discussions on Zoom OR completion of substitute, asynchronous tasks: 10%

Asynchronous quizzes (on MyCourses): 20%

Other asynchronous activities (i.e. forum discussions, Perusall): 10%

Mid-term video project: 25%

Final paper (2,000 words): 35%

Please note that students obtaining a failing grade (D, J or F) will not be entitled to do extra work to improve their mark.

### **Required films:**

The films listed below will be analyzed and discussed over the course of the term. The list may be subjected to changes according to the progress of the course. The films are available either on streaming platforms, a Google Drive folder that will be shared with the class or Kanopy. Kanopy is a film archive to which McGill students have access with their McGill credentials. The link to each film will be available on MyCourses in the Content section.

D'Emilia, Alessandro, Nika Šaravanja, and David Monacchi, *Dusk Chorus*, 2017.

Antonioni, Michelangelo, *Gente del Po*, 1943 (1947).

Antonioni, Michelangelo, *Deserto rosso*, 1964.  
Pasolini, Pier Paolo, *Uccellacci e uccellini*, 1966.  
Garrone, Matteo, *Gomorra*, 2008. SCS  
Frammartino, Michelangelo, *Le quattro volte*, 2010. SCS  
Rohrwacher, Alice, *Le meraviglie*, 2014.  
Rohrwacher, Alice, *Lazzaro felice*, 2018.

### **Sensitive Content Statement (SCS):**

Content warning: Please be aware that some of the course content may be disturbing for some students because of violent or crude scenes. It has been included in the course because it directly relates to the learning outcomes. Please contact the instructor if you have specific concerns about this.

### **Required readings:**

The required readings for this course will be posted on MyCourses, together with a more detailed course plan. A few additional articles may also be posted from time to time on MyCourses.

- MacDonald, Scott. "Toward an Eco-Cinema." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2004, pp. 107-32.
- Willoquet-Maricondi, Paula. "Shifting Paradigms: From Environmentalist Films to Ecocinema." *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010, pp. 43-61.
- Antonioni, Michelangelo. "Concerning a Film about the River Po." *Springtime in Italy*, edited by David Overbey, Hamden: Archon Books, 1979, pp. 79-80.
- Pinkus, Karen. "Antonioni's Cinematic Poetics of Climate Change." *Antonioni: Centenary Essays*, edited by Laura Rascaroli and John David Rhodes, London: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2011, pp. 254-75.
- Minghelli, Giuliana. "Horizons First and Last: *Gente del Po*." *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film*. New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 133-39.
- Past, Elena. *Italian Ecocinema Beyond the Human*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019 (three selected chapters).
- Seger, Monica. "Pier Paolo Pasolini: Boundaries and Mergers in (Ex)Urban Film." *Landscapes in between: Environmental Change in Modern Italian Literature and Film*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015, pp. 50-69.
- Rushing, Robert A. "Toxicity: Making the Toxic Visible in Italian Cinema." *The Italianist*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2020, pp. 244-55.
- Corrieri, Augusto. "There As Here." *Performance Research*, vol. 24, no. 6, 2019, pp. 22-28.
- Seger, Monica. "Le Quattro Volte, All at Once." *The Italianist*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2014, pp. 292-297.
- Ivakhiv, Adrian. "Green Film Criticism and its Futures." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2008, pp. 1-28.
- Di Bianco, Laura. "Ecocinema *Ars et Praxis*: Alice Rohrwacher's *Lazzaro Felice*." *The Italianist*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2020, pp. 151-164.

### **Language of Submission:**

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

**Academic Integrity:**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures" (see [McGill's guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

**Note on student-instructor communication:**

Because of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, students-instructor in-person meetings are unfortunately prohibited. The instructor will be constantly available for answering students' questions by email (within 24 hours) or online Zoom meetings. In case students want to organize a video/audio call, please send the instructor a message and schedule an appointment. Office hours will be held by appointment too. The instructor encourages students to talk about their needs and share their concerns, opinion and suggestions about the course anytime they can. The instructor will be happy to talk to students, give them feedback and assist them remotely.

**Copyright of lectures:**

All slides, video recordings, lecture notes, etc. remain the instructor's intellectual property. As such, you may use these only for your own learning (and research, with proper referencing/citation) ends. You are not permitted to disseminate or share these materials; doing so may violate the instructor's intellectual property rights and could be cause for disciplinary action. © Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.