This seminar introduces the student to modern and contemporary Italian cinema, one of the richest and most influential traditions in world cinema, through a study of various representations of the road. We will explore how the road dramatizes personal and national history, foregrounds a changing consciousness of space and time, and reinvents cinematic technology. Through key historical moments (Fascism, the post-war, the 1960s economic miracle), the seminar will examine the ways in which the road embodies at the same time temporal passage and dwelling in the present, thus representing a fluid space of openness, freedom and experimentation. More than any other space, the road gives a material form to times of cultural transition (the tensions between post-war democracy and the fascist past; industrial modernity and a mythic agrarian origin). During our journey, motorized and on foot, along paths, alleyways, city streets and country highways, we will be led by a series of questions: What is a road? What is the temporality evoked by the road? What does it mean for a country and its people, as well as for the modern technology of cinema itself, to be on the road? What hopes and fears do cinematic roads project as they traverse the Twentieth Century? Along the way, we will reflect on the connection between the road and other instances of open and fluid becoming such as the figure of the child. Like the road, the child is going places, yet poised on the threshold of past and future, a hybrid figure resisting the leveling power of history and projecting an uncertain future. The post-war cinema of neorealism will provide a key point of departure for the seminar, as we explore how its revolutionary aesthetics shaped modernist auteurs like Fellini, Antonioni and Pasolini. Finally, what happens to the road in the time of Covid 19? Whatever the answer may be, the road affords a space of ongoing meditation on our present moment and the tasks of cinema as a modern medium.
COURSE MATERIALS

All the readings and the films will be posted on MyCourses. The films are available either through Kanopy, a streaming video service that you can access directly through McGill library (these films are marked with K below), or through a link to McGill OneDrive.

Films

Alessandro Blasetti, *Four Steps in the Clouds/ Quattro passi tra le nuvole*, 1942

Luchino Visconti, *Ossessione*, 1943

Roberto Rossellini, *Paisan/Paisà*, 1946 K

Federico Fellini, *La strada*, 1954 K


Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Hawks and Sparrows/Uccellacci e uccellini*, 1964

Required Readings


Mikhaïl Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, Austin: University of Texas, 1986


Giuliana Minghelli, *Cinema Year Zero: Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film*, New York: Routledge, 2013 (selections)


André Bazin, "Cinematographic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation" in *What is cinema?* Vol. 1-2, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974


Ala Alryyes, *Original Subjects: The Child, the Novel and the Nation* (selections)


John Rhodes, *Stupendous Miserable City*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2007 (selections)


**EVALUATION**

Forum Discussions 30%
Short Quizzes 10%
4 Module Review Short Essays 30%
Final Project 30%

**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).

**Extraordinary Circumstances Statement:**
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 ORGANIZATION**

This course will be taught as an asynchronous online course with one regular live component: a Zoom class held on Thursday at our scheduled time: 10:05-11:35. The live session will be recorded for the students unable to attend. Our home base for all the materials, assignments, Zoom meetings, as well as the recordings of the live sessions, will be MyCourses.

1. **Learning online: Homework and Discussions**

The course is divided in modules. The modules are organized around a film and are two-weeks long, the one exception being the module on Roberto Rossellini’s *Paisà* which will be only one week. After an introductory encounter on Zoom on the first day of class, there will be 6 film modules and one week-long study module at the end of October reserved to work on the draft/outline of the final essay and/or
planning and preparation for the creative video project. Each module contains the course materials (readings, links to film, video clips and short presentations by the professor) and learning activities.

You will be asked to engage with the activities within the module following sequentially the presentation of the reading and viewing materials. Each week presents a similar set of tasks: 1) One short quiz 2) Two to three discussions on a group forum around questions raised by the week’s film and readings 3) A review assignment at the end of each module, a short essay to evaluate the module’s learning. All the modules as well as other course documentation and guidelines are located in MyCourses under Content.

2. Weekly Zoom Meetings

On Thursday, at the scheduled class time, we will meet on Zoom. The link to the platform and the semester meeting schedule will be posted on MyCourses in the Zoom section. This live class will allow us to touch base on each week’s work and further explore the questions that emerged in the forum discussions. These meetings will be organized in a three-part format: 1) a short lecture 2) viewing of a clip 3) breakout in smaller groups to discuss the questions raised. After the meeting a post with the major takeaway points and a recording of the class will be available on MyCourses. Students who will not be able to attend classes will not be penalized as long as they participate in the forums and demonstrate that they have reviewed the materials covered in the Zoom meetings. We will discuss and agree upon a Zoom etiquette on the first day of class. Hopefully we will be able to create a community of trust and collaboration that will approximate the normal classroom experience. There will be no recording of the breakout discussion rooms. When the main session is being recorded, you will be notified through a “pop-up” box in Zoom during the meeting. You can turn off the camera, so that only your name appears on screen. If you do not feel comfortable sitting in a recorded class, you may leave the meeting by logging off Zoom.

Technical requirements:
All students are required to have access to a computer, the internet, a microphone and webcam. Please do the following before joining the course:

- Create a basic account through this link: https://mcgill.zoom.us You must sign in with your McGill username/password. Having a Zoom account will help you facilitate virtual meetings for collaborative assignments.
- Read this section on getting started: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362033-Getting-Started-on-Windows-and-Mac
- Please contact me if you do not have a webcam or microphone so that we can find a solution together and make appropriate accommodations.
COURSE WORK

Forum discussions
Short Quizzes
4 Module review short essays
Final essay or creative project

Participation in group discussions (30%)
You will be responsible for the timely completion of the module’s sequence of readings and viewings to guarantee an active and informed participation in the weekly forum discussions. The discussions are an integral part to the content in this class. You don’t study for exams, you study for discussions. Engaged participation in this activity is crucial to your learning and success in the course. Please make sure to read the detailed guideline and the grading rubric for the forum postings and replies available on MyCourses under Content in the folder Course Basics. Each week will normally feature two group discussions. To maximize and facilitate the student’s interaction and peer review, the class will be randomly divided into groups of 8-10 students. Groups will be formed anew for each module.

Short quizzes (10%)
Each week one of the readings will be followed by a short quiz in a variety of formats (Multiple Choice, True/False, Fill-in-the-Blanks) to assess your understanding of the materials. The quizzes will be asynchronous; they will remain available for 24 hours and the students will have 30 minutes to complete them.

Module Review Short Essays (30%)
At the end of each module there will be a review assignment, either a short essay (500-700 words) in response to a question that emerged during the discussions or to a set of stills, or a free-form essay where you can reflect on a question or issue that you found compelling. You will be required to complete 5 of the 6 module’s review essays.

Final essay and/or Creative project
For the final project you will have two possibilities. You can choose to write a critical essay of about 1500 words that includes visual quotes supporting your argument (at least 6 stills from the film or films), or make a creative video clip accompanied by a short commentary. The starting, general question for the video clip would be: “What is it like being on the road at the time of Covid 19”? But you will be free to explore any theme or idea introduced in the seminar through images relating to our present moment. For the creative project you will be allowed to work in groups of 3 to 4 people.

There are three sets of deadlines for the final project:

October 8: Proposal of a topic for the final essay, or script idea for the video clip.
October 30: Students will use the Study Week of October 27-29 to finalize an outline/draft of the essay (bullet points, choice of stills, brief bibliography), or plan the video clip project (one-page description of the concept, a tentative script, ideas engaged from the course, collection of materials and a plan for shooting). A detailed description of what is expected for the draft/outlines will be provided in Course Basics. Each step of the project will receive detailed feedback from the instructor.
December 1: The final project is due.
KEEPING IN TOUCH—aka Office Hours
I will create a page on MyCourses where students will be able to post queries that either the instructor or fellow students will be able to answer. There will not be official office hours, but you will be able to reach me by email. Beside the regular feedback on the forum discussions, short essays and weekly Zoom meetings, I am planning to meet at least twice with each individual or group working on the final project to discuss the topic choice, the draft/outline, and its progress.

A FEW TIPS: How to succeed in the online setting
Create your workspace at home. Manage your time: complete the assignments in a timely manner, space the tasks, don’t procrastinate. The organization of the course will help you early on to create a routine. The course is focused on Zoom and forum group discussions: make the most of the many options for group interaction and collaboration. Technology can be overwhelming, but we are all learning the tools of our new learning trade. We will make trial runs of the major platforms we will be using (Zoom; Microsoft One Drive). Please look at McGill’s Teaching and learning services for more tips: https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/students/remote-learning-resources.

NETIQUETTE
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: 1) Username (use only your legal or preferred name) 2) Visual backgrounds 3) "Chat" boxes.
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.
Course Overview

INTRODUCTION
September 3

MODULE ONE -- FASCIST ROADS: FOUR STEPS IN THE CLOUDS (1942)
September 10-17
The spatetime of Fascism; Fascism and Cinema; Chronotopes of Fascism in Four Steps in the Clouds.

MODULE TWO -- BREAKING AWAY FROM FASCISM: OSSESSIONE (1943)
September 22-October 1
The road as a landscape; the birth of a new cinema; the weight of Fascism.

MODULE THREE -- HISTORY HITS THE ROAD: PAISAN (1946)
October 6-8
Rossellini’s long road to neorealism; the road and the birth of a nation; cinema between fiction and documentary.

→ October 8 Topic for final project due

MODULE FOUR -- A ROAD MANIFESTO: LA STRADA (1954)
October 13-22
A woman’s journey through Italy; the everyday as traveling spectacle; cinema of fiction and ethnography.

MODULE FIVE -- STUDY WEEK
October 27-29
→ October 30 Draft/Outline for final project due

MODULE SIX -- ON THE ROAD OF THE ECONOMIC MIRACLE: L’AVVENTURA (1961)
November 3-12
Adventure vs. encounter; women, landscape and modernity; the task of cinema and the invention of new roads.

MODULE SEVEN -- “WHERE IS HUMANITY GOING?—WHO KNOWS!” HAWKS AND SPARROWS (1964)
November 17-26

→ Final project due on December 1