

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

ITAL 375: Italian Cinema and Society
Term: Fall 2019

Meetings: Monday & Wednesday 2:35-3:55pm
Location: Arts 150

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Course Description

The course covers 12 key films produced by Italian directors between 1945 and 2016. Exploring this period through these cinematic texts will allow us to discuss some of the most important issues faced by Italian society since the end of the World War II, such as: the representation of historical events (fascism and war, modernization and the “economic miracle,” contemporary migration and the video revolution), the questioning of the traditional pillars of Italian society (the family, the Church, heterosexuality, the role of the father), and the debates surrounding the role of artists and intellectuals.

The course will cover a wide range of topics that can be grouped into four main categories: cinema as narrative; the specificity of cinematic language the powers of cinematic techniques; the relationship between cinema and other forms of artistic expression; and the possibilities and limits of cinematic representation.

The objectives of the course are: (a) to provide an overview of the development of Italian cinema over the three decades following the end of WW II; (b) to identify key issues in film studies that can serve as basic points of reference for the study of Italian and Western cinema; (c) to explore the relationship between cinematic representation and the socio-cultural history of Italy during the period in question; and (d) to develop the ability to interpret and respond to cinematic media both in writing and through the moving image.

Course Work

Participation in class discussion is essential. Students will be asked to discuss every film presented in class. The student’s attendance record and performance in class discussion will determine her/his participation mark.

On Wednesday, **September 28**, Monday, **October 31**, and Wednesday, **November 23**, a 15 minute quiz will test basic knowledge of the films discussed during the previous four-week period. The objective of this assignment is to ensure that students have watched carefully and are familiar with the main features (basic plot, characters’ name, significant events, etc.) of the films discussed in class.

During the term, students will be asked to complete the following assignments:

(a) **due on Thursday, October 13**, a 1-2 minute video clip accompanied by a 500-750

words commentary which explains how the clip addresses a historical or contemporary issue and how the clip's visual style has been influenced by one or more of the films on the syllabus. As stated in the detailed instructions available in myCourses, the objective of this assignment is for students to confront the challenge of communicating ideas through audiovisual means. To assist in meeting this objective, students will be asked to submit a 3/4-page storyboard on Monday, October 3 (see the storyboard instructions in myCourses). Students will then receive the instructor's comments and suggestions either by e-mail, in person or on-line via Zoom or Teams. The storyboard will **NOT** be marked insofar as it is designed to be a tool to help students produce a strong Clip & Commentary;

- (b) **due on Monday, December 5**, an 2000-2500 word final paper which must include a visual component (e.g., stills from the films discussed, drawing of sequences structure, etc.) as per the detailed instructions in myCourses. A list of suggested topics for the final paper will be handed out after the Thanksgiving week-end. *Students wishing to discuss a topic of their own choice, or wishing to complete a visual project rather than a final paper must obtain the instructor's permission by Monday, November 21 at the latest. Permission may be obtained by e-mail, or during an in person or on-line meeting.*

The assignments (other than the quizzes) must be handed in electronically (via MyCourses) using widely used formats (e.g., .doc or .docx for text; .jpg or .gif for stills; .mp3 or .wav for sound; .avi or .mp4 for video; etc.).

There is no final examination for this course.

Evaluation

Participation, attendance, and progress:	10%
Quizzes (3 x 5%):	15%
Clip and commentary (1-2 minute video + 500-750 words commentary):	30%
Final paper (2000-2500 words text + visual component):	45%

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

Viewings

The films to be discussed in class are listed at the end of this syllabus. They are all available from the McGill library and/or on Kanopy. It is the responsibility of students to make sure that they have easy access to these films.

Readings

The compulsory readings for this course are Peter Bondanella and Federico Pacchioni's *A History of Italian Cinema* which can be purchased in the McGill's bookstore, and a few additional articles provided through myCourses.

The following readings are suggested:

David Bordwell, *Film Art: An Introduction*

Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: 1943-1988* and *Italy and Its Discontents: Family, Civil Society, and State 1980-2001*

McGill Policy Statements

1. 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 <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).
L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity>).
2. 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. 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).

Acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose presence marks this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L'Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont leur présence marque ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.

Films to Be Discussed in Class

1. War and Reconstruction

Roberto Rossellini, *Roma città aperta*/Rome Open City, 1945

Vittorio de Sica, *Ladri di biciclette*/ Bicycle Thieves, 1948

2. Industrialization and Prosperity

Luchino Visconti, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*/Rocco and His Brothers, 1960

Federico Fellini, *La dolce vita*, 1960

3. Modernity and Its Discontents

Michelangelo Antonioni, *Deserto rosso*/Red Desert, 1964

Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teorema*/Theorem, 1968

4. The Weight of History

Liliana Cavani, *Il portiere di notte*/The Night Porter, 1974

Lina Wertmüller, *Pasqualino sette bellezze*/Seven Beauties, 1975

Ettore Scola, *C'eravamo tanto amati*/We All Love Each Other So Much, 1974

5. Post-Modern Italy and Beyond

Ferzan Özpetek, *Le fate ignoranti*/Ignorant fairies, 2001

Matteo Garrone, *Reality*, 2012

Paolo Sorrentino, *La grande bellezza*/The Great Beauty, 2013