

McGill University
Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

ITAL 477: Italian Cinema & Video

Italian Women Directors:
Gendering the Camera-Eye in Post-1945 Italian Cinema

Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday 2:35 - 3:55pm
Location: Room 295 – 688 Sherbrooke

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Course Description

The deeply patriarchal character of Italian society is widely recognized and one of its key manifestation is the marginalization of women voices in virtually all fields of cultural production. The film industry is no exception to this rule. Indeed, the status of film as a valuable commodity and the sensitive role of filmmaking in the shaping of national identity and projects have contributed to an unusually marked domination of Italian cinema by man directors, cinematographers and scriptwriters. In sum, it has been especially difficult of women to enter filmmaking (other than in acting roles), play a strong role in the production of Italian cinema and become well-recognized at home and abroad.

In spite of these challenges, highly original women directors have emerged in the second half of the 20th century and have left a strong legacy in the Italian cinematic tradition. Two of these women, Liliana Cavani and Lina Wertmüller also enjoyed an international reputation, especially in the 1970s and the 1980s. Beginning in the 1990s, some new women voices have also began to make themselves heard in the Italian film scene, though they have yet to gain an international audience.

In this course, we will examine the contribution made a some of these voices. We will begin with the work of Cavani and Wertmüller and then we will move on to the next generation of women directors. Our analysis of their work will situate their efforts within the evolving Italian cultural context and will focus on some fundamental questions: how did these women struggle with the gendering of the camera? how did they position themselves as women in a man-dominated tradition? how did they struggle with the constraints imposed by being labeled “women directors”? were they able to build on each other’s achievements? In the end, the objective of the course is to problematize the inescapably gendered nature of the camera and explore the challenges confronting all subjects (but especially subaltern ones) who choose it as a means of expression and intervention.

Course Work

Attendance is mandatory and 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.

Students will also be responsible for:

- (a) three (3) short **quizzes**, held on Thursday, **February 2**, Thursday, **March 9**, and Thursday, **April 6**, 2023. The quizzes will test basic knowledge of the films screened during the previous weeks;
- (b) an original **video clip** (1-2 minute in length) accompanied by a **commentary** (500-700 words), due on Tuesday, **March 7, 2023**;
- (c) a **final paper**, 2000-2500 words in length, which must include a visual component (e.g., stills from the films discussed). The final paper is due on Friday, **April 14, 2023**. A list of suggested topics for the final paper will be handed out after the Winter Reading Break. *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 Tuesday, March 14th at the latest. Permission may be obtained by e-mail, or during an in person or on-line meeting.*

Assignments 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

Attendance, participation and progress:	10%
Quizzes (3 x 3 1/2%):	15%
Video Clip & Commentary:	30%
Final paper (8-10 pages, double spaced):	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.

Readings

The required text for this course is Shohini Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed*. It can be purchased from the McGill bookstore. A few chapters and articles will also be made available to students from time to time in electronic form through myCourses. Two works of general interest are also *suggested* and will be placed on reserve: *Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present* by Peter Bondanella and *A History of Contemporary Italy* by Paul Ginsborg. Also recommended is Millicent Marcus's *Italian Cinema in the Light of Neorealism*, available from the McGill library as an eBook.

Viewings

Ten required films will be discussed in class over the term. ***Please note: McGill does not own all the compulsory films, and it is the responsibility of students to ensure that they have adequate access to the films they need (via the web, etc.).*** Recommended films appear beside the work they help to illuminate.

<i>Required</i>	<i>Recommended</i>
<i>Love and Anarchy</i> (Lina Wertmüller, 1973)	<i>The Seduction of Mimi</i> (Wertmüller, 1972) <i>Summer Night</i> (Wertmüller, 1986) <i>The Nymph</i> (Wertmüller, 1996) <i>Ferdinand and Caroline</i> (Wertmüller, 1999)
<i>Swept Away</i> (Wertmüller, 1974)	
<i>Seven Beauties</i> (Wertmüller 1975)	
<i>The Night Porter</i> (Liliana Cavani, 1974)	<i>Galileo</i> (Cavani, 1968) <i>The Cannibals</i> (Cavani, 1969) <i>Milarepa</i> (Cavani, 1973) <i>The Guest</i> (Cavani, 1971) <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (Cavani, 1977)
<i>The Skin</i> (Cavani, 1981)	
<i>The Berlin Affair</i> (Cavani, 1985)*	
<i>Towards Evening</i> (Francesca Archibugi, 1990)*	<i>Flying Lessons</i> (Archibugi, 2006)
<i>We Also Want the Roses</i> (Alina Marazzi, 2000)*	
<i>The Best Day of My Life</i> (Cristina Comencini, 2002)*	<i>The Beast in the Heart</i> (C. Comencini, 2005) <i>When the Night</i> (C. Comecini, 2011)
<i>The White Space</i> (Francesca Comencini, 2009)*	<i>The Words of My Father</i> (F. Comencini, 2001) <i>A Special Day</i> (F. Comencini, 2012)

* Films not yet owned by the McGill library – students will be notified if they become available before the end of the term.

Use of Cellphones, Computers and Recording Devices

Cellphones must be turned off and stored away during class.

Computers may be used ONLY for discrete note taking. The instructor will ask students using the computer for any other purpose (such as e-mail or web browsing) to leave the classroom. Computers must be turned off during Quizzes.

No recording device of any kind can be used unless specifically authorised by the instructor.

McGill Policy Statements

- 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.