NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, Florence Italy  
Fall 2010  
Syllabus for History of Italian Cinema

Class Meetings: Wednesdays 4:30-7:15 pm  
Screenings:

Film Screenings: Monday or Tuesday 6:00-8:00 pm

Professor: Tina Fallani Benaim  
t.fallani@virgilio.it  
Office Hours: after class or by appointment  
Required Reading:

Peter Bondanella: Italian Cinema (Continuum Third Edition 2003)  
Millicent Marcus: In the Light of Neorealism (Princeton university Press 1986) 
Chapters 1,2,6, included in the Course Reader

Packet of Articles and Reviews in the Course Reader (see weekly calendar) that includes Essays by: Bazin, Burke, Chatman, Michaiczyck

Assignments: Attendance to lectures and screenings  
One midterm paper and a final test (essay questions) covering the entire program  
Oral presentations

Grading System:

Participation 20%  
Oral Presentations 20%  
Mid-term exam 25%  
Final Exam 35%

Course description
The course introduces the student to the world of Italian Cinema. In the first part the class will be analysing Neorealism, a cinematic phenomenon that deeply influenced the ideological and aesthetic rules of film art.  
In the second part we will concentrate on the films that mark the decline of Neorealism and the talent of "new" auteurs such as Fellini and Antonioni.  
The last part of the course will be devoted to the cinema from 1970's to the present in order to pay attention to the latest developments of the Italian industry. The course is a general
analysis of post-war cinema and a parallel social history of this period using films as "decoded historical evidence". Together with masterpieces such as "Open City" and "The Bicycle Thief" the screenings will include films of the Italian directors of the "cinema d'autore" such as "The Conformist", "Life is Beautiful" and the 2004 candidate for the Oscar for Best Foreign Film, "I am not scared".

The class will also analyse the different aspects of "Film Making" both in Italian and the U.S. industry where I had the pleasure to work for many years in the Editing Department on Films such as “The Dead Poet Society” and “The Godfather part3”

The Films in VHS or DVD format are dubbed in English or sub-titled.

Expectations
Come to class. Be on time. Do the homework. Bring the readings to class. Engage in discussion. Develop your own perspective. You are expected to have completed all the readings and critically engage in dialogue with the material each time you step into the classroom. You are expected to carefully watch the film, taking notes during the showing. You are expected to work together as groups, equalizing participation between your members. You are expected to do research, be friendly, and think constantly.

Structure of Class

Presentations:

Prepare a plot summary of the film. Distil the main points of the articles into short, succinct sentences. Ask your classmates to turn to a particular page of an article if you are quoting from a passage. If you are unsure about a concept, say you don't know. It is okay to not know. It will serve as discussion.

Your investigation will explore the social, political, technological, industrial, aesthetic, and cultural elements that relate to the film (including production and reception). You can engage with popular and scholarly sources, books and periodicals, DVDs and web sites, trailers and advertisements, statistics and movie reviews and any historical document that informs us about the period. Select a few clips from the film to illustrate your argument. After presenting your analysis, ask questions of your classmates. They may observe something about the film that you hadn't imagined.

Speaking in front of a class for many students can be a harrowing experience. For others, it comes easy. Recognise this fact by calling on as many different people as possible and do so by name. Be patient when awaiting answers. Give time for your question to sink in. Be ready to rephrase your question if it seems confusing to your classmates. Don't answer your own question. If you ask a question, always wait for a response. Listeners, don't be afraid to write down your words before presenting them to class. Use your notes taken during the film to assist you in recalling information and thoughts.
To prepare for a discussion of the film, research these questions to put the film in a broader context:

1. What is the historical context of the film?

2. What were the conditions of the film’s production?

3. What elements of the film itself are of artistic importance?

4. Cultural and social importance?

5. Historical importance?

6. What are the main issues that the film deals with?

7. What was the reception of the film?

8. How was the film reviewed when it opened?

9. How did it do at the box office?

10. Does the film engage with any particular technology or storytelling aesthetics?

11. How does it compare to the other films we have viewed?

12. Make a brief biography of the director

Choose a few clips to anchor discussion of some of the above topics.

Make sure your approach to the film has a point. Do research, make an argument, and support it with well-chosen evidence and supplementary material. If members of your group disagree on a point or two, present it in the context of your report. Disagreement is productive and natural.
Tailor your project to the colleagues in the class. Remember, you know what the class knows. Present it as such.

Assume the class has watched the film and done the readings, but don't assume they remember everything they've seen or read. If you feel something is significant, repeat it without hesitation. What's better than repetition is amplification, using that text to respond to or lead into a larger concept or issue.

**Attendance to class and screenings is mandatory. Students are expected to participate actively in the class discussions. Absences will result in the lowering of the final grade**

**Weekly Calendar:**

**Week one:**
*Wednesday, September 8*
Introduction
THE LAST KISS, Gabriele Muccino 2000 (115)
Film Reviews

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) OPEN CITY, Roberto Rossellini 1945 (100)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 2 (focus on Rossellini)
Marcus: Rossellini's Open city: The Founding

**Week two:**
*Wednesday, September 15*
Lecture on THE LAST KISS
Clips from THE LAST KISS (the remake), Tony Godwyn 2006 (103)

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) THE BICYCLE THIEF, Vittorio De Sica 1948 (93)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 2 (focus on De Sica)
Marcus: De Sica's Bicycle Thief: casting Shadows on the Visionary City

**Week three:**
*Wednesday, September 22*
Lecture on OPEN CITY and THE BICYCLE THIEF

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) LA STRADA, Federico Fellini 1954 (105)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 4 (focus on Fellini)
Marcus: Fellini's La Strada: Transcending Neorealism
Bazin: La Strada

**Week four:**
*Wednesday, September 29*
Lecture on: LA STRADA
Student presentation and class discussion
Screening: Federico Fellini's Autobiography, Clips from his life.
Pasquito del Bosco,2000 (68)

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) LA DOLCE VITA, Federico Fellini 1959 (180)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 6 (focus on Fellini)
Burke: La Dolce Vita
**Week five:**
**Wednesday, October 6**
Screening: LA DOLCE VITA (continued)
Clip from THE INTERVIEW, Federico Fellini, 1987

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) BLOW-UP, Michelangelo Antonioni 1966 (120)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 6 (focus on Antonioni)
Chatman: "Il provino" and Blow-Up
Julio Cortazar: “Blow Up” (original short story)

**Week six:**
**Wednesday, October 13**
Lecture on: LA DOLCE VITA and BLOW-UP (Steiner)
Student presentation and class discussion

Screening in class: Michelangelo Antonioni
Documentary by Sandro Lai 2001 (55)

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) THE CONFORMIST, Bernardo Bertolucci 1970 (120)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 8 (focus on Bertolucci)
Marcus: A morals charge

**Week seven:**
**Wednesday, October 20**
Midterm Exam

**Week eight:**
**Wednesday, October 27**
Fall break

**Week nine:**
**Wednesday, November 3**
Start screening in class 1900 Bernardo Bertolucci, 1977, 255 minutes)

Screening: 1900, Bernardo Bertolucci 1977
Bondanella: chapter 8 (focus on Bertolucci)
Bernardo Bertolucci interviews:
Dacia Maraini, 1973: who were you?
Sally Quinn, 1977: 1900 has taken its toll on Bernardo Bertolucci
The New York Times, Vincent Canby: 1900

**Week ten:**
**Wednesday, November 10**
Lecture on: THE CONFORMIST and 1900
Student presentation and class discussion

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) SWEPT AWAY, Lina Wertmuller 1974 (120)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 10 (focus on Wertmuller)
Michaicyck: Lina Wertmuller: The Politics of Sexuality
Week eleven:
Wednesday, November 17
Lecture on: SWEPT AWAY
Clips from TRAVOLTI DAL DESTINO, Guy Ritchie 86 minutes, 2002
Student presentation and class discussion

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) CINEMA PARADISO, Giuseppe Tornatore 1988 (123)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 12 (focus on Tornatore)
Marcus: Giuseppe Tornatore’s Cinema Paradiso and the art of Nostalgia
Film reviews

Week twelve:
Wednesday, November 24
Lecture on: CINEMA PARADISO
Student presentation and class discussion

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL, Roberto Benigni 1998 (118)
Assignments: Bondanella: chapter 12 (focus on Benigni)
Marcus: The Seriousness of Humour in Roberto Benigni’s Life is Beautiful
Film reviews

Week thirteen:
Wednesday, December 1
Lecture on: LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL and THE TIGER AND THE SNOW
Student presentation and class discussion

Screening: (Monday or Tuesday) I AM NOT SCARED, Gabriele Salvatores 2003 (108)
Assignments: Film Reviews

Week fourteen:
Wednesday, December 8
Lecture on: I AM NOT SCARED
Student presentation and class discussion

Week fifteen
Wednesday, December 15
Final Exam