



Fall 2019 – History of Italian Cinema Monday 3pm – 5:45pm

Class Description:

This course explores Italian cinema from its origins to the present time, within the socioeconomic and historical context of Italian culture and society. Classes will focus on some of the major works of key directors, as well as at the most important genres of popular cinema, giving particular attention to the historical, cultural, and literary matrix of each movie. Students will be encouraged to understand the possibilities of film both as works of art and as testimonies and documents of Italian culture and society. Italian film has had a remarkable international history. Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* (1914) was the first film shown on the lawn of the White House, and impacted D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916). "Diva" films created a standard modern drama with a female star. Neorealist films became influential worldwide, arguably the most important film "movement" in the history of cinema, at the time. Such names as Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Luchino Visconti, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Bernardo Bertolucci were in the vanguard of the 1960s international arthouse film, while the 'Comedy Italian Style' showed a lighter vein of international cinema also popular during the period. From the end of World War II to the 1970s, many influential films and stylistic trends were produced and promoted by Italian cinema. The concept of "impegno" (= political commitment) defined the genre of the instant movies, and fits the ideological issues of the political turmoil during the so-called Years of Lead. The "nostalgia narrative" of the 1980s and 1990s has kept emphasizing the cultural uniqueness of the Italian cinema of the past. From the 1990s experiences of the coming of age stories to the films of the new millennium, historical traumas, intertextuality and a vocation to the social will be the main answer to the crisis of film production. Culture and cinema are intertwined through the course, that aims at addressing government policies, influences, and both implicit and explicit censorship in the course of Italian film history. Through cinema, students are encouraged to discover ethical and political challenges, besides Italian cultural peculiarities.

The course comprises lectures and discussions, accompanied by PowerPoint slides and guided film watching. Note-taking is mandatory, and individual study of the notes, readings, and films at home is required after every class.

Instructor Details:

Name: Rossella Catanese, PhD

NYUGlobalHome Email Address: rossella.catanese@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Monday, 11am-1pm

Villa Ulivi Office Location: Room 8

Villa Ulivi Phone Number: +39 055 5007 300

Desired Outcomes:

On completion of this course, students should:

- demonstrate a critical understanding of the evolution of Italian film history, including themes, genres, key directors and key films;
- understand the ways in which films explore political and social issues in Italy;
- investigate the artistic, social and political influences on (and of) arthouse films.

Assessment Components

- Attendance and Participation: 10%
- Pop Quizzes: 5%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Research Paper (2000 words): 30%
- Final Exam: 30%

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations:

- **Grade A:** The student's work demonstrates an understanding of the subject that goes beyond assigned course readings. The student writes essays/exam questions that are an original synthesis of source materials, demonstrating the ability to evaluate source material critically. Written arguments are clear, well-organized and well-presented; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student has distinguished himself/herself throughout the course of the semester for his/her contributions to class discussion.
- **Grade B:** The student's work shows a clear understanding of assigned readings and materials covered in class. The student writes clear, well-organized and well-presented essays/exam questions; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student is prepared in class and asks relevant questions.
- **Grade C:** The student's work shows a basic understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. However, written and/or oral work is deficient in one or more of the following areas: clarity, organization or content. The student's work is generally in need of improvement
- **Grade D:** The student's work shows occasional understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work is deficient in one or more of the following areas: clarity, organization or content. The student does not participate in class discussion and has not frequented the instructor's office hours.
- **Grade F:** The student's work does not demonstrate understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work are either insufficient or are

not submitted. The student appears unprepared in class and has not frequented the instructor's office hours.

Grading Guidelines

A = 94-100

A minus = 90-93

B plus = 87-89

B = 84-86

B minus = 80-83

C plus = 77-79

C = 74-76

C minus = 70-73

D plus = 67-69

D = 65-66

F = below 65

Grading Policy:

Please refer to Assessment Expectations and the policy on late submission of work

Academic Accommodations:

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see the [Moses Center](#) for further information.

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see [Study Away and Disability](#).

Attendance Policy:

Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. **To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade.** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to the number of class times over a single week

Excused Absences:

In case of absence, regardless of the reason, the student is responsible for completing missed assignments, getting notes and making up missed work in a timely manner based upon a schedule that is mutually agreed upon between the faculty member and the student. **The only excused absences are those approved by the Office of Academic Support; they are as follows:**

Absence Due to Illness

- If you are sick, please see a doctor. Contact the Office of Student Life for assistance.
- For absences that last for **two or more consecutive days**, a doctor's certificate, "certificato medico" is required. The doctor will indicate in writing the number of days of bed rest required. Please note these certificates can only be obtained on the day you see the doctor and cannot be written for you afterwards.
- Absences can ONLY be excused if they are reported WITHIN 48 HRS of your return to class via the online [NYU Florence Absence Form](#)
- OAS will not accept a student email or telephone call regarding an absence due to illness
- OAS will only notify faculty of absences REPORTED on the ABSENCE FORM
- The Office of Student Life, when assisting you in cases of severe or extended illness, will coordinate with the Office of Academic Support to properly record your absences

Due to Religious Observance

- Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday
- Information regarding absences due to religious observance must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online [NYU Florence Absence Form](#)
- Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

Due to a class conflict with a program sponsored lecture, event, or activity

- All students are entitled to miss one class period without any penalty to their grade in order to attend a lecture, event or activity that is sponsored by the academic program
- Information regarding absences due to a class conflict must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online [NYU Florence Absence Form](#).
- Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

Students with questions or needing clarification about this policy are instructed to contact a member of the Office of Academic Support located in Villa Ulivi or to email florence.academicssupport@nyu.edu

Late Submission of Work

- All course work must be submitted on time, in class on the date specified on the syllabus.
- To request an extension on a deadline for an assignment, students must speak to the professor one week prior to the due date
- To receive an incomplete for a course at the end of the semester, two weeks before final exams, both the student and the faculty member must meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs to review the request and if granted, they must both sign an Incomplete Contract detailing the terms for completing missing coursework.

Plagiarism Policy

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY FORM:

The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

In the event of suspected or confirmed cases of plagiarism, the faculty member will consult first with the Assistant Director for Academic Affairs as definitions and procedures vary from school to school.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center, located in Villa Ulivi, offers you feedback on any type of writing, at any stage in planning or drafting; very rough drafts are welcome. Sign up for a consultation at the [Writing Center's website](#) and submit your working draft or ideas at least six hours in advance to [NYU Florence Writing Center](#). You can drop in for a consultation M-Th, but remember that appointments are given priority. Please also note that the Writing Center does not correct or "fix" your writing but prompts you to think and work. The aim is to create stronger writers in the long term, not necessarily perfect papers in the short term.

Required Text:

- Bertellini, Giorgio (ed.). *The cinema of Italy*. London: Wallflower Press, 2007.

Copies of each textbook are available for consultation and short term loans in the [Villa Ulivi Library](#). Extra copies of some textbooks are also available for semester long loans. More information on [Books and Course Materials](#).

Other Required Readings:

- Celli, Carlo, and Cottino-Jones, Marga. "Remote History". *A New Guide to Italian Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: xi-xiv.
- Bertellini, Giorgio. "Silent Italian Cinema: A New Medium for Old Geographies." In Burke, Frank (ed.). *A Companion to Italian Cinema*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017.
- Dalle Vacche, Angela. "Introduction: Mater Dolorosa." *Diva: Defiance and Passion in Early Italian Cinema*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008: 1-21.

- Gottlieb, Sidney. "Rossellini, Open City, and Neorealism." *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 31-42.
- Di Carmine, Roberta. "Comedy 'Italian Style' and *I soliti ignoti* (*Big Deal on Madonna Street*, 1958)." In Horton, Andrew, and Rapf, Joanna E. *A Companion To Film Comedy*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013: 454-473.
- Celli, Carlo, and Cottino-Jones, Marga. "The Later 1960s". *A New Guide to Italian Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 97-111.
- Minuz, Andrea. "La Dolce Vita and Its Relevance Today." *Political Fellini: Journey to the End of Italy*. New York: Bergahn Books, 2015: 58-77.
- Greene, Naomi. "The End of Ideology." *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990: 60-67 (the full chapter is 53-91).
- Vahdani, Alireza. "Nuovo Cinema Paradiso: A Reflection of Italian Society." *Offscreen* (2011), Internet resource. Accessed 31 January 2019 <http://offscreen.com/view/nuovo_cinema_paradiso>.
- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. "The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni's 'Life is Beautiful'." *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14:1 (2001): 253-266.
- Antonello, Pierpaolo. "Il divo. Sorrentino's spectacle of politics." In Lombardi, Giancarlo, and Christian Uva (eds). *Italian Political Cinema: Public Life, Imaginary, and Identity in Contemporary Italian Film*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2016: 291-304.
- O'Leary, Alan. "Dead Man Walking: The Aldo Moro Kidnap and Palimpsest History in Buongiorno, Notte." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 6:1 (2008): 33-45.
- O'Leary, Alan. "What is Italian Cinema?" *California Italian Studies*, 7:1 (2017). Internet resource. Accessed 31 January 2019 <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7z9275bz>>.

Texts are available on line.

Internet Research Guidelines:

The careful use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites will be given. Failure to cite internet and other non-traditional media sources in your written work constitutes plagiarism.

Additional Required Equipment:

N/A

Class Assignments and Topics:

Session 1 – September 2th

Presentation of the course: introduction to Italian cinema. Explanation of the syllabus. Guidelines on readings, screenings, assignments and exams.

Screening: clips from *My Voyage to Italy* (Scorsese, 2002)

Assigned reading: Celli, Carlo, and Cottino-Jones, Marga. "Remote History". *A New Guide to Italian Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: xi-xiv.

Session 2 – September 9th

Lecture and discussion on early cinema, historical epics, "diva" films, Avant-garde.

Screenings: clips from early cinema (Edison, Lumière), *La presa di Roma* (Alberini, 1905), *Troppo bello* (Deed, 1909), *Cabiria* (Pastrone, 1914), *Assunta Spina* (Serena, 1915), *Thais* (Bragaglia, 1916).

Assigned readings: 1) Bertellini, Giorgio. "Silent Italian Cinema: A New Medium for Old Geographies." In Burke, Frank (ed.). *A Companion to Italian Cinema*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017; 2) Dalle Vacche, Angela. "Introduction: Mater Dolorosa." *Diva: Defiance and Passion in Early Italian Cinema*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008: 1-21. Print

Session 3 – September 16th

The Fascist Years and the movies.

Screenings: *1860* (Blasetti, 1934), *Men, What Rascals!* (Camerini, 1932)

Assigned readings: Textbook, chap. 1-2 (pp.11-30).

Session 4 – September 23rd

World War II: The Birth of Neorealism

Screenings: *Obsession* (Visconti, 1943), *Paisan* (Rossellini, 1946), *Rome, Open City* (Rossellini, 1945)

Assigned readings: 1) Textbook, chap. 3 (pp. 31-42); 2) Gottlieb, Sidney. "Rossellini, Open City, and Neorealism." *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 31-42.

Session 5 – September 30th

Reconstruction and the late 1940s.

Screenings: *The Earth Trembles* (Visconti, 1947), *The Bicycle Thief* (De Sica, 1948)

Assigned reading: Textbook, chap. 4 (pp. 43-50)

Session 6 – October 7th

The 1950s: after the Neorealism.

Screenings: *The Gold of Naples* (De Sica, 1954), *Senso* (Visconti, 1954), *La Strada* (Fellini, 1954)

Assigned readings: Textbook, chap. 6-7 (pp. 63-82).

Session 7 – October 14th

The Economic and Cinematic Boom of the 1960s. #1 Comedy Italian Style, “Spaghetti” Western and “Spaghetti” Nightmare.

Review for Midterm Exam.

Deadline to submit **paper topic** for approval.

Screenings: *Big Deal on Madonna Street* (Monicelli, 1958), *Easy Life* (Risi, 1962), *A Fistful of Dollars* (Leone, 1964), *Black Sunday* (Bava, 1960).

Assigned readings: 1) Textbook, chap. 16 (pp. 163-172); 2) Di Carmine, Roberta. “Comedy 'Italian Style' and *I soliti ignoti* (*Big Deal on Madonna Street*, 1958).” In Horton, Andrew, and Rapf, Joanna E. *A Companion To Film Comedy*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013: 454-473.

Session 8 – October 21st [MIDTERM EXAM]

Midterm Exam.

October 28th – November 3rd [FALL BREAK]

No class

Session 9 – November 4th

The Economic and Cinematic Boom of the 1960s. #2 Arthouse cinema and authorship

Screenings: *Rocco and His Brothers* (Visconti, 1960), *La dolce vita* (Fellini, 1960), *8 ½* (Fellini, 1963), *The Adventure* (Antonioni, 1960), *Blow Up* (Antonioni, 1966), *La ricotta* (Pasolini, 1962).

Assigned readings: 1) Textbook, chap. 14 (pp. 143-152); 2) Celli, Carlo, and Cottino-Jones, Marga. “The Later 1960s”. *A New Guide to Italian Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 97-111; 3) Minuz, Andrea. “La Dolce Vita and Its Relevance Today.” *Political Fellini: Journey to the End of Italy*. New York: Bergahn Books, 2015: 58-77; 4) Greene, Naomi. “The End of Ideology.” *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990: 60-67 (the full chapter is: 53–91).

Session 10 – November 11th

Political films in the Years of Lead and the “Giallo”.

Screenings: *Love and Anarchy* (Wertmuller, 1973), *The Conformist* (Bertolucci, 1970), *The Working Class Goes to Heaven* (Petri, 1971), *Deep Red* (Argento, 1975)

Assigned readings: Textbook, chap. 17-18 (pp. 173-191); chap. 21 (pp. 213-222)

Session 11 – November 15th [FRIDAY: FIELD TRIP]

Field trip: Cineteca di Bologna and Home Movies archive. No homework due

Session 12 – November 18th

Working on national memory: media and nostalgic narrative in 1980s.

Screening: *Cinema Paradiso* (Tornatore, 1988), *Ginger and Fred* (Fellini, 1989)

Assigned reading: Vahdani, Alireza. "Nuovo Cinema Paradiso: A Reflection of Italian Society." *Offscreen* (2011), Internet resource. Accessed 31 January 2019
<http://offscreen.com/view/nuovo_cinema_paradiso>.

Session 13 – November 25th

The 1990s as a new Italian cinematic Renaissance. The digital editing and the coming of age stories.
Research Paper due.

Screening: *The Sheltering Sky* (Bertolucci, 1990), *Lamerica* (Amelio, 1994), *Life is beautiful* (Benigni, 1997), *But Forever in My Mind* (Muccino, 1999)

Assigned reading: 1) Textbook, chap. 24 (pp. 245-254); 2) Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. "The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni's 'Life is Beautiful'." *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14:1 (2001): 253-266.

Session 14 – December 2nd

The 2000s: global media, trauma narrative and postmodern retrospectives.
Review for Final Exam.

Screening: *Goodmorning, Night* (Bellocchio, 2003), *The Golden Door* (Crialesi, 2006), *The Divine* (Sorrentino, 2008), *Gomorra* (Garrone, 2008).

Assigned reading: 1) Antonello, Pierpaolo. "Il divo. Sorrentino's spectacle of politics." In Lombardi, Giancarlo, and Christian Uva (eds). *Italian Political Cinema: Public Life, Imaginary, and Identity in Contemporary Italian Film*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2016: 291-304; O'Leary, Alan. "Dead Man Walking: The Aldo Moro Kidnap and Palimpsest History in Buongiorno, Notte." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 6:1 (2008): 33-45; O'Leary, Alan. "What is Italian Cinema?" *California Italian Studies*, 7:1 (2017). Internet resource. Accessed 31 January 2019
<<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7z9275bz>>.

Session 15 – May 13th [FINAL EXAM]

Final Exam.

Classroom Etiquette

- Eating is not permitted in the classrooms. Bottled water is permitted.
- Cell phones should be turned off during class time.
- The use of personal laptops and other electronic handheld devices are prohibited in the classroom unless otherwise specified by the professor.
- We recycle! So keep it green! Please dispose of trash in the clearly marked recycle bins located throughout the on campus buildings

Required Co-curricular Activities

Field trip: Cineteca di Bologna and Home Movies archive

The Cineteca di Bologna, created in 1963 as a municipal institution, is deeply rooted in the Bolognese local culture, and at the same time devoted to an international network. Since 1989 the Cineteca di Bologna is member of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF) and of the Association des Cinémathèques Européennes (ACE). Its yearly festival, 'Il Cinema Ritrovato,' is one of the central events for scholars in the field of film heritage and film restoration worldwide, but also for all kinds of audience, since it includes sections dedicated to kids and entertainment. Thus, the Cineteca di Bologna holds a large film and non-film collection, including a rich library, and promotes exhibitions and workshops. Moreover, its building is located very close to the University of Bologna's department of Performing Arts and Communication Sciences, ensuring a strong connection with the city's educational institutions. Its library, dedicated to Renzo Renzi who was among the founders of Bologna's Commissione Cinema, supports the idea of the cinematheque as a research center. Home Movies, The Italian Amateur Film Archive, was born in 2002, with the mission to collect and preserve amateur and family film, an audiovisual heritage that is still hidden and largely inaccessible. The Archive was founded and is managed by the Home Movies Association, a research group aimed at promoting and organizing the study, storage and upgrading of amateur and family film. Home Movies has currently opened a new Experimental and Art Film section, giving large room to experimental and artist's cinema, as a look at the visual revolution of 1960s and 1970s.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Please, check the NYU Calendar of events. Suggested optional co-curricular activities will be announced in class and/or via email by the professor throughout the semester.

Your Instructor

Rossella Catanese is a Postdoctoral Researcher at IMT School for Advanced Studies in Lucca. She also teaches at Sapienza University of Rome, and Polimoda Fashion School in Florence. Her publications focus on film restoration, cinematheques, film history, experimental cinema and avant-garde.