NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, Florence Italy
Syllabus for WOMEN PROTAGONISTS IN ITALIAN CINEMA

Class Meetings:

Film Screenings:

Professor: Tina Fallani Benaim
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Office Hours: After class or by appointment

Required Reading: See Weekly Calendar

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
In this course we will focus on the presence of women as protagonists, symbolic figures, and filmmakers in Italian cinema. We will be studying how the image of women has changed in Italian Cinema from the mid 1940’ to our days. In recent years, Cinema Italiano has generated a new wave of Italian women directors who have made their mark on the national cinematic imagination. Directors such as Francesca Archibugi, Cristina and Francesca Comencini and Roberta Torre, among others, have established themselves as important voices of Italy's latest generation of filmmakers. In addition to considering the aesthetic and formal elements of Italian films by contemporary female directors, we will discuss the range of social issues at play within them. 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 websites, 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. Recognize 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. Prepare a brief biography of the director.
2. What is the historical context of the film?
3. What were the conditions of the film's production?
4. What elements of the film itself are of artistic importance?
5. Cultural and social importance?
6. Historical importance?
7. Analyse each character of the film
8. What are the main issues that the film deals with?
9. What was the reception of the film?
10. How was the film reviewed when it opened?
11. How did it do at the box office?
12. Does the film engage with any particular technology or storytelling aesthetics?
13. How does it compare to the other films we have viewed?
14. Prepare a few questions for class discussion
15. Bring a printed version of your notes to me

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. Unexcused absences will result in the lowering of the final grade.
Weekly Calendar:

Week one:

Introduction
IL CORPO DELLE DONNE, Lorella Zanardo 2009 (25 minutes)
Assignments:
BBC News: Film Scorns Italian TV sex symbols
The Body of Women: Female Image in Italian Television
Interview with Lorella Zanardo
Lorella Zanardo: real women’endangered species on Italian TV
The Observer: My name is Christa.
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Feminist Perspectives on Objectification

Screening:
OPEN CITY, Roberto Rossellini 1945 (100)
Assignments:
Bondanella:A History of Italian Cinema, Continuum 2009 : chapter 3 (pages 61-71)
Marcus: Rossellini’s Open city: The Founding
Steven Gundle: Bellissima, Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy,Yale University Press 2007: Beauty and National Identity after the Second World War

Week two:

Class discussion on: IL CORPO DELLE DONNE
Lecture on: OPEN CITY

Screening:
LA STRADA, Federico Fellini 1954 (105)
Assignments:
Cottino-Jones: Women, Desire and power in Italian Cinema, Palgrave 2010: A Woman’s Search for Change and Meaningful Relationships in the Films of the 1950’s pages 75-81 and 87-100
Marcus: Fellini’s La Strada: Transcending Neorealism
Bazin: La Strada

Week three:

Lecture on : LA STRADA

Screening:
DIVORZIO ALL’ITALIANA, Pietro Germi 1961 (105)
Assignments:

Week four:

Lecture on : DIVORZIO ALL’ITALIANA
Clips from: L’ULTIMO BACIO, Gabriele Muccino 2000 (115)
Screening: SWEPT AWAY, Lina Wertmuller 1974 (120)
Bondanella A History of Italian Cinema, Continuum 2009: chapter 7 pages 193 - 200
Michaicyck: Lina Wertmuller: The Politics of Sexuality

**Week five:**
Lecture on: SWEPT AWAY
Clips from TRAVOLTI DAL DESTINO, Guy Ritchie 86 minutes, 2002

Screening: LA CITTA' DELLE DONNE, Federico Fellini 1980 (145)
Assignments: Bondanella:A History of Italian Cinema, Continuum 2009
Fellini and Sexuality: Fellini’s Casanova and City of Women pages 302 - 303
Cottino-Jones: Women, Desire and power in Italian Cinema, Palgrave 2010: decentering the Masculine and spotlighting the Feminine in the Films of the 1980’s pages 187-191
Steven Gundle: Bellissima, Feminine beauty and the idea of Italy. Yale University Press, 2007:
Fellini and the Cinematic Imaginary

**Week six:**
Lecture on : LA CITTA’ DELLE DONNE

Screening: TANO DA MORIRE, Roberta Torre 1997 (80)
Assignments: Flavia Laviosa : Visions of Struggle in Women’s Filmmaking in the Mediterranean Italy : Women of the mafia. Anthropological Anxieties: Roberta Torre’s Critique of Mafia Violence
Áine O’Healy
Film Reviews

**Week seven:**
Lecture on : TANO DA MORIRE
Clips from: GALANTUOMINI, Edoardo Winspeare 2008 (102)

Screening: PANI E TULIPANI, Silvio Soldini 1999(114)
Assignments: Bondanella:A History of Italian Cinema, Continuum 2009 Part Four:Generational change in the Contemporary Italian Cinema pp 552-556
Film Reviews

**Week eight:**
Midterm Exam

**Week nine:**
Break

**Week ten:**
Lecture on : PANI E TULIPANI

Screening: IL PIU’ BEL GIORNO DELLA MIA VITA, Cristina Comencini (2002)
Assignments:
Film Reviews

**Week eleven:**

Lecture on: IL PIU’ BEL GIORNO DELLA MIA VITA
Clips from:
LA BESTIA NEL CUORE, Cristina Comencini 2005 (120)
Assignments:
The Newyork Times: Steven Holden: One Woman’s Happiness and Hysteria
Emanuel Levy: Interviews
Film Reviews

Screening:
MI PIACE LAVORARE, MOBBING, Francesca Comencini (2003) (86)
Assignments:
Film Reviews

**Week twelve:**

Lecture on: MI PIACE LAVORARE, MOBBING

Screening:
LEZIONI DI VOLO, Francesca Archibugi 2006 (106)
Assignments:
Film Reviews

**Week thirteen:**

Lecture on: LEZIONI DI VOLO

Screening:
LO SPAZIO BIANCO, Francesca Comencini 2009 (98)
Assignments:
Luisa Passerini, Gender relations, from Italian Cultural Studies ed Forgacs and Lumley pp. 144-159
Rachel K Jones and April Brayfield: Life greatest joy?: European Attitudes toward the Centrality of Children, in Social Forces, Vol.75 No. 4 pp.1239-1269
Film Reviews

**Week fourteen:**
**Wednesday, December 3**
Lecture on LO SPAZIO BIANCO
Review

**Week fifteen**
Final Exam