

NYU Summer in Florence 2019
FLORENCE in Italian Cinema and Literature:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to key topics in culture and film studies as explored through the representation of Florence in cinema and literature. It will focus on a selection of Italian- and English-language films and novels set in Florence from the 19th century to the present. Each film and novel will be discussed for its aesthetic relevance and its historical and cultural context of Florence and Italy. Among the main topics to be discussed are the evolution of Italian culture and identity from post-unification to the present, and the differences between the depictions of Florence and Italy by English-language and Italian writers and filmmakers.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Tue/Thu 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M., Villa Ulivi)

Tuesdays will feature an introductory lecture and a discussion of the literary and historical reading material, while Thursdays will be dedicated to film viewings and discussion. In addition to class time, it is suggested that, as time permits, students visit selected filming locations in Florence outside of class time based on information provided in the book: *World Film Locations: Florence*.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

The goals of this course are as follows:

- To develop a broader understanding of Florentine and Italian culture and identity through film and literature
- To provide insight into major cultural and sociopolitical issues of modern Italy, and Florence in particular
- To familiarize students with basic literary and cinematic codes and introduce them to the analysis of films and novels
- To understand the relationship between literature and cinema and understand the main strategies of adaptation

KEY QUESTIONS

- How is Florence portrayed in film?
- How do English-language films portray Florence versus Italian films?
- How do the characters interact with Florence as a city?
- What are the main differences between literary Florence and cinematic Florence?

SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Introduction to Italian Cinema: The impact of WWII

Films:

- *My Voyage to Italy*, Martin Scorsese, 1999. (Excerpts on neorealism)
- *Paisà'*, Roberto Rossellini, 1946. (The Florentine episode)

Reading(s): Excerpt from *Florence Guide*. Concentrate on the section from Italian Unity onwards (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/italy/florence/history>)
Introduction and pp. 5-9 of *World Film Locations*. Florence

Class Visit: Mediateca Toscana, Via San Gallo, 25. A conversation with Dr. Stefania Ippoliti, Director of Mediateca Toscana and Toscana Film Commission

Theme(s): Florence in Cinema; World War II; Fascism; The Liberation

Week 2 – Gender, National and Political Identity Post-WWII

Film: *Le Ragazze di San Frediano*, Valerio Zurlini, 1954

Readings: Vasco Pratolini, *The Girls of Sanfrediano*, 1949

- Millicent Marcus, *Introduction to Filmmaking by the Book*, 1993

Class Visit: The San Frediano Neighborhood

Theme(s): Neorealism in Cinema and Literature; Italian National Identity; Gender in Italian Culture; Adaptation Strategies

Quiz on *The Girls of Sanfrediano*

Week 3 – Florence and The Flood: from Angels to Terrorists?

Films: *La Meglio Gioventù*, Marco Tullio Giordana, 2003 (Excerpts: 1:25 to the end of Disc 1 of 2)
(see year by year plot on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Best_of_Youth)

Walking on Water, a documentary by Paolo Fantacci introduced by Cristina Fantacci

Readings: Richard Drake, *Italy in the 1960s: A Legacy of Terrorism and Liberation*, South Central Review, Vol. 16/17, Vol. 16, no. 4 - Vol. 17, no. 1, Rethinking 1968: The United States & Western Europe (Winter, 1999 - Spring, 2000), pp. 62-76.

Themes: The 1966 Arno Flood as turning point in Florentine history; Social Change; Generational Gap; 1968 in Florence and Italy; Youth Protest; Political Terrorism

Week 4 – The Boom Years

Film: *Amici Miei*, Mario Monicelli, 1975

Readings: Excerpt from Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, Cambridge 2013

Class visit: The Zeffirelli Museum

Theme(s): Italian Humor; Italian Identity; Masculinity; Florentine Culture & Humor

Week 5 – The Foreign Gaze

Film(s):

- *Room with a View*, James Ivory, 1985
- *Tea with Mussolini*, Franco Zeffirelli, 1999 (Movie night, June 25th)

Readings:

- E.M. Forster, *Room with a View*, 1908
- Rosemary Sweet, *British Perceptions in the Long 18th Century*, 2007, *The Historical Journal*, 50:4, pp. 837-859.

Themes: Italy as seen from the outside; Anglo vs. Italian Culture; Idealization & Romanticism; Florence and the 'foreigners': allies or scorpions?

Quiz on *Room with a View*

Week 6 – How it all began... and how it ends

Film: *Wondrous Boccaccio*, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, 2015

Readings: Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, Introduction, and the following stories:

- Messer Gentil de' Carisendi e Monna Catalina (X, 4)
- [Calandrino](#), and eliotropia (VIII, 3)
- Ghismunda e Guiscardo opposed by her father, Prince Tancredi (IV, 1)

- The Abbess and the Priest's Knickers. (IX, 2)
- [Federigo degli Alberighi](#) (V, 9)

Themes: The Birth of the Myth of Florence; Florence as Framing Device;

Quiz on Boccaccio's Decameron
Presentation of Final Papers

EVALUATION

30% class participation
20% presentations and quizzes
50% Final Exam/Final Paper

Students have a choice whether to take a final exam or to write a 6/8 pages (double spaced) final paper on a relevant topic to be discussed with the professor.

REQUIRED BOOKS (all available on NYU Classes)

1. Forster, E.M., *Room with a View*, 1908
2. Pratolini, V., *The Girls of San Frediano*, 1949
3. Zambenedetti, A., *World Film Locations: Florence*, Intellect Books, Chicago 2014

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

1. Bertellini, G., *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape and the Picturesque*, Indiana University Press, 2009
2. Bondanella, P., *Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present*, Continuum, New York, 1997 (Third Edition 2003)
3. Ginsborg, P., *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, Penguin, London, 1990
4. Ginsborg, P., *Italy and Its Discontents 1980-2001*, Penguin, London, 2003
5. Landy, M., *Italian Film*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000
6. Liehm, M., *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984
7. Patriarca, S., *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, Cambridge 2013

This site-specific version of the course: Italian Cinema and Literature is the result of a collaborative research project conducted jointly by Stefano Albertini in New York and Ilaria Sborgi's Masters students at NYU in Florence in the Fall 2014. Cristina Bellini, librarian of NYU in Florence, provided endless support and advice in every step of its development.