Course: COM FT 315 History of Italian Cinema  
Instructor: Giulia Lavarone, Ph.D  
Instructor e-mail: lavarone@bu.edu  
Office hour: by appointment  
Class schedule: 4 hours per week  
Credit value: 4 credits

COURSE OVERVIEW

The course will focus on the history of Italian Cinema from 1943 to today, with particular attention to the function of cityscapes and landscapes as portrayed by major Italian film directors.

Starting from references to silent films and the Fascist cinema of the 1930s and 1940s, the course will move on to Neorealism which was able to capture the drama of Italian cities during the Second World War, as well as the poverty of the postwar period.

Students will then analyze Comedies Italian Style, as well as engaging film by Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni and Pier Paolo Pasolini. The period between the 1950s and the 1960s was characterized by the economic boom. Even though narrative and stylistic approach varies a lot, many film directors focus on the radical changes that affected the architecture and lifestyle of Italian cities.

The final part of the course will also address some modern and contemporary film directors such as Nanni Moretti and Silvio Soldini.

Students will be brought behind the scenes of a film which will vary from one semester to another.

- In the fall, students will analyze Davide Ferrario’s *Dopo mezzanotte*, a love story set inside the National Museum of Cinema in Turin. A class field trip to Turin will be integral part of the course.
- In the spring, students will study Andrea Segre’s *Io sono Li*, set in Chioggia, a small traditional city close to Venice, and will visit the places where the film was shot.

Students will be required to watch the films assigned before the class meets, according to a schedule prepared with the instructor. In class students will discuss and analyze some of the most important scenes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FILM

*Paisà* (*Paisan*, Rossellini, 1946)  
*Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*, De Sica, 1948)  
*I soliti ignoti* (*Big deal on Madonna Street*, Monicelli, 1958)
The films which students are required to watch in their entirety (outside of the scheduled lessons) will be available on DVD at the BUSA Center.

Other film scenes, available online (YouTube) or on DVD at the BUSA Center, will be watched during the lessons.

The course pack prepared by the instructor (available at copy shop) will include readings as specified in the detailed syllabus below.

Additional bibliography will be available on JSTOR.

The course pack texts will be excerpted from the following books:

- **La dolce vita** (Fellini, 1960)
- **Deserto rosso** (Red desert, Antonioni, 1964)
- **Caro diario** (Dear diary, Moretti, 1994)
- **L’aria serena dell’Ovest** (The peaceful air of the West, Soldini, 1990)
- **Dopo mezzanotte** (After midnight, Ferrario, 2003) (FALL) or **Io sono Li** (Shun Li and the Poet, Segre, 2011) (SPRING)

---

**Cinema and the City. Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context** / Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice – Blackwell, 2001

**Cities and Cinema** / Barbara Mennel – Routledge, 2008

**A History of Italian Cinema** / Peter E. Bondanella – Bloomsbury Academic, 2009


**Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City** / Mark Shiel – Wallflower Press, 2006


**Comedy Italian Style – The Golden Age of Italian Film Comedies** / Rémi Fournier Lanzoni – Continuum, 2009

**Pier Paolo Pasolini, Poet of Ashes** / edited by Roberto Chiesi and Andrea Mancini - Titivillus, 2007

**The cinema of Nanni Moretti: Dreams and Diaries** / Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli - Wallflower Press, 2004


Additional texts for the class presentation:

**The films of Michelangelo Antonioni** / Peter Brunette – Cambridge University Press, 1998

**The cinema of Nanni Moretti: Dreams and Diaries** / Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli - Wallflower Press, 2004

GRADING CRITERIA

Attendance and class participation: 15%
2 short essays (4 pages each): 20%
Written midterm: 20%
1 class presentation (group work): 10%
Final written exam: 15%
Final paper: 20%

Attendance and class participation: Students are expected to be punctual, ask questions, express curiosity and participate in discussions.

2 short essays: Each student will be required to submit two 4-page essays. The first essay will focus on an Italian film shot before 1960, the second essay will focus on an Italian film shot after this date. The films will be selected by the student with the instructor’s approval. Students will adopt either a historical perspective or will conduct a more personal stylistic analysis. Coherence, consistency, and accuracy in the use of cinematographic terminology will be assessed. In addition to references to what has been discussed in class, students are required to have a bibliography of minimum two texts.

Written midterm exam: Multiple-choice questions plus some open questions referring to the period up to Neorealism.

1 class presentation (group work): Students will be divided into groups. Each group will analyze a film (Deserto rosso, Caro diario, or L’aria serena dell’Ovest) and study the material recommended by the instructor.

Written final exam: Multiple-choice questions plus some open questions referring to the period from post Neorealism to contemporary cinema.

Final paper: A final paper based on an Italian film selected by the student with the instructor’s approval. The student will prepare a detailed outline which will include a bibliography of minimum 3 texts. A draft of the paper will be given to the professor for suggestions. The paper will be 6-8 pages long. Students will have to use the skills acquired during the course in order to do a narrative and stylistic analysis of the film.

POLICIES

Attendance
Boston University Padua students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trip required for the class. Students should note that attendance will be taken into account by faculty when determining final grades. Students absent from class for medical reasons need to provide a local doctor’s note.

Religious Holidays
Boston University’s Office of the University Registrar states:
‘The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled classes to be rescheduled.’ See Chapter 151C of the General Laws, Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Academic Conduct Code**

*It is every student’s responsibility to read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be “…expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean.” You can view the entire Academic Conduct Code here: [http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/](http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/)*

**SYLLABUS**

### 1st lesson
**Introduction to the course and to the cinema/city relationship.**

Introduction to the course (teaching methods, grading criteria, etc.).
Introduction to the general theme of the relationship between cinema and the city, examined in a historical and theoretical perspective. Discussion with students about some possible approaches to this topic. Watching short films by the Lumière brothers.

**To read before the lesson:**
1. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, *Cinema and the City*: chapters *Cinema and the City* by Mark Shiel (only pp.1-2) and *Cities: Real and Imagined* by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, pp.99-108.

### 2nd lesson
**Italian Cinema before Neorealism.**

Italian cinema from the origins to the 1930s: the *Kolossal* film and the influence on American cinema (Griffith); the creative and production crisis during the 1920s; the birth of Cinecittà; the *telefoni bianchi* comedies; Fascism and the censorship of films, reality and language.

**To read before the lesson:**

### 3rd lesson
**Introduction to Neorealism.**
The magazine *Cinema* and its influence: a “return to reality”, from Verga to Visconti. *Ossessione* (1943) and the birth of Neorealism. The historical context of the Second World War.

**To read before the lesson:**

**Students will be required to watch the film: *Paisà (Paisan, Rossellini, 1946)***

**4th lesson**
Rossellini.

Rossellini. Watching and analysis of film scenes. Analysis of *Paisà* and discussion with the students.

**To read before the lesson:**

**5th lesson**
Rossellini and De Sica.

Conclusion of the discussion about Rossellini and beginning of the study of De Sica. Watching and analysis of film scenes.

**To read before the lesson:**

**Students will be required to watch the film: *Ladri di biciclette (Bicycle Thieves, De Sica, 1948)***

**6th lesson**
De Sica.

Analysis of *Ladri di biciclette* and discussion with the students. Conclusion of the De Sica topic. Watching and analysis of film scenes.

**To read before the lesson:**
7th lesson
Conclusions on Neorealism.

Watching and analysis of scenes from films by Visconti and by De Santis. Conclusions on Neorealism.

To read before the lesson:
3) Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*: chapter The Choral Voice of Giuseppe De Santis, pp.139-140.

Students will be required to watch the film: *I soliti ignoti (Big deal on Madonna Street, Monicelli, 1958)*

8th lesson
From Neorealism to Comedy Italian Style.

The film genres of the 1950s. The so-called Pink (or Rosy) Neorealism. Introduction to the Comedy Italian Style and to the social context of the economic boom (1960s). Introduction to the cinema of Mario Monicelli. Analysis of *I soliti ignoti* and discussion with the students.

To read before the lesson:
2) Rémi Fournier Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style*: chapters Differences between Commedia Italiana and Commedia all’Italiana, pp.28-34, and The Forerunners of the Comedy Italian Style, pp.34-43.

By the 9th lesson, students will be required to submit the first short essay.

9th lesson
The Comedy Italian Style.

Other Comedies Italian Style (by Dino Risi and other directors). Watching and analysis of film scenes.

To read before the lesson:
1) Rémi Fournier Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style*: chapters Italian Comedy in the 1960s, pp.49-78, and Dino Risi and the Art of Caustic Satire (only pp.89-93: part about The Easy Life)

10th lesson
Visit to the Museum of Pre-cinema in Padova.

Back to the “archeology” of cinema ... with the visit to the famous MUSEO DEL PRE-CINEMA MINICI ZOTTI in Padova.

11th lesson
Midterm exam.

Written exam on Neorealism

12th lesson
Introduction to the Art Film of the 1960s. Fellini.

Introduction to the Art Film of the 1950s and 1960s. Beginning of the study of Fellini. Watching and analysis of film scenes.

To read before the lesson:

Students will be required to watch the film: *La dolce vita* (Fellini, 1960)

13th lesson
Fellini.

Analysis of *La dolce vita* and discussion with the students.
Conclusion of the Fellini topic.

To read before the lesson:

14th lesson
Antonioni.

Antonioni. Watching and analysis of film scenes.

To read before the lesson:


**Students will be required to watch the film:** *Deserto rosso (Red desert, Antonioni, 1964)*

**15th lesson**
Antonioni and Pasolini.

Analysis of *Deserto rosso*, led by a group of students, and discussion – **class presentation (1st group)**.
Introduction to Pasolini.

**To read before the lesson:**

**To read for the class presentation (only students of the 1st group):**

**Program field trip to TURIN (fall) or CHIOGGIA (spring)**
FALL: a 2-day trip to Turin, in order to visit the National Cinema Museum and to participate in the activities of the Turin Film Festival.
SPRING: a 1-day trip to the city of Chioggia and to the Laguna di Venezia, in order to visit – by feet and by boat - the sets of the film *Io sono Li* (with one of the film’s photographers as a guide).

**16th lesson**
Pasolini.

Watching and analysis of scenes from films by Pasolini.

**To read before the lesson:**
Students will be required to watch the film: *Caro diario (Dear diay, Moretti, 1993)*

By the 17th lesson, students will be required to submit the second short essay and to select the subject of the final paper (to be discussed with the instructor).

17th lesson


Brief references to the film genres in the 1960s and the 1970s: *spaghetti western*, erotic comedies, horror, etc.


To read before the lesson:


18th lesson

Moretti.

Analysis of *Caro diario*, led by a group of students, and discussion – **class presentation (2nd group)**. Conclusion of the Moretti topic (the 1990s and 2000s).

To read before the lesson:


To read for the class presentation (only students of the 2nd group):


Students will be required to watch the film: *L’aria serena dell’Ovest (The peaceful air of the West, Soldini, 1990)*

19th lesson

Soldini.
Analysis of *L’aria serena dell’Ovest*, led by a group of students, and discussion – **class presentation (3rd group)**.
The theme of displacement in Italian Cinema of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.
Watching and analysis of some scenes from Soldini’s films.

**To read before the lesson:**
1) Peter E. Bondanella, *A History of Italian Cinema*: chapter Other Names to Remember from the Third Wave Generation of the 1950s, pp.552-556.

**To read for the class presentation (only students of the 3rd group):**

Students will be required to watch the film: *Dopo mezzanotte* (After midnight, Ferrario, 2003) (FALL) or *Io sono Li* (Shun Li and The Poet, Segre, 2011) (SPRING)

20th lesson
Italian cinema of the 1990s and 2000s.

A brief overview of the renaissance of Italian cinema over the last two decades.
Analysis of *Dopo mezzanotte* (FALL) / *Io sono Li* (SPRING) and discussion with the students.

**To read before the lesson (FALL):**

**To read before the lesson (SPRING):**

By the day of the final exam, students will be required to submit the **final paper**.

**Final exam**