



## CAS LI 354 CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN LITERATURE

Professor Elisabetta Convento

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Lessons: Monday and Wednesday, 9.15 - 11.00am

Office hours: after class or per appointment

### Course Description

The course will deal with some of the main authors of Contemporary Italian Literature, starting from the period following the end of the Second World War until today. In this time frame, narrative and poetry will mostly focus on the representation of the post-war situation, the industrial development, the identity crisis of Italian cities and their inhabitants, the emerging social problems, and the female condition. The students will familiarize themselves with some of the most important voices of the contemporary Italian panorama, such as Buzzati, Celati and Merini. The search for a style to portray the new epoch sees in Ortese and Morante some very original attempts. The linguistic experimentation of Calvino and Zanzotto, and finally the disenchanted vision of Vassalli, will lead the students to a full understanding of the literary period and its many challenges.

### Course Objectives

The main purpose of the course is to provide students with tools to study main authors and works of contemporary Italian literature. In class, students will read literary texts and literary criticism, share points of view, and analyze formal and linguistic features of selected works. Various textual typologies will be taken into account, including poetry, short stories, and novels, as well as the use of media, such as documentaries produced by those same authors or in cooperation with them. In order to make class discussion more stimulating, and to facilitate the analysis of literary works, the readings will be done before class meets. Each student will also have to select one novel or collection of short stories among those indicated in the bibliography, and write a final paper based on the selected work.

Course field trips connected with topics dealt with in class will be an integral part of the course. Possible field trips will include Bologna, Pasolini's itinerary, and Torino.

Depending on availability, Gianni Celati will be a visiting guest speaker.

The course is held in Italian. Course material is entirely in Italian, with the addition of some important literary criticism that may be in English, as indicated in the bibliography.

### BIBLIOGRAPHIC MATERIALS

- Course reader with an introduction to the authors and biographical information, extracts from works by main authors, and appendix with glossary of literary terms and rhetorical figures.
- Available on Blackboard: literary criticism and information on literary period; additional bibliographical material for final papers.

- An introductory book on contemporary Italian literature: Alberto Casadei, *Il Novecento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2005, available at the BUSA Padua library.
- A novel or collection of stories, among those indicated in the bibliography, to be read in its entirety.
- Documentaries as indicated.

### Main Works

Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, Newton Compton, Roma 2010.

Anna Maria Ortese, *Il mare non bagna Napoli*, Adelphi, Milano 2008

Anna Maria Ortese, *Corpo Celeste*, Adelphi, Milano 2008.

Elsa Morante, *L'isola di Arturo*, Einaudi, Torino 2005

Natalia Ginzburg, *Le piccole virtù*, Einaudi, Torino 2005

Natalia Ginzburg, "Discorso sulle donne", in *Mercurio*, n.36 (1948), pp.105-110.

Pasolini, *Teorema*, Garzanti, Milano 1994.

Andrea Zanzotto, in *Poeti Italiani del novecento* a cura di Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, Mondadori, Milano 2005.

Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili*, Mondadori, Milano 2005

Dino Buzzati, *I misteri d'Italia*, Mondadori, Milano 2002.

Gianni Celati, *Narratori delle pianure*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2006

Alda Merini, in *Poeti Italiani del novecento* a cura di Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, Mondadori, Milano 2005.

Sebastiano Vassalli, *La morte di Marx*, Einaudi, Torino 2006.

### Literary Criticism

Mario Barenghi, *Calvino*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2009.

Italo Calvino, *Una pietra sopra*, Mondadori, Milano 1998.

Alberto Casadei, *Il Novecento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2005.

Luca Clerici, *Apparizione e visione. Vita e opere di Anna Maria Ortese*, Mondadori, Milano 2002.

Derek Duncan, "Naming the Narrator in *La Luna e i Falò*", *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (Jul., 1991), pp. 592-60.

Luisa Guj, "Illusion and Literature in Morante's *L'Isola di Arturo*", in *Italica*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Summer, 1988), pp.144-153.

Walter Nardon, *La parte e l'intero. L'eredità del romanzo in Gianni Celati e Milan Kundera*, I Labirinti, Trento 2007.

Cesare Segre, *La letteratura italiana del Novecento*, Laterza, Bari 2004.

Cesare Segre and Clelia Martignoni, *Testi nella storia. Il Novecento*, Vol. IV, Mondadori, 2000.

*Poeti Italiani del Novecento*, a cura di Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, Mondadori, Milano 2005.

Sebastiano Vassalli e Giovanni Tesio, *Un nulla pieno di storie*, Interlinea, Novara 2010.

John Welle, "From Babel to Pentecost: The Poetry of Andrea Zanzotto", in *World Literature Today*, Vol. 58, No. 3, Varia Issue (Summer, 1984), pp. 377-380.

### Documentaries/films

"Teorema" di Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1968.

"Ritratti: Andrea Zanzotto" di Carlo Mazzacurati e Marco Paolini, 2000.

"Strada provinciale delle anime" di Gianni Celati, 1991.

## Detailed Syllabus

Lesson 1	<p><b>Explanation of course material, syllabus, and introduction to the course</b>  <b>From the Second World War to Postmodernism: between history and literature</b>  <b>PART I</b>            Reading: "Percorsi della letteratura novecentesca" in Alberto Casadei, <i>Il Novecento</i>, pp. 9-17            Cesare Segre, "Il Neorealismo in letteratura", in <i>La letteratura italiana del Novecento</i>, pp. 53-58;            "Dal romanzo borghese al romanzo politico", in <i>La letteratura italiana del Novecento</i>, pp. 59-62;</p>
Lesson 2	<p><b>The route to the second half of the century: historical ties and heritage</b>  <b>D'Annunzio and Svevo</b>            D'Annunzio, in <i>Testi nella storia</i>, pp. 75-85, + extracts from <i>Il Piacere</i>, pp. 91-97.            Svevo, in <i>Testi nella storia</i>, pp. 188-197, + extracts from <i>La Coscienza di Zeno</i>, pp. 213-220.</p>
Lesson 3	<p><b>After the War. A return to childhood and to the mother tongue</b>  <b>Pavese</b>            Literary Criticism: D. Duncan, "Naming the Narrator in <i>la Luna e i Falò</i>", pp. 592-60.  <b>Reading: Pavese, <i>La luna e i falò</i></b>, chapter I,II,III, pp. 7-18.</p>
Lesson 4	<p><b>Women writers and their search for self-realization</b>  <b>Anna Maria Ortese</b>            Literary Criticism: Luca Clerici, "Il mare non bagna Napoli" pp. 244-252.            Anna Maria Ortese, "Attraversando un paese sconosciuto", in <i>Corpo Celeste</i> pp. 39-52.</p>
Lesson 5	<p>Anna Maria Ortese            Reading: "Interno familiare" in <i>Il mare non bagna Napoli</i>, pp. 35-61.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Selection of work to read in its entirety</b></p>
Lesson 6	<p><b>An Italian Bildungsroman</b>  <b>Elsa Morante</b>            Literary Criticism: C. Garboli, Introduzione a <i>L'Isola di Arturo</i>, pp.V-XVIII            Reading: Selected chapters from <i>L'Isola di Arturo</i> pp. 11-36.</p>
Lesson 7	<p>Elsa Morante            Reading: Selected chapters from <i>L'Isola di Arturo</i> pp. 39-51; 142-150.            Literary Criticism: L. Guj, "Illusion and Literature in Morante's <i>L'Isola di Arturo</i>", pp.144-153.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Response paper 1 due (2 pages)</b></p>
Lesson 8	<p><b>Short stories of obscure existences</b>  <b>Natalia Ginzburg</b>            Literary Criticism: D. Scarpa, Introduzione a <i>Le piccole virtù</i>, pp. V-XXXII            Reading: "Lui e io" in <i>Le piccole virtù</i>, pp. 45-57.</p>
Lesson 9	<p>Natalia Ginzburg            Reading: Natalia Ginzburg, "Discorso sulle donne", pp.105-110.            Reading: "Le piccole virtù" in <i>Le piccole virtù</i>, pp. 113-128</p>
	<b>Field trip Bologna</b>
	<b>WRITTEN MIDTERM</b>
Lesson 10	<p><b>Pasolini and the provocative portrait of the bourgeoisie: between narrative and poetry</b>  <b>PART II</b>            Literary Criticism: Segre &amp; Martignoni, "Impegno e sperimentalismo di Pier Paolo Pasolini" in <i>Testi nella storia</i>, pp.1254-1260.            Reading: Pasolini, <i>Teorema</i>, chapter 1-5, pp.7-22</p>
Lesson 11	<p>Film: Pasolini, <i>Teorema</i>. Parts of the film will be seen in class and will be followed by a discussion.</p>
Lesson 12	<p><b>Poetry: Andrea Zanzotto – A master of words</b>            Literary Criticism: Introduction to the author in <i>Poeti Italiani del novecento</i>, pp-869-876            Documentary Film: Carlo Mazzacurati e Marco Paolini, "Ritratti: Andrea Zanzotto"</p>
Lesson 13	<p>Andrea Zanzotto            Literary Criticism: John Welle, "From Babel to Pentecost: The Poetry of Andrea Zanzotto", pp. 377-380            Reading: "Oltranza-oltraggio", "Cantilena londinese" e " 'Tato' padovano"</p>

	<b>Deadline to select a subject for final paper (to be discussed with professor)</b>
Lesson 14	<p><b>The world of endless possibilities</b>  <b>Italo Calvino</b>  Literary Criticism: Mario Barenghi, "Le città invisibili" in <i>Calvino</i> pp. 81-87  <i>Italo Calvino</i>, Presentazione di <i>Le città invisibili</i> pp. V-XI.  Reading: <i>Le città invisibili</i>, Chapter II, pp. 23-40; Chapter III, pp.41-55.</p>
	<b>Field trip</b>
Lesson 15	<p><b>Italo Calvino</b>  Reading: <i>Le città invisibili</i>, Chapter VII, pp. 101-114.  Literary Criticism: Italo Calvino, "Per chi si scrive?" in <i>Una Pietra Sopra</i>, pp. 192-198; "Gli dèi della città" in <i>Una Pietra Sopra</i>, pp. 340-344.</p>
Lesson 16	<p><b>Dino Buzzati, the Veneto Noir</b>  Reading: "Gliangoli strani del veneto" pp. 17-26 "La caramella stregata vola per quattro chilometri" pp. 27-36; "Festa in villa col mago", pp. 145-154, in <i>I Misteri d'Italia</i></p>
	<b>Response paper 2 due (2 pages)</b>
Lesson 17	<p><b>Views of everyday life and language</b>  <b>Gianni Celati</b>  Literary Criticism: Walter Nardon, "Showing &amp; Telling", pp. 109-113 in <i>La parte e l'intero</i>.  Reading: "Fantasmi a Borgoforte", pp. 60-64; "Come un fotografo è sbarcato nel nuovo mondo", pp. 131-135, in <i>Narratori delle Pianure</i></p>
Lesson 18	<p><b>Gianni Celati</b>  Literary Criticism: Walter Nardon, "Narratori lungo la pianura", pp. 131-139 in <i>La parte e l'intero</i>  Reading: "Il ritorno del viaggiatore", pp. 105-111, in <i>Narratori delle Pianure</i>  Film: Gianni Celati, "Strada provinciale delle anime"</p>
	<b>Final paper draft due</b>
Lesson 19	<p><b>Poetry: Alda Merini - Sanity, insanity and search for the self</b>  Literary Criticism: Maria Corti, Introduction to <i>Fiore di Poesia</i>, pp. V-XX.  Reading: "Una Maddalena" and "La terra santa" in <i>Fiore di Poesia</i>.</p>
Lesson 20	<p><b>Sebastiano Vassalli and Postmodern Italian literature</b>  Literary Criticism: "La letteratura nell'età postmoderna" in Alberto Casadei, <i>Il Novecento</i>, pp. 131-139.  Reading: "Una famiglia va al mare" in <i>La morte di Marx</i>, pp. 21-29</p>
Lesson 21	<p><b>Sebastiano Vassalli</b>  Literary Criticism: Sebastiano Vassalli, "Scrivere le storie", "Moderno, Postmoderno", pp. 56-65  Reading: "Dialogo sulla democrazia", pp. 88-97, "Sebastiano" in <i>La morte di Marx</i>, pp. 117-126</p>
Lesson 22	Review and questions
	<b>FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION</b>
	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b>

### The course requires

1. Careful reading (with dictionary) and literal comprehension of texts included in the syllabus before class.
2. Active participation in class discussion.
3. Reading of a whole novel or collection of stories among those indicated in bibliography.
4. Students will take turns presenting authors in class. They will introduce the biography of each author, the time period, literary movement, and will present some of the main points highlighted by the literary criticism included in the course reader. They will lead the discussion on the reading of the day by preparing questions for the class. The

calendar of oral presentations will be prepared in class during the first lessons. Students will individually meet the professor to get to know about the results of their class presentation.

5. A written midterm exam with open questions.

6. Two two-page response papers based on questions prepared by professor.

7. A final paper based on the selected book to read. The student will prepare a detailed outline (see example provided by professor) which will include a bibliography. A draft of the paper will be given to the professor for suggestions. The paper, in Italian, will be *at least* 8 pages long: it is recommended that students use the library resources of the University of Padua.

8. A final oral examination on the subjects and texts studied in the second part of the course.

## COMPONENTS OF THE FINAL GRADE

Attendance, class participation: 15 %

Class presentation: 10%

Midterm written exam: 20%

2 response papers: 15% (2 pages each - in Italian, Times New Roman 12, double spaced, margins 2cm)

Final oral exam: 20% (includes all topics discussed in class during second part of the course)

Final written 8 page paper: 20% (in Italian, Times New Roman 12, double spaced, margins 2cm) – includes bibliography

## 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.

## PLAGIARISM

Simply stated, plagiarism is taking another's work and presenting it as you own.

Dictionary definitions of plagiarism frequently include terms such as 'theft' or 'steal'. Plagiarism is, in fact, intellectual theft. It is one of the most serious forms of academic misconduct. Plagiarism committed by a student will certainly result in course failure and may result in suspension or dismissal. For more details please see Boston University's Academic Conduct Code: : <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

## 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.