

BOSTON UNIVERSITY STUDY ABROAD PADUA

Course: COM FT 315 History of Italian Cinema

Course schedule: 3 hours twice a week

Office hour: Monday, after class

Credit value: 4 credits

COURSE OVERVIEW

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

Starting from a discussion about basic concepts in cinema, the course will begin by exploring Italian Neorealism, which was able to capture the drama of Italy during the Second World War, as well as the poverty of the postwar period.

Students will then analyze the art films of Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and the golden age of Italian Film Comedies through the comedies of Pietro Germi (Divorce, Italian Style) and Dino Risi (The Easy Life) as well as minor sub-genres such as Spaghetti Western and Italian Giallo.

The final part of the course will also address some contemporary film directors such as Nanni Moretti, Paolo Sorrentino and Matteo Garrone.

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

Program learning outcomes

Bu Global Programs/study abroad learning outcomes for BU Padova Italian and European Studies Program and Padua Internship program

Learning Outcomes for IESP Program

- Students show knowledge of written and oral Italian at different proficiency levels, from beginner to advanced, including the ability of interaction with locals in real life contexts.
- Students develop knowledge of Italian culture with respect to at least one of the following areas: history, literature, international relations, food policies, and the arts in general.

- Students will gain awareness of different cultural worldviews and behaviors that foster critical thinking, social and communication skills and teamwork, and will be able to use them in cross-cultural contexts. Students end goal will be to incorporate other worldviews into their own and perceive themselves as global citizens.

ESSENTIAL FILMOGRAPHY

Roma Città Aperta (Rome Open City, Rossellini, 1945)
 Paisà (Paisan, Rossellini, 1946)
 Ladri di biciclette (Bycycle Thieves, De Sica, 1948)
 I soliti ignoti (Big deal on Madonna Street, Monicelli, 1958)
 La dolce vita (Fellini, 1960)
 Accattone (The Scrounger, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1960)
 Divorzio all'italiana (Divorce Italian Style, Pietro Germi, 1961)
 L'Eclisse (The Eclipse, Antonioni, 1962)
 Per un pugno di dollari (For a Fistful of Dollars, Sergio Leone, 1964)
 Suspiria (Dario Argento, 1977)
 Nuovo Cinema Paradiso (Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988)
 Caro diario (Dear diary, Nanni Moretti, 1994)
 Gomorra (Matteo Garrone, 2008)
 La Grande Bellezza (The Great Beauty, Paolo Sorrentino, 2013)

The films which students are required to watch these films in their entirety (outside of the scheduled lessons) will be available online through Kanopy or in DVD at the BU Padua Center.

Other film scenes, available online (Kanopy, YouTube) or on DVD at the BU Padua Center, will be watched in class.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Readings required for the course:

Students must purchase this book (electronic version available)

A History of Italian Cinema / Peter Bondanella, Federico Pacchioni (2nd Edition) – Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

The reading material prepared by the instructor is available on the Blackboard site of the course (access through your BU account and Kerberos password) and include readings from the following books:

The History of Italian Cinema: A Guide to Italian Film from its Origins to the Twenty-First Century / Gian Piero Brunetta – Princeton University Press, 2011

GRADING CRITERIA

1. Attendance, class preparation and participation (includes view of films outside of class: 15%)
2. Oral presentation on Film 20%
3. Written midterm (3 questions): 25%
4. Visual Quiz: 15%
5. Final Exam (6 open ended questions) 25%

Attendance, class preparation and participation: Students must be punctual and prepared. They must read the course material assigned before class and have to be able to ask appropriate questions, express curiosity and participate in class discussions.

Oral presentation on Film: in-class oral presentation about a film or a director chosen by the student. Students must prepare a power-point presentation to illustrate their speech, exploring the main elements of the film (general theme, setting, story/plot, characters, cinematography, main conflict).

Written midterm exam: in-class exam with a short essay questions questionnaire, focusing and referring to what has been studied together about Neorealism and Comedy Italian Style, together with specific questions on cinematographic vocabulary.

Visual quiz: there will be one visual quiz during the whole course. During classtime the students will be exposed to two meaningful clips or frames of a movie

Final exam: In class exam, with the format of 6 open-ended questions that will include all the movies screened during the second part the course.

Students can adopt a historical perspective adding a personal approach. Coherence, consistency and accuracy in the use of cinematographic terminology will be assessed.

Students will have to use the skills acquired during the course in order to do a narrative and stylistic analysis of the film.

Skills acquired: students will be able to analyze film texts using specific historical, cultural, and theoretical approaches; they will be able to write analytical essays that employ specific analytical frameworks; they will be able to discuss the vision of Italian landscape throughout the history of cinema, stressing out social, economic and urban transformations.

Class and University Policies

Examinations

All academic commitments must be completed before you leave the site; no incompletes are permitted. Students who do not complete a course on time will be given an F. Students

are required to sit their examinations on the dates, at the times, and in the same classroom as the other students in their class. If a student is ill or has another extenuating circumstance which causes the student to be absent from a scheduled examination, he/she must provide appropriate documentation and receive approval from the Director.

Attendance

Students should note that attendance will be taken into account by faculty. Boston University Padua students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, on-site class, internship work appointment, and activity required for the class as indicated in the syllabus. Any student with irregular class attendance may have his/her final grade penalized.

Absences

Unjustified absences from class, and any class related activity, will affect the students' participation grade, which will be lowered by one letter grade for each absence.

Absence for Religious Reasons

According to Chapter 151C of the General Laws, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, any student in an educational or vocational training institution, other than a religious or denominational educational or vocational training institution, who is unable, because of his or her religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study, or work requirement on a particular day, shall be excused from any such examination or study or work requirement, and shall be provided with an opportunity to make up such examination, study, or work requirement that may have been missed because of such absence on any particular day; provided, however, that such makeup examinations or work shall not create an unreasonable burden upon such school. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to the said students such opportunity. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to students because of their availing themselves of the provisions of this section. Students who have questions about practicing their religion while abroad should contact Boston University Study Abroad.

Lateness

Students arriving more than 10 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Being late three times is equivalent to missing one class.

Late Assignments

Students are expected to turn in all course assignments on time as stated in each course syllabus. Late assignments will not be accepted and missed assignments will automatically be awarded an F. Please note that all coursework must be completed by the end of the program.

Plagiarism

Simply stated, plagiarism is taking another's work and presenting it as you own. 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 Code of Student Responsibilities: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/>

Disability accommodations

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 617-353- 3658 to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. For more information, please visit: <http://www.bu.edu/disability>

Interruption of program or early departure

Only in serious cases – mostly related to medical emergencies – the Director will allow a student to take a significant break during the program or to leave before its official conclusion. Official written approval must be received by the Director.

Academic Advice

The Director serves as the head of the faculty and as academic advisors. The Director is available on an appointment basis to assist students with academic issues. For academic advice regarding students' home institutions' policies and transfer credit information, non-Boston students should also contact their school's academic advisors.

Tutorials

BU faculty are available by appointment for students who may need support in the learning process. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this resource. Students in the past found it very useful to succeed. Students who receive a C on a test must seek support from faculty.

Detailed Class Schedule

1st lesson

Introduction to the course (syllabus, teaching method, grading criteria, etc.).

Introduction to the general theme of the relationship between cinema and landscape, examined in a historical and theoretical perspective. Discussion with students about some possible approaches to this topic.

Watching short films by the Lumière brothers and Méliès, highlighting how the Lumière brothers used the potentiality of recording and showing reality, realizing documentaries, while Georges Méliès underlines the possibilities of cinema for narrative and performance.

However, this is not a binary distinction, but only two ways of using cinematic invention, and two perspectives for the future development of cinema history.

Discussion with students about the starting point of two different branches of cinema: documentary and narrative. What is narrative? We will also analyze the cinematic space between dream and reality.

Introduction to Italian Neorealism: A New Film Aesthetic.

Students will be required to watch the film: *Paisan* (Rossellini, 1946) before the 2nd lesson.

2nd lesson

Roberto Rossellini

Analysis of film scenes watched in class. We will focus on some sequences of Rossellini's films in particular to underline the relationship between characters and urban structure (Roma, città aperta will introduce the exploration of Rome that we will investigate deeper in De Sica's films).

Analysis of Paisà and discussion with the students. We will focus on the representation and differences of landscape and cityscape in neorealist cinema.

Analysis of Viaggio in Italia (Journey in Italy, Rossellini 1954) and discussion with the students. We will focus on the landscape, which is not just a background for the action that takes place, but it is a protagonist in itself.

Students will be required to watch the film: Ladri di biciclette (Bycicle Thieves, De Sica, 1948) before the 3rd lesson.

3rd Lesson

Vittorio De Sica

Beginning of the study of De Sica. Analysis of Ladri di biciclette and discussion with the students.

We will focus on the topic of exploration of the city in De Sica's films.

In Ladri di Biciclette the city is not a simple background of the plot, but it is essential to understand the emotional condition and the status of our protagonists.

Visit to the Museum of Precinema in Padua.

Students will be required to watch the film: La Dolce Vita (Fellini, 1960) before the 4th lesson.

4th lesson

Oral presentation by the student (15 minutes plus Q&A)

Brief about Midterm exam

Continuation of the study of De Sica.

We will watch some sequences from Umberto D. underlining differences and similarities with Ladri di biciclette. Discussion with students about the perception of the city as a place where the protagonists are lonely and feel abandoned, although they are surrounded by other people.

Introduction to Fellini

Analysis of La dolce vita and discussion with the students. This film is one of the best examples of the exploration of Rome, that shows the city in its peculiarities but also contradictions. On the one hand, there are the neorealist authors, that follow their

protagonists showing to the spectator only what the characters explore; on the other hand, there is Fellini, that shows Rome in its multiple facets, giving a representation of the city as seen by an outsider (the overwhelming initial panoramic view from the helicopter, or the astonishing sequence of the Trevi Fountain). Reality vs. perception.

Students will be required to watch the film: *Divorzio all'italiana* (Divorce Italian Style, Pietro Germi, 1961) before the 5th lesson.

5th lesson

Conclusions about Fellini.

Comedy Italian Style.

1950s film genres. The so-called Pink (or Rosy) Neorealism.

Introduction to the Comedy Italian Style and to the social context of the economic boom (1950s- 1960s).

Introduction to Mario Monicelli's cinema. Analysis of *I soliti ignoti* and discussion with the students.

We will then compare *Ladri di biciclette* and *I soliti ignoti* due to their representation and expression of the space: in both films indeed, the city is a space into which the protagonists move around looking for something and someone, but with an opposite mood: drama vs. comedy.

Other Comedies Italian Style. Watching of film scenes and analysis in particular Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso* and Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana*.

6th lesson

MIDTERM EXAM: 1 hour

Pier Paolo Pasolini

Focus on the work of Italian poet and director Pier Paolo Pasolini.

From 'Accattone' to the Trilogy of Life, through his essay films. We will explore his 'cinema of poetry' and Pasolini's cinematic representation of the Roman slums, or the "borgate".

Students will be required to watch the film: *Accattone* (Pasolini, 1960) before the 6th lesson.

7th lesson

On-site class in Bologna. Visit to the exhibition 'Pier Paolo Pasolini. Folgorazioni figurative' and visit to Cineteca di Bologna.

Continuation and discussion about the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Students will be required to watch the film: L'Eclisse (Antonioni, 1964) before the 8th lesson.

8th lesson

Oral presentation by the student (15 minutes plus Q&A)

Michelangelo Antonioni

Beginning of the study of Antonioni. Watching and analysis of film scenes.

We will work on landscape and in particular on soundscape, referencing to some films like L'Avventura (The Adventure, 1960) and L'eclisse (Eclipse, 1962). On this films Antonioni underlines the connection between time and space, and between landscape and soundscape.

9th lesson

VISUAL QUIZ - 30 minutes

Italian pulp cinema: Spaghetti western and Italian Giallo

Popular film genres such as Spaghetti Western and Italian Giallo will be investigated through the work of Sergio Leone (A fistful of dollars) and Dario Argento

10th lesson

Italian Contemporary Auteur Cinema: Moretti, Tornatore, Sorrentino, Garrone

The creative and production crisis of Italian Cinema in the 1980s.

Moretti. Watching and analysis of film scenes. We will investigate how the author describes his city, which is seen first of all as expression of a free thinking, and then as narrative.

Guidelines for the final exam

For the final exam, students will be required to read all the essential and class reading materials, and will be asked to answer to 6 short essay questions that will focus on Italian Popular Cinema (Spaghetti Western, Italian Giallo) and Italian Contemporary Auteur Cinema. Students will be offered a preparatory meeting before the exam and a list of films.