Course title: The Great Beauty: Pride and Politics in the Italian Film Industry (in English)
Course code: CINE 3002 ROIT (ENG)
Programs offering course: Rome Open Campus Block
Open Campus Track: Language, Literature, and Culture
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring Block II 2021

Course Description

This course will analyze the history, political environments, thematic concentrations, and economic trends of the Italian film industry, from the early 20th century to the present. Analyses will be conducted through the readings and by looking at a selection of paradigmatic, influential, or particularly successful works that were brought forth by the big players on the Italian film market. Among these films of major cultural relevance that reflect – and have in turn shaped – the discourse on Italian national identity, are the Oscar-winning movie The Great Beauty (2013), shot in and dedicated to Rome; "Rome, Open City" (1945), by Roberto Rossellini, a classic work of Italian Neorealism; and several examples of Italian Comedies. We will learn about the production history and critical reception of these works, as well as about the political and historical context in which they were produced. A visit to the Cinecittà Studios and debates with local film students / experts will complement knowledge acquired in class.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Outline the history of Italian cinema from the end of Fascism to the present;
- Evaluate social implications of Italian cinema;
- Analyze the representations of Italian society shown in the movie screens;
- Investigate the relationship between cinema and culture;
- Manage an appropriate use of specific vocabulary relevant to film production;
- Develop consistent interpretations and evaluations of movies;
- Research, critically analyze and interpret film reviews published in Italian and international media;
- Test basic techniques of film-making.

Course Prerequisites

None.

Methods of Instruction

This course will combine lectures, class debates, walking tours, film screenings, press reviews and conversations with guest speakers.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Weekly Film Review 25%
2. Quiz 15%
3. Group Project 15%
4. Final Exam 25%
5. Class Participation 20%

TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Weekly Film Review
Students will be asked to write 2 film reviews by analyzing, interpreting and commenting on specific movies with clear references to the directors’ poetics, the historical and cultural contexts and the technical specifications, as discussed in class. Professor will provide extensive and precise guidelines.

Quiz

True/False Questions and Short Answers test

Group Project

The class will be divided into groups, and each group (4 to 8 students) will choose one scene from Perfetti Sconosciuti (Perfect Strangers) and re-film it under the instructor's guide using simple techniques and mobiles or digital video cameras. The students will prepare, act, direct and perform as a film company. Finally, they will be taught simple editing techniques in order to present and discuss the film done.

Final Exam

Students will take a final exam at the end of the course. The exam (True/False Questions and Short Answers tests + film review) will include all topics analyzed in class.

Class Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class: 1.1 Italy Seen through Its Films

This class will introduce and discuss the concept of national cinema in Italy. Syllabus will be presented and reviewed, with emphasis on assessment methods and course requirements.

Class: 1.2 Italians go to Hollywood

The role of filmmakers, producers and critics in the film industry will be discussed within the framework of contemporary film studies, resources and analytical tools will be provided too.

By analyzing scenes from many of the Italian films Academy Award and International Film Festival Winners such as La Strada, Divorce Italian Style, Cinema Paradiso, Mediterraneo, The Great Beauty, Call me by your name and La Vita è Bella (Life is beautiful) by Roberto Benigni’s, students will explore and discuss the notion of Italian identity that Italian cinema has created and exported abroad from the end of II W.W. until now.


Week 2

Class: 2.1 Neorealism: the Phenomenon that Changed the History of Worldwide Cinema

The Postwar era: Neorealism

Italian Neorealism represents a watershed in the evolution of worldwide cinema for its aesthetics and poetics. After World War II and the end of the Mussolini’s regime, cinema stimulated social, political and cultural change. Topics, techniques, main directors and emblematic examples of the Italian Neorealism movement will be analyzed and interpreted in their historical context and cultural value. Introduction to Rome, Open City (1945) by Roberto Rossellini that marks the beginning of the neorealist era and to The Bicycle Thief - (1948) by Vittorio De Sica – considered the peak of that era.

Class: 2.2 How to Watch a Film & How to Review It
Discussion of Life is Beautiful (1997) by Roberto Benigni and The Bicycle Thief (1948) by Vittorio De Sica through the comparison among different film reviews.

Introduction to cinematographic language, editing and cinematography through the analysis of Life is Beautiful, The Bicycle Thief and other Italian films’ selected scenes.

**Due date for submission of Film Review 1. La Vita è Bella (Life is Beautiful, 1997)**

Reading: Bondanella, Peter. A History of Italian Cinema. PART TWO: Chapter 3 – Masters of Neorealism: Rossellini, De Sica, and Visconti (pp. 61-97).

Media resources: My Voyage to Italy (documentary) by Martin Scorsese: a selection of clips.

**Week 3**

Class: 3.1 The Backbone of Italian Film Industry/Popular Genre Films: Comedy Italian Style

Italian style comedy: Commedia all’Italiana

The genre that was born at the beginning of the 50’s and traversed almost 70 years of national cinema. Italian film industry and directors were experimenting with a new poetics in order to interpret the optimist wave during a period of rapid social and political change, the “economic miracle”. Key figures and codes will be studied. Political and social implications of Divorce Italian Style (1962) by Pietro Germi and of other important Italian film comedies will be discussed.

Class: 3.2 ‘Young Comedians’ at Stake

Continuity and break with the tradition of the ‘Comedy Italian style’. By viewing and analyzing Perfetti Sconosciuti (Perfect Strangers – 2016) by Paolo Genovese and scenes from the most recently acclaimed Italian comedies students will be able to frame the contemporary Italian film industry’s status and the cultural and social development of the country itself.

Class: 3.3 Group Project: How to Make a Film

Selecting, preparing and shooting the selected scenes.

Students will be divided into groups, and each group will choose one scene from Perfetti Sconosciuti (Perfect Strangers) to be re-made in class. Discussion of the individual roles within a film crew: director, editor, actor, director of photography. Rehearsals and filming in class of the selected scenes using simple techniques and students’ mobiles or digital cameras.

Reading: Bondanella, Part Three, Chapter 7: Commedia all’Italiana – Comedy and Social Criticism.

Media Resources

Clips from Nanni Moretti, Paolo Virzi, Luca Lucini, Cristina Comencini, Paolo Genovese and Sidney Sibilla films.

**Due date for submission of Film Review 2 The Bicycle Thief (1948)**

**Week 4**

Class: 4.1 Combination of Great Art with Maximum Profit: the Industry’s Dream Comes True

Part 1

Cinecittà Studios. Field Study. Built in 1937 during the Fascist era, the studios are unanimously still considered the hub of Italian cinema. Historical and political aspects will be discussed before and during the visit.

Class: 4.2 La Dolce Vita

The most relevant changes in Italian and European society of the 60’s will be evident through the international blockbuster by Federico Fellini, the dominant director of the golden age of Italian cinema. Critical reception will be analyzed through reviews published on Italian and International newspapers and magazines taking into consideration the influence Fellini’s work had on Paolo Sorrentino’s The Great
Week 5

Class: 5.1 Combination of Great Art with Maximum Profit: the Industry's Dream Comes True

Part 2

The Great Beauty. The Italian film directed by Paolo Sorrentino won in the foreign language category at the Oscars 2013.

La Grande Bellezza described as "La Dolce Vita" 2.0 explores the relationships among culture, politics and aesthetics through a kaleidoscopic journey set against the photogenic backdrop of Rome. Critical reception will be analyzed through reviews published on Italian and International newspapers and magazines.

Class: 5.2 Group Project: How to Make a Film

Final shooting and editing the selected scenes.

Walking tour: students will shoot one very simple scene in one of the locations used as setting for Perfect Strangers or Sorrentino's The Great Beauty such as Castel S. Angelo, Piazza Navona, etc.

Students will then perform the editing of all the scenes shot (on location and in class) using very simple editing techniques.


Week 6

Class: 6.1 Pride & Beauty

Presentation, Screening and Discussion of the scenes re-filmed by students from Perfetti Sconosciuti. (Final Group Project)

Class: 6.2 Course Review

An exercise on the social, cultural, aesthetic and critical elements that contributed to the shaping of the Italian cinema identity.

Class: 6.3 Final Exam

Course Materials

Readings


Further reading materials will be assigned on a week-by-week basis.

Professor will provide a complete list of complementary readings, media sources and articles published in national and international media in order to stimulate class debates and activities.

Media Resources

Benigni, R. (Director). (1997). La Vita è Bella
De Sica, V. (Director). (1948). Bicycle thieves
Fellini, F. (Director). (1960). La dolce vita
Genovese, P. (Director) (2016) Perfetti Sconosciuti (Perfect Strangers)
Germi, P. (Director). (1962). Divorce Italian Style
" " (1964). Sedotta e Abbandonata(Seduced and Abandoned)
Lucini, L. (Director). (2005) L'uomo perfetto (The Perfect Man)
Moretti, N. (Director). (2010). Habemus Papam
Rossellini, R. (Director). (1945). Roma, città aperta
Scorsese, Martin (Director) (2001). My Voyage to Italy (documentary)
Sybilia, S. (Director). (2014). I can quit whenever I want (Smetto quando voglio)
Virzi, P. (Director). (2003). Caterina in the big City