



CIEE Ferrara, Italy

Course title:	Contemporary Italian Literature
Course code:	LITT 3002 FELA
Programs offering course:	Liberal Arts
Language of instruction:	Italian
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term:	Fall 2020

Course Description

The course starts with some fundamental questions: “What is the history of literature?” and “What is a literary canon?” It then proceeds with the analysis of one literary genre: the contemporary short novel. Chosen texts are analyzed from a structural, linguistic, and stylistic point of view in relation to the literary historical context. Special emphasis is placed on the cinematographic adaptation of texts considered in class. In the first module, students are introduced to the current debate on the literary canon and the general movement of expansion and rethinking of the Western literary categories, through references to post-colonial, gender and cultural studies. In order to challenge a significant example from the contemporary Italian canon, the course focuses on the short story as strictly related to the Italian society and the local historical context described by authors of the second half of the 20th century such as Primo Levi, Giorgio Bassani, Antonio Delfini. The second module accounts for the short story as a literary genre used by young contemporary authors in order to measure themselves against the literary production of their age and get prepared for a future masterpiece. This cluster spans generations of modern Italian literature, beginning with Pier Vittorio Tondelli to the hyper-contemporary production that opens up the literary canon to female writers, such as Valeria Parrella, Dacia Maraini and Susanna Tamaro. An essential part of this course is the literary representation of local contexts, proposed by a double-site visit in Ferrara and a field trip to Modena, following in the writers’ footsteps to understand how literary creation develops in Italy. We will also consider the relationship between literature and arts, cinema and music, in particular the cinematographic adaptation of Bassani’s *Una notte del '43* as well as the common cultural background of Italian music and literature through the Seventies.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

The course gives students an overview of Contemporary Italian Literature through a chronological insight of the short story as both training and explorative genre for Italian writers.

Students will:

- Learn to question the cultural issues concerning the Western literary canon;
- Build a descriptive and analytical vocabulary to understand and describe the Italian local contexts;
- Analyze literary masterpieces within the genre of the short story in their historical and cultural context;
- Deepen their awareness of the history of Italian literature and society in some critical periods;
- Develop the necessary linguistic, stylistic and analytical tools needed to properly tackle literary texts;



- Familiarize with the diversity of artistic modes of representation of youth in relation to literature, movies and songs;
- Become intimately acquainted with the city of Ferrara and, more broadly, with Emilia-Romagna region as a case study for artistic production.

Course Prerequisites

A good knowledge of Italian is required in order to actively participate in classroom discussions.

Methods of Instruction

Lectures, seminar sessions, site visits, field trips, research assignments, film screening, song listening.

Assessment and Final Grade

1.	Oral Presentation	10%
2.	Midterm Exam	25%
3.	Final Exam	25%
4.	Term Paper	15%
5.	Participation	25%
	TOTAL	100%

Course Requirements

Oral Presentation

The oral assignment consists in a 10-minute presentation on a short story chosen by students. Considering the research interest of each student, the instructor suggests short stories from those listed on the reader. Each student will resume the chosen short story and briefly provide an analysis which links his short story to the topics discussed in class.

A detailed bibliography is fundamental, because it reflects the validity of the material students intend to use for the oral presentation.

Midterm Exam

The first part will consist of 3 open questions about the assigned readings and lectures. The second part asks students to choose 3 extracts – selected by the teacher especially for the exam – from short stories already studied in class and write a brief critical analysis (from a stylistic, cultural and historical point of view).

Final Exam

Students will be evaluated by a written assignment. Students are asked to make a comparison between two short stories listed in the reader. Both texts will be selected from 6 extracts provided by the teacher in relation to the exam. Students will argue their personal motivation concerning the mutual relationship of the two chosen texts and of both texts with the notion of the literary canon, in order to illustrate their relevance within the history of the contemporary Italian short story.

Term Paper

1. Pretend you are an editor who has to publish a short story collection of Contemporary Italian Literature for the publishing house minimum fax specialized on the contemporary short story's genre. Your aim is to propose a new reading or itinerary within the genre in order to reformulate some questions about the Italian literary canon. You are asked to select short stories from the Reader and write a Preface to your ideal anthology in order to justify a new reading of the Contemporary Italian Literature and a consequent rethinking of the customary literary canon. You can focus on some innovative topics:
 1. The short story as a historical narrative (from the Neo-Realistic literature to postmodernism)
 2. Giving voice to marginal topics: short story, surrealism and the Gothic model
 3. The illusion of a live recording: short story and the mimetic description of reality
 4. Young style of writing: short story as an exploratory language for novelists
 5. The collections of short stories: differences of degree and style
 6. The fictional representation of the non-metropolitan areas (Ferrara, Bologna, Modena)
 7. The short story as a literary language for misrepresented writers (young people, woman, etc.)
2. The topic will be determined in discussions with the course instructor during office hours, or in ad hoc tutorials. Paper outline must include one-paragraph thesis statement and at least 4 short stories from 3 different authors.
3. All essays must be typed on a computer and double-spaced (c. 1.000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliography). Students are expected to send the paper to the instructor via email by the deadline specified on the weekly schedule. Late submissions will be penalized one half grade for each day they are late. Extensions are granted only in special circumstances, such as serious illness or bereavement.

Participation

Quick-write tests will be administered at the beginning of each class session. Students are expected to do the readings and assessments in advance, so as to be familiar with the language and style of each writer included in the reader, and to participate in class discussion.

Students are reminded that plagiarism (presenting another person's work as one's own) is completely unacceptable and will result in the student receiving a FAIL for the term paper. To avoid this, always make sure that references and other people's ideas are cited correctly. If you are unsure about how to cite a reference, check with the course instructor.

Laptops, mobiles and other electronic devices are not allowed in the classroom.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend regularly and participate actively in class. Students missing more than 2 lessons will be penalized one half grade for each lesson missed.

Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class 1.1 Lesson 1

Cluster I: The Literary Canon and the Short Story after WWII

Introduction to the Literary Canon: a Western Construction, its cyclical crisis and revivals; the role played by Italian literature

Class 1.2 Lesson 2

Literature after the end of history: Primo Levi's short stories in the ruins of Western civilization

Reading 1: "An Elegy for the Canon," Bloom 1994, p. 15-41.

Optional reading: "Elegiac conclusion," Bloom 1994, p. 517-528.

Reading 2: "Auschwitz, città tranquilla" (1986), "L'ultimo Natale di guerra" (1984), Levi 2015, p. 821-825, 826-834.

Optional reading: "Appendice a *Se questo è un uomo*" (1976), Levi 1989, p. 329-350.

Week 2

Class 2.1 Lesson 3

Primo Levi and Dante's Ulysses. Discussion on the documentary *La strada di Levi*.

Reading 3: "I sommersi e i salvati," "Il canto di Ulisse" (1958), Levi 1989, p. 79-90, 98-103. Raimondi-Fenocchio 2004, p. 210-212.

Documentary 1: Davide Ferrario, *La strada di Levi* (2007)

Class 2.2 Lesson 4

The short story as an autonomous literary genre: problems, advantages and practical solutions in relation to the After WWII and the Neo-Realism movement

Reading 4: *Una notte del '43* (1955), Bassani 2005, p. 163-184.

Week 3

Class 3.1 Lesson 5

The city as historical background: Giorgio Bassani and Ferrara

Reading 5: *Una notte del '43* (1955), Bassani 2005, p. 185-200. Raimondi-Fenocchio 2004, p. 91-93.

Week 4

Class 4.1 Lesson 6

Site visit, Bassani's Ferrara. On the way to the fiction (novel and movie)

Lapide dell'Eccidio del Castello Estense, Farmacia Navarra (Corso Martiri della Libertà 27), Ex Casa del Fascio (viale Cavour), Ghetto ebraico

Movie 1: Florestano Vancini, *La lunga notte del '43* (1960)

Reading 6: Renda 2010, p. 29-44, 72-77.

Class 4.2 Lesson 7

Short story as a training genre for novelists: Antonio Delfini's prominent failure

Reading 7: "Il ricordo della basca" (1938), Delfini 1992, p. 177-190. Garboli 2005, p. 16-19, 23-25, 32-36.

Week 5

Class 5.1 Lesson 8

The short story as autobiographical enigma: preliminaries for a surrealist genre

Reading 8: "Il ricordo della basca" (1938), Delfini 1992, p. 190-197. "Un enigma della Basca", Agamben 2010 (English translation available).

Class 5.2 Lesson 9: Midterm Exam

Week 6

Class 6.1 Lesson 10-11

Field trip to Modena, in the footsteps of Delfini's background

Piazza Grande and Duomo di Modena, Palazzo Ducale (Monumento a Ciriaco De Mita), Portici del Collegio, Biblioteca Delfini, Teatro Strozzi, Teatro Comunale Luciano Pavarotti

The day trip is worth 2 lessons: if missed, it will be considered as 2 lessons missed.

Reading 9: "Un centro non centro: piazza (Grande) bella piazza," Bertoni 2016, p. 35-47.

Week 7

Class 7.1 Lesson 12

Cluster II: Short Story as Literary Genre for (New) Italian Youth

Pier Vittorio Tondelli, young writers, new topics: the Freshman and House's seeker

Reading 10: "La casa!... La casa!..." (1981), Tondelli 2000, p. 727-730. Raimondi-Fenocchio 2004, p. 219-220.

Class 7.2 Lesson 13

The Student and the Professor: Umberto Eco, Italian Theory and the Seventies Heritage

Reading 11: "Un racconto sul vino" (1988), Tondelli 2000, p. 769-790.

Song 1: Francesco Guccini, *Canzone delle osterie di fuori porta* (1974)

Week 8

Class 8.1 Lesson 14

Stefano Tassinari: fragments of memory from the Italian Seventies

Reading 12: "Introduzione," "La dolcezza complice negli anni," Tassinari 2011, p. 9-11, 67-77.

Class 8.2 Lesson 15

Gioventù cannibale's horror: the short-story anthology that opens up Italian literature to a new literary genre

Reading 13: Aldo Nove, "Il mondo dell'amore," in Brolli 1996, p. 53-62. "Spazzatura e violenza: sull'estetica cannibale," Trevi 1996.

Week 9

Class 9.1 Lesson 16

From the experimental short story to the writer's collection: Aldo Nove's 1996

Reading 14: "Woobinda," "Vibravoll," "Mia nonna," "Ruanda," "Non ho paura dei miei sentimenti," "Quando si spaventano sono fortissimo," Nove 1996, p. 19-20, 21-23, 59-61, 65-66, 98-100, 118-120.

Class 9.2 Lesson 17

Oral presentations are scheduled for this class.

Week 10

Class 10.1 Lesson 18

Short stories and female writers: new canons, new characters. The family novel within a short narrative

Reading 15: "Di nuovo lunedì," Tamaro 1991, p. 11-22.

Class 10.2 Lesson 19

The social climbing: women, South and stereotypes

Reading 16: "Dritto dritto negli occhi," Parella 2003, p. 26-43.

Optional reading: "Il passaggio," Parella 2003, p. 81-128.

Deadline for the term paper outline

Week 11

Class 11.1 Lesson 20

The secondary genre: the short story and the novelist. Dacia Maraini's polyphony

Reading 17: "Cronaca di una violenza di gruppo," Maraini 2012, p. 77-98.

Optional reading: "Lo stupratore premuroso," Maraini 2012, p. 61-74.

Class 11.2 Lesson 21

Postmodernist short stories: New Italian Realism

Reading 18: "American Parmigiano" Wu Ming 2008, p. 1-22.

Deadline for the Term Paper

Send it as attachment via email, by 9 pm, Thursday, April 27

Week 12

Class 12.1 Lesson 22

Final Exam

Course Materials

Readings

Students are provided with a course reader available online at Canvas which contains all the weekly reading materials. Students will be expected to do the readings prior to the lecture, in order to be familiar with the language, plot and theme of each author, and participate actively in the classroom discussion.

Additional critical studies will be provided before the mid-term and the final exam. The CIEE study center contains a selection of books, essays and magazines some of which are included in the bibliography below. Students are encouraged to consult this material.

There is also a number of books and articles on the Youth Italian Culture and Contemporary Italian Short Story in the various public and university libraries around the city (Ferrara integrated catalogue: <http://opac.unife.it>).

Books and essays included in the online reader

- Agamben, Giorgio. "Un enigma della Basca." *Categorie italiane. Studi di poetica*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2010. Print. 145-149. (English translation available on the web: "An Enigma Concerning the Basque Woman." *The End of the Poem. Studies in Poetics*. Stanford University Press, 1999. 119-123. Print.)

- Bassani, Giorgio. “Una notte del '43.” Cinque storie ferraresi. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1956. 163-200. Print.
- Bertoni, Alberto. “Modena contro Delfini.” Scrittori da un ducato in fiamme. Delfini, D'Arzo e il Novecento. Reggio Emilia: Corsiero Editore, 2016. 21-84. Print.
- Bloom, Harold. The Western Canon. The Books and Schools of The Ages. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994. Print.
- Brolli, Daniele. Ed. Gioventù cannibale. Torino: Einaudi, 1996. Print.
- Delfini, Antonio. Il ricordo della basca. Milano: Garzanti, 1992. Print.
- Garboli, Cesare. “Antonio Delfini.” Storie di seduzione. Torino: Einaudi, 2005. 9-49. Print.
- Levi, Primo. Se questo è un uomo / La tregua. Torino: Einaudi, 1989. Print.
- Levi, Primo. L'ultimo Natale di guerra. In Tutti i racconti. Torino: Einaudi, 2015. 795-910. Print.
- Maraini, Dacia. L'amore rubato. Milano: Rizzoli, 2012. Print.
- Nove, Aldo. Woobinda e altre storie senza lieto fine. Roma: Castelvevchi Editore, 1996. Print.
- Parrella, Valeria. Mosca più balena. Roma: minimum fax, 2003. Print.
- Raimondi, Ezio – Fenocchio, Gabriella. Eds. La letteratura italiana. Il Novecento. Vol. 2. Dal neorealismo alla globalizzazione. Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2004. Print.
- Renda, Marilena. Bassani, Giorgio: un ebreo italiano. Roma: Alberto Gaffi Editore, 2010. Print.
- Tamaro, Susanna. Per voce sola. Venezia: Marsilio, 1991. Print.
- Tassinari, Stefano. D'altri tempi. Roma: Alegre, 2011. Print.
- Tondelli, Pier Vittorio. Racconti. In Opere. Romanzi, teatro, racconti. Milano: Bompiani, 2000. 727-806. Print.
- Trevi, Emanuele. “Spazzatura e violenza: sull'estetica cannibale.” In Gioventù cannibale. Torino: Einaudi, 1996. 203-209. Print.
- Wu Ming. “American Parmigiano.” In Corti di carta. Milano: RCS “Corriere della sera”, 2008. 1-22. Print.

Online Resources

All required readings, slides, supplemental digital resources and additional information will be available online at Canvas. Therefore, students are not required to purchase any textbooks.

Media Resources

Documentary

La strada di Levi, by Davide Ferrario, 2007.

Movie

La lunga notte del '43, by Florestano Vancini, 1960.

Song

Guccini, Francesco. “Canzone delle osterie di fuori porta.” *Stanze di vita quotidiana*. Concept Album, 1974.