

LE MENZOGNE CHE CI RACCONTIAMO

Self-Conceptions & Deceptions in 20th-Century Italian Literature

Professor Julianne VanWagenen
Course Hours: 1:00-2:20 T/TH
Meeting Room: VKC 111

ITAL 450: *Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo: Self-Conceptions & Deceptions in 20th-Century Italian Literature*

Email: jvanwage@usc.edu
SPRING 2019

Office hours: W, TH, F 1:00-2:00 and by appt.



ITAL 450 - Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo

DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to introduce students to a group of the most important Italian writers of the 20th-century: Italo Svevo, Luigi Pirandello, Elsa Morante, Alberto Moravia, and Elena Ferrante. The course title, “Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo,” plays on a linguistic ambiguity in Italian that allows it to mean both *The lies we tell each other* and *The lies we tell ourselves*. The theme of the course suggests, indeed, certain unclear delineations between, amongst other pairs: truth and deception, deception and self-deception, author and narrator, narrator and character, reality and perception. Furthermore, as these protagonists struggle to delineate themselves in their modern and postmodern worlds, it suggests the increased difficulty of *being* in Italy, and in the world, as the 1900s progress. The course theme and content will allow us to consider, not only the precarious relationship between truths, lies, and fictions, but also the proto-postmodern tendency to frame other genres within novels (such as the artifice of memoir), the relationship between Freudian and post-Freudian theory and literature, the impact and lasting effects of Fascist repression on the Italian psyche, the so-called ‘death of the author’ as proposed in the 1960s, as well as the status of the author today.

All of the books, but one, act as 1st-person investigations of the past, and in fact, the tales are often explicitly framed as memories. Students in this course, as they attempt to decipher truth from lies within the inherent ‘lie’ that is fiction, will find themselves wondering not only about literature, but about themselves and their relationship with time and with the world. How accurate are any of our memories? How objective are our perceptions? How truthful are we when we tell our own stories?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Become introduced to some important concepts in critical literary theory
 - Learn to, or continue to improve capability to, read literature through various cultural and theoretical lenses
 - Become familiar with five central Italian literary figures from the 20th-century and the web of relationships between them and their literature
 - Learn to think critically and rigorously about complex epistemological concepts around knowing and truth
 - Become familiar with crucial moments in Italian history in the 1900s, such as turn-of-the-century modernity/modernisms and *il ventennio fascista*
 - Contextualize contemporary Italy, and the contemporary world, in view of the events and ideas of the past
 - Enrich, collaborate, and share knowledge about assessing truth, knowledge, memories and other ideas discussed in class
 - Improve reading, writing and written and spoken argumentation proficiency in Italian
-

ITAL 450 - Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo

TEXTS:

- Ferrante, Elena. *L'amore molesto*. Roma: Edizioni e/o, 1992.
- Morante, Elsa. *L'isola di Arturo, memorie di un fanciullo*. Torino: Einaudi, 1957. [selections]
- Moravia, Alberto. *Il conformista*. Milano: Bompiani, 1951. [selections]
- Pirandello, Luigi. *Uno, nessuno e centomila*. Firenze: R. Bemporad, 1926. [selections]
- Svevo, Italo. *La coscienza di Zeno*. Bologna: Licinio Cappelli, 1923. [selections]

FILMS:

- Bertolucci, Bernardo. *Il conformista*, 1970.
- Martone, Mario. *L'amore molesto*. 1995.

SECONDARY TEXTS:

- Alighieri, Dante. *Divina Commedia*, Inferno XVI-XVII.
- Barthes, Roland. "Death of the Author" in *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana, 1977, pp. 1-6.
- Benedetti, Carla. "Is the Author Dead?" in *The Empty Cage: Inquiry into the Mysterious Disappearance of the Author*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005, pp. 1-23.
- Booth, Wayne C. "The Price of Impersonal Narration II: Henry James and the Unreliable Narrator" in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 339-364.
- Edkins, Jenny. "Trauma Violence, and Political Community" and "The Return of the Political - the Memory of Politics" *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 1-19 and 215-233.
- Faenza, Vincenzo. *Silenzio della coscienza e gioco delle maschere: letture psicologiche su La nausea di Sartre e Uno, nessuno e centomila di Pirandello*. Bologna: CLUEB, 2004.
- Ferrante, Elena. "Menzogne che dicono sempre la verità" in *La frantumaglia*. Roma: Edizioni e/o, 2003, pp. 70-71.
- _____. "Il libro di nessuno" in *La frantumaglia*. Roma: Edizioni e/o, 2003, pp. 187-197.
- _____. "La reinvenzione dell'*Amore molesto*, Carteggio con Marco Martone" in *La frantumaglia*. Roma: Edizioni e/o, 2003, pp. 22-39.
- _____. "Gli abiti, i corpi: *L'Amore molesto* sullo schermo" in *La frantumaglia*. Roma: Edizioni e/o, 2003, pp. 48-52.
- Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca, N.Y., 1977, pp. 1-16.
- Ivaldi, Federica. "Il conformista di Bernardo Bertolucci: una riscrittura critica del romanzo moraviano a vent'anni di distanza." *Studi Novecenteschi* 86 (n.d.): 313-26.
- Jung, C. G. "Phenomenology of the Self" in *The Portable Jung*. New York: Viking Press, 1971, pp. 139-162.
- Lavagetto, Mario. "Introduzione a Italo Svevo." in *Romanzi*, by Italo Svevo. Torino: Einaudi, 1993, pp. 1-16.

ITAL 450 - Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo

- _____. [selezioni] *La cicatrice di Montaigne: sulla bugia in letteratura*. Torino: Einaudi, 2002.
- Luperini, Romano. *L'autocoscienza del moderno*. Napoli: Liguori, 2006.
- _____. “Capitolo ottavo. Da *Suo marito* a *Uno, nessuno e centomila*” in *Pirandello*. Roma, 1999.
- Marchese, Lorenzo. “Genealogia dell'autofinzione italiana.” *Il verri, L'io in finzione*, 64 (Giugno): 40–60.
- Schiavulli, Antonio. “Confessione e verità” in *Soggetti a nessuno: Svevo, Pirandello, Foucault*. Modena: Mucchi editore, 2013, pp. 105–111.
- _____. “Al di sopra di tutti gli altri: le pratiche di innocentizzazione di Zeno” in *Soggetti a nessuno: Svevo, Pirandello, Foucault*. Modena: Mucchi editore, 2013, pp. 74–181.
- Stara, Arrigo. “Sul concetto dell'inconscio” in *Letteratura e psicoanalisi*. Roma: GLF editori Laterza, 2001, pp. 13–16.
- _____. “Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno*” in *Letteratura e psicoanalisi*. Roma: GLF editori Laterza, 2001, pp. 93–96.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Regular attendance of class meetings and film screenings, and quality participation are critical to the success of this course. Expected absences should be discussed with the instructor in advance and are limited to 3 total hours per semester.

LANGUAGE:

This class has been designed to be taught in Italian as an Italian 450 course to develop students' knowledge of Italian literature and culture, as well as their reading comprehension and argumentation skills in Italian. The primary texts as well as the majority of secondary texts are in Italian, as are the two films screened during the semester. All class work (response papers, presentations, midterm exam, final paper) are to be completed in Italian and students will be assessed on both depth of thought and accuracy of language.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 20% Participation in class discussion and completion of weekly reading
 - 25% Response papers every week (3/4 page, in Italian)
 - 20% Oral presentation (scheduled across the semester, in Italian)
 - 15% In-class midterm (essay format)
 - 20% Final paper (5 pages, in Italian)
-

1. Papers

- Each paper should have the specified length, typed in 12-pt. Times New Roman font, and have one-inch margins
- Include your name and the title of your paper at the top of the first page (single-spaced)
- All papers must have titles
- For your final paper, you should number pages
- Spell check and proofread adequately

ITAL 450 - Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo

- Your response papers do not require citational support. But for your final paper, be sure that you cite all secondary material and present bibliographical information according to either the guidelines of either the Modern Language Association or Chicago Manual of Style
- You must list all material cited, even if you are only using the required text
- There will be information distributed in class for the papers

2. Presentations

Students will be assigned one presentation during the semester, to present *in Italian*. Presentation topics will contextualize the readings and films. Students are encouraged to begin thinking about a theme near the begin of the course, to see me in office hours to discuss that theme, and begin to develop it in their oral presentation. They may then go ahead and deepen that theme for their final paper. Students will present to their peers their research that they organize in PowerPoint. Their PowerPoint and handouts will be shared with other students in a public Dropbox file. Although students can use notes and refer to their PowerPoint to assist them in their presentations, their performances should be practiced and last ten to twelve-minutes. A question and answer session will follow the presentation and students' grades will be based, in part, on interactions with their peers.

3. Midterm Exam (February 28)

The midterm exam will be a hand-written 5-paragraph essay that responds, *in Italian*, to a prompt given at the beginning of class. Students will have 70 minutes to complete their midterms. Students will be graded on profundity of thought, clarity of argumentation, and accuracy of language.

4. Final Paper (April 28)

The final paper will be written in Italian and it will investigate a course theme that is of interest to the student. Students must begin to think about and develop their theme during the first week after midterms and they should meet with me at least twice between week 10 and week 14, to discuss and elaborate their interest.

5. Film screenings (March 27 & April 24)

While film screenings are not mandatory, film viewings *are* mandatory, and students who cannot attend the screening with COSÌ, the USC Italian club, and our class discussion afterwards, will view the film on their own. Students who do attend the film screening and discussion (and *participate* in the discussion) do not need to turn in a response paper those weeks.

GRADES

93-100 A

90-92 A-

87-89 B+

83-86 B

80-82 B-

77-79 C+

73-76 C

70-72 C-

67-69 D+

63-66 D

60-62 D-

0-59 F

COURSE CALENDAR

READINGS ARE TO BE COMPLETED FOR THE DAY/WEEK THEY ARE ASSIGNED. YOU MUST BRING TO CLASS THE CURRENT READING. Assignments are listed under the day for which they are to be completed.

WEEK 1: *L'uomo in abbozzo*: Introduzione al corso e il tema

Tuesday, January 8

- In class: Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*, Inferno XVI-XVII

Thursday, January 10

Lettura:

- Booth, Wayne, "The Price of Impersonal Narration II: Henry James and the Unreliable Narrator" in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 1961. pp. 339-364
- Luperini, "L'autocoscienza del moderno nella letteratura del Novecento" in *L'autocoscienza del moderno*, 2006.

SVEVO: SMOKE AND MIRRORS

WEEK 2: La vita come un problema in *Una vita* e *La coscienza di Zeno*

Tuesday, January 22

Lettura:

- Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno*, 1923, "Prefazione", "Preambolo", "Il fumo", pp. 1-29

Thursday, January 24

Lettura:

- Mario Lavagetto, "Confessarsi è mentire" in *La cicatrice di Montaigne: sulla bugia in letteratura*, 2002, pp. 217-227

WEEK 3: La funzione/finzione di Dottor S e la 'vendetta' diaristica; il pensiero freudiano

Tuesday, January 15

Lettura:

- Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno*, 1923, "Morte del padre," pp. 30-61 + selections in PDF handout

Thursday, January 17

Lettura:

- Arrigo Stara, "Sul concetto dell'inconscio" e "Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno*" in *Letteratura e psicoanalisi*, pp. 13-16 e 93-96

WEEK 4: Un linguaggio diaristico insolito: "A dire la verità, io..." e "Devo confessare che..."

Tuesday, January 29

Lettura:

- Svevo, "Psico-analisi" *La coscienza di Zeno*, 1923 pp. 434-471

ITAL 450 - Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo

Thursday, January 31

Lettura:

- Schiavulli, "Confessione e verità" and "Al di sopra di tutti gli altri: le pratiche di innocentizzazione di Zeno" in *Soggetti a nessuno: Svevo, Pirandello, Foucault*, 2013, pp. 105-111 and 74-181

PIRANDELLO: MIRRORS AND MASKS

WEEK 5: La maschera è una menzogna?: L'identità e l'apparenza

Tuesday, February 5

Lettura:

- Pirandello, *Uno nessuno e centomila*, 1926, "Libro primo: Mia moglie e il mio naso" e "Libro secondo: Ci sono io e ci siete voi", pp. 1-41

Thursday, February 7

Lettura:

- Foucault, "What is an Author", 1969, pp. 1-16

WEEK 6: La fine di ogni verità e il trionfo del relativismo totale: una fine postmoderna nel 1926?

Tuesday, February 12

Lettura:

- Pirandello, *Uno nessuno e centomila*, 1926, "Libro terzo: Pazzie per forza" e "Libro quarto: Com'erano per me Marco di Dio e sua moglie Diamante", pp. 42-83

Thursday, February 14

Lettura:

- Schiavulli, "Nient'altro che la verità" in *Soggetti a nessuno: Svevo, Pirandello, Foucault*, 2013, pp. 230-237

MORANTE: ENCHANTED MEMORIES

WEEK 7: Dalla menzogna alle memorie e il sortilegio

Tuesday, February 19

Lettura:

- Attenzione all'avvertenza iniziale: "Tutto il presente racconto è assolutamente immaginario..."
- Morante, "Capitolo primo: Re e stella del cielo" in *L'isola di Arturo: memorie di un fanciullo*, 1957, pp. 8-46

Thursday, February 21

Lettura:

- Morante, "Sul romanzo" in *Nuovi argomenti*, 1959

WEEK 8: Tra fiaba, finzione e memoir: Elsa/Arturo, protagonista

Tuesday, March 5

Lettura:

- Morante, "Capitolo quinto: tragedie" e "Capitolo sesto: il bacio fatale" in *L'isola di Arturo: memorie di un fanciullo*, 1957, pp. 145-188

Thursday, March 7

Lettura:

- Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", 1967, pp. 1-6

ITAL 450 - Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo

WEEK 9: Uscire dall'isola incantata per passare alla realtà violente della guerra

Tuesday, February 26

Lettura:

- Morante, "Capitolo ottavo: addio" in *L'isola di Arturo: memorie di un fanciullo*, 1957, pp. 203–239

Thursday, February 28

IN CLASS: MIDTERM

SPRING BREAK: March 10 -17

MORAVIA: REPRESSED ‘SHADOW’ & PERFORMED ‘SELF’

WEEK 10: La repressione del dissenso (e dell'individuo) nell'Italia fascista

Tuesday, March 19

Lettura:

- Moravia, "Prologo" e "Parte prima" [selezioni] in *Il conformista*, 1951.

Thursday, March 21

Lettura:

- Jung, "Phenomenology of the Self" in *The Portable Jung*, pp. 139-162

WEEK 11: La memoria in terza persona, una repressione comune: “Non ero fascista io.”

Tuesday, March 26

Lettura:

- Moravia, "Parte seconda" e "Epilogo" [selezioni] in *Il conformista*, 1951.

Wednesday, March 27

FILM SCREENING: WITH COSÌ, ITALIAN CLUB OF USC:

Bertolucci's *Il conformista*, 1970

Discussion and pizza to follow

Lettura:

- Ivaldi, "Il conformista di Bernardo Bertolucci: una riscrittura critica del romanzo moraviano a vent'anni di distanza", *Studi novecenteschi* (2013): 313-326.

Thursday, March 28

Lettura:

- Edkins, "Trauma Violence, and Political Community" pp. 1-19; "The Return of the Political - the Memory of Politics" in *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, 2013. pp. 215-233

FERRANTE: LA COSCIENZA DI DELIA

WEEK 12: Ecco, la ‘vera’ identità di Elena Ferrante

Tuesday, April 2

Lettura:

- Ferrante, *L'amore molesto*, 1992, pp. 1-43

ITAL 450 - Le menzogne che ci raccontiamo

Thursday, April 4

Lettura:

- Ferrante, "Menzogne che dicono sempre la verità" e "Il libro di nessuno" in *La frantumaglia*, 2003, 70-71 e 181-197.

WEEK 13: Mirroring: madre e figlia, morte e nascista, e i personaggi di Delia e Amalia

Tuesday, April 9

Lettura:

- Ferrante, *L'amore molesto*, 1992, pp. 44-87

Thursday, April 11

Lettura:

- Benedetti, "Is the Author Dead?" in *The Empty Cage: Inquiry into the Mysterious Disappearance of the Author*, 2005, pp. 1-23

WEEK 14: Finzione, autobiografia, e autofinzione

Tuesday, April 16

Lettura:

- Ferrante, *L'amore molesto*, 1992, pp. 88-130

Thursday, April 18

Lettura:

- Marchese, "Genealogia dell'autofinzione italiana," *Il verri, L'io in finzione*, 64 (Giugno): 40-60.

WEEK 15: "Amalia c'era stata. Io ero Amalia."

Tuesday, April 23

Lettura:

- Ferrante, *L'amore molesto*, 1992, pp. 131-173

Wednesday, April 24

FILM SCREENING: WITH COSÌ, ITALIAN CLUB OF USC:

Martone's *L'amore molesto*, 1995

Discussion and pizza to follow

Lettura:

- Ferrante, "La reinvenzione dell'*amore molesto*, Carteggio con Mario Martone" e "Gli abiti, i corpi: *L'amore molesto* sullo schermo" in *La frantumaglia*, 2003, pp. 22-39 e 48-52.

Thursday, April 25

Conclusione

Final paper due via email by Sunday, April 28