

Remembering & Forgetting

Neorealism & Beyond in Italian Cinema

Professor Julianne VanWagenen
Course Hours: 1:00-2:20 T/TH + Screenings TBD
Meeting Room: VKC 158
ITAL 324: *Remembering and Forgetting: Neorealism*

Email: jvanwage@usc.edu
SPRING 2019

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

ITAL 324: *Remembering and Forgetting: Neorealism and Beyond in Italian Cinema*

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

DESCRIPTION:

In three modules the class will follow Italian history and Italian cinema through **(Module 1, 6 weeks / 6 films)** the second postwar and NEOREALISM, with the classic films *Paisan* and *Rome Open City* by Roberto Rossellini and *Bicycle Thieves* by Vittorio De Sica; **(Module 2: 6 weeks / 6 films)** the years of the economic miracle and sweeping cultural change and the POST-NEOREALIST, with the iconic and groundbreaking films *La dolce vita* by Federico Fellini and *Avventura* and *Blow-Up* by Michelangelo Antonioni; **(Module 3: 2 weeks / 2 films)** the years of social strife and *gli anni di piombo* and the SPAGHETTI WESTERN genre, which rose to fame through Sergio Leone's *Dollars Trilogy*.

The course follows a chronological trajectory, but each classic film is paired with a film from the late 1980s - present day, which is either a direct citation of, or is greatly influenced by, the original. The postmodern films are comedies, romantic comedies, dramas and melodramas, but they are all mainstream, though they are rooted in some of the most groundbreaking and genre-forming cinema of all time. We will compare the child-protagonists in the postwar films *Rome open city* and *Cinema Paradiso*, we will consider the meaning of the recreation of the famous 1st episode of *Paisan* between Joe and Carmela in Salvatores' 1991 *Mediterraneo*, and work to unravel the critique that lies at the bottom of Paolo Sorrentino's 2013 homage to Federico Fellini's Rome in his 1960 *La dolce vita*.

This course will at once provide a survey of crucial Italian film genres and directors, from Rossellini (1945) to Sorrentino (2013) and a space to explore contemporary cinema and the postmodern tendency to rely on citation for authenticity. Students will learn to 'read' and analyze film, just as they might literature, as we discuss historical contexts, themes, tones, undertones, camera innovations and musical and cinematographic plot-driving devices. The course's THEORETICAL DRIVE and secondary readings, furthermore, will introduce students to the concept of Italian communal-forgetting after the traumas of Fascism and WWII, and allow them to look at the innocence, nostalgia, and amnesia that tend to replace violence, documentation, and memory. By the end of the course, students should have a grasp, not only of Italian cinema and the characteristics of the modern and postmodern, the critical relationship between shared memories, personal and shared trauma, and nationhood.

Finally, though taught in English, this course will provide a semi-immersive environment in which students will constantly hear the target language.

FILMS SCREENED:

Nuovo Cinema Paradiso, Tornatore (1988)
Roma città aperta, Rossellini (1945)
Paisà, Rossellini (1946)
Mediterraneo, Salvatores (1991)
Ladri di biciclette, De Sica (1948)
L'america, Amelio (1994)
I vitelloni, Fellini (1953)
L'ultimo bacio, Muccino (2000)
La dolce vita, Fellini (1960)
La grande bellezza, Sorrentino (2013)
L'avventura, Antonioni (1960)
Blow-Up, Antonioni (1966)
Django Unchained, Tarantino (2012)
Per un pugno di dollari (A Fistful of Dollars), Leone (1964)

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

READINGS [AVAILABLE AS PDFS ON COURSE WEBSITE]:

- Bazin, André, "An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism" in *What Is Cinema?: Volume II*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005 [1971]), pp. 16-41.
- Bondanella, Peter, "The Cinema of Poetry and the Road beyond Neorealism" in *The Films of Federico Fellini* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 43-64.
- Caminati, Luca. "The Return of History: Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica*, Memory, and National Identity." *Italica* 83, no. 3/4 (2006): 596-608.
- Cardullo, Bert, "The coming-of-age film à la Fellini: the case of *I vitelloni*" in *After Neorealism - Italian Filmmakers and Their Films: Essays and Interviews* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 25-35.
- "Beyond Neorealism, or Preserving a Cinema of Social Conscience: An Interview with Gianni Amelio" in *After Neorealism - Italian Filmmakers and Their Films: Essays and Interviews* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 125-144.
- Carlorosi, Silvia, "Introduction," in *A Grammar of Cinepoiesis: Poetic Cameras of Italian Cinema* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015), pp. viii-xxviii.
- Cortázar, Julio, "Blow-Up" in *Blow-Up and Other Stories* (New York: Collier Books, (1963), 100-115.
- Fisher, Jaimey, "On the Ruins of Masculinity: The Figure of the Child in Italian Neorealism and the German Rubble-Film," in *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), pp. 25-53.
- Frayling, Christopher, "Ennio Morricone," in *Once upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in assoc. with Autry National Center. Institute for the Study of the American West, 2005).
- "Leone's West: Finding the Fairy Tale," in *Once upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in assoc. with Autry National Center. Institute for the Study of the American West, 2005).
- Galt, Rosalind, "Italy's Landscapes of Loss: Historical Mourning and the Dialectical Image" in *Cinema Paradiso, Mediterraneo and Il Postino* *Screen* xliii, no. 2 (2002): 158-73.
- Liotard, Jean-François, "Answering the question: what is the postmodern?," in *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, Sydney, Power Publications, 1992, pp. 1-9.
- Marcus, Millicent, "Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* and the Art of Nostalgia" in *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). pp. 199-213
- "National Identity by Means of Montage in Rossellini's *Paisan*," in *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 15-28
- Minghelli, Giuliana, "Viaggio in Italia: Nothing Here that Brings Back Old Memories?" in *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 67-83.
- "On Site in 1947-1948" and "Missing Wheels of Time" in *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 91-108
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo, "The 'Cinema of Poetry' in *Heretical Empiricism* (Washington, DC: New Accademia Publishing, 2005) pp. 167-186.
- Polzonetti, Pierpaolo, "Quakers and Cowboys: Italian Mythologies and Stereotypes of Americans from Piccinni to Puccini," *The Opera Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2008): 22-38.
- Ricciardi, Alessia, "The Spleen of Rome: Mourning Modernism in Fellini's *La dolce vita*" *Modernism/Modernity*, 2000 Apr; 7 (2): 201-19.
- Ruberto, Laura and Kristi Wilson, "Introduction," in *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), pp. 1-24.

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

ADDITIONAL IN-CLASS MEDIA [NO PURCHASE REQUIRED]:

Excerpt: *Ladri di saponette*, Nichetti (1989)
Excerpt: Season 2, Episode 1, *Master of None*, "The Thief" (2017)
Excerpt: *The Interview*, Federico Fellini, 1987
Excerpt: *Psycho*, Hitchcock (1960)
Excerpt: *Michelangelo Antonioni* [documentary], Lai 2001
Excerpt: *Austin Powers: The International Man of Mystery* (1997), Roach
Excerpt: *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999), Roach
Excerpt: *The Dollars Trilogy (Soundtrack)* (1964-1967), Leone / Morricone
Excerpt: *Django* (1966), Corbucci
Excerpt: *Amarcord* (1974), Fellini

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.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Reaction papers:** Every Thursday students will turn in a 1 page reaction paper based on the film screening and readings for that week.
- **Oral presentation:** Each student will choose one film to present in class. If there are more students than films, students will work in pairs to present their film. Presentations should give a brief plot summary (not taken from any online source), any relevant historical context, some brief biographical notes about the director and, if pertinent, about the writer. Then, the main part of the oral presentation should focus on one aspect of the film—it may be a theme, a scene, a location, etc.—to analyze and then discuss with the class.
- **Midterm exam:** The midterm will take place in-class the week before spring break. Based on a prompt handed out in class, students will respond in a hand-written 5-paragraph essay.
- **Final project:** Students can choose from two options for their final project. They may either write a five-page research paper, in Italian, based on a course theme or film, or they may write an eight-page screenplay for a short film, in the target language, that fits into one of the genres of the course, and include a one-page abstract, single-spaced in the target language, that describes the film, its characteristics and why it belongs to a given genre, and what influences played a part in the plot, tone, and theme.

LANGUAGE:

This class has been designed to be taught in English as an Italian 342 course to develop students' knowledge of Italian cinema and culture. The films will be in Italian with English subtitles and all readings will be in English. Students who want Italian-language credit for the course must complete reaction papers, presentations, and the final paper/project in Italian.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 20% Participation in class discussion and weekly film screening
- 25% Reaction papers every week (1 page)
- 20% Oral presentation (scheduled across the semester)
- 15% In-class midterm (essay format)
- 20% Final project or paper

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

1. Participation (in-class discussions, group work, readings, quizzes)

Be sure not to miss any classes. Daily attendance is a key factor in our course. Coming allows you to 1) interact with the other students and 2) discuss and receive explanations about what you read and studied at home. Please remember that, although attendance is not graded per se, unexcused absences will have a negative effect on your participation grade (see point 4 below).

USC official policies allow for some absences to be excused. Thus, the following circumstances would not be considered unexcused. Students who can verify that they were prevented from completing assignments and/or taking exams due to illness or religious holidays are permitted to make up the work they missed. Students who miss class because of their performance in university-sponsored events, such as athletic competitions, fine-arts performances, ROTC activities, etc. are also allowed to make up the work they missed. Students who are summoned for jury duty are excused as well. Finally, a death in the immediate family would also excuse a student's absence.

On the other hand, personal reasons for missing class are not excused. These include personal trips to attend university-sponsored events as a spectator, to visit family, to attend weddings (and similar events), to attend court (except for jury duty), even when plane tickets have already been purchased.

In order to make up any work (assignments, quizzes, exams, etc.) that you miss, you must bring valid, original documentation. For illness, a medical excuse from a doctor or other appropriate health-care provider is required and is subject to confirmation. Students using the University Park Health Center should have a valid release on file at the UPHC with my name on it. For university-sponsored events, an original memo from the appropriate advisor must be provided in advance. Documentation from a newspaper, funeral, memorial service, etc., must be provided in the event of absence due to a death in the immediate family. The court papers summoning you for jury duty are required in order to be excused.

2. About the papers and other writing assignments

- Each paper, including response papers, 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
- 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
- You will email me your papers. Any papers that do not meet requirements (length, assignment instructions, etc.) will be emailed back to you with further instructions for completion. You will earn one grade lower on the completed draft

3. Presentations

Students will be assigned one to two presentations throughout the semester. Presentation topics will contextualize the readings and films. They should deal with the contemporary cultural context in which the book/film was made and released, as well as with possible tensions between historical truths and mythical truths as portrayed in the book/film. 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 be between seven and ten-minutes. A question and answer session will follow the presentation and students' grades will be based on interactions with their peers. Students will be graded not only on their presentations but on how they ask and answer questions, respond to each other, etc.

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

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.

FILM SCREENINGS will be available to watch on your own via the course website. I will also choose a time at the beginning of the semester to screen the films on campus for the entire class. You are encouraged to watch as many films as you can with the class.

WEEK 1: Introduction

Tuesday, January 8

Introduction to course and theme "Remembering and Forgetting"

Thursday, January 10

Overview of Post-WWII Italian Cinema

Reading: André Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism" in *What Is Cinema?: Volume II*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005 [1971]), pp. 16-41.

MODULE 1: WORLD WAR II & NEOREALISM

WEEK 2: *Roma città aperta*, Rossellini (1945)

Tuesday, January 22

Introduction to neorealism, its characteristics and great directors

Reading: Laura Ruberto and Kristi Wilson, "Introduction," in *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), pp. 1-24.

Thursday, January 24

Lecture on Roma città aperta and the role of cinema in light of the death of the witness

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

WEEK 3: *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, Tornatore (1988)

Tuesday, January 15

Lecture on the neorealist legacy of the child-protagonist

Reading: Jaimey Fisher, "On the Ruins of Masculinity: The Figure of the Child in Italian Neorealism and the German Rubble-Film," in *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), pp. 25-53.

Thursday, January 17

Lecture on Cinema Paradiso and nostalgia when 'one can't go home again': after war in I malavoglia, after America in La luna e i falò, and after films in Cinema paradiso

Reading: Millicent Joy Marcus, "Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* and the Art of Nostalgia" in *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). pp. 199-213.

WEEK 4: *Paisà*, Rossellini (1946)

Tuesday, January 29

Lecture on the difficulty of 'understanding' in neorealist film and implied difficulty of interpretation

Reading: Giuliana Minghelli, "Viaggio in Italia: Nothing Here that Brings Back Old Memories?" in *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 67-83.

Thursday, January 31

Lecture on the role (or lack thereof) of Fascist soldiers in Italian WWII films

Reading: Millicent Joy Marcus, "National Identity by Means of Montage in Rossellini's *Paisan*," in *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 15-28.

WEEK 5: *Mediterraneo*, Salvatores (1991)

Tuesday, February 5

Lecture on the transition from neorealist 'remembering' to a nostalgic 'amnesia'

Reading: Rosalind Galt, "Italy's Landscapes of Loss: Historical Mourning and the Dialectical Image in *Cinema Paradiso*, *Mediterraneo* and *Il Postino*" *Screen* xliii, no. 2 (2002): 158-73.

Thursday, February 7

Guest lecture by / conversation with Alessandro Ago on Gabriele Salvatores

WEEK 6: *Ladri di biciclette*, De Sica (1948)

Tuesday, February 12

Lecture on 1948 and the bicycle as a metaphor for the Italian Republic's first elections

Reading: Giuliana Minghelli, "On Site in 1947-1948" and "Missing Wheels of Time" in *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 91-108.

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

- Thursday, February 14 *Lecture on "The first time as tragedy, the second time as farce," postmodern citations of Bicycle Thieves in Italy and the U.S.*
- In class, [excerpts] *Ladri di saponette*, Nichetti (1989)
 - In class, [excerpts] Seas 2, Ep 1, *Master of None*, "The Thief" (2017)
- Reading: Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the question: what is the postmodern?", in *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, Sydney, Power Publications, 1992, pp. 1-9; AND The Idea Channel, Postmodernity (9 min)

WEEK 7: *Lamerica*, Amelio (1994)

- Tuesday, February 19 *Lecture on citation as a postmodern tool for authenticated art and critique*
- Reading: Caminati, Luca. "The Return of History: Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica*, Memory, and National Identity." *Italica* 83, no. 3/4 (2006): 596-608.
- Thursday, February 21 *Lecture on the legacy of social-consciousness in Italian cinema post-neorealism*
- Reading: Bert Cardullo, "Beyond Neorealism, or Preserving a Cinema of Social Conscience: An Interview with Gianni Amelio" in *After Neorealism - Italian Filmmakers and Their Films: Essays and Interviews* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 125-144.

MODULE 2: AFTER NEOREALISMO, TOWARDS CINEPOIESIS

WEEK 8: *I vitelloni*, Fellini (1953)

- Tuesday, March 5 *Introduction to Federico Fellini and lecture on 1953, the year that neorealism ends*
- Reading: Bert Cardullo, "The coming-of-age film à la Fellini: the case of *I vitelloni*" in *After Neorealism - Italian Filmmakers and Their Films: Essays and Interviews* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp. 25-35.
- Thursday, March 7 *Introduction to the economic miracle and lecture on the existential crises of Fellini's bourgeois protagonists and his critique of economic-boom youths*
- Reading: Peter Bondanella, "The Cinema of Poetry and the Road beyond Neorealism" in *The Films of Federico Fellini* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 43-64.

WEEK 9: *L'ultimo bacio*, Muccino (2000)

- Tuesday, February 26 *Lecture on the Muccini's film as a revisiting of Fellini's Rimini without the critique*
- In class, [excerpts] *The Last Kiss*, Zach Braff, Casey Affleck, Rachel Bilson, Goldwyn (2006)
- Thursday, February 28 IN CLASS: MIDTERM

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

SPRING BREAK: March 10 -17

WEEK 10: *La dolce vita*, Fellini (1960)

Tuesday, March 19

Introduction to post-neorealist cinema and the great directors, beyond Fellini

- In class, [excerpts] *The Interview*, Federico Fellini, 1987

Thursday, March 21

Lecture on paparazzi, 1960s cosmopolitanism in Italy, and the economic miracle

Reading: Alessia Ricciardi, "The Spleen of Rome: Mourning Modernism in Fellini's *La dolce vita*" *Modernism/Modernity*, 2000 Apr; 7 (2): 201-19.

WEEK 11: *La grande bellezza*, Sorrentino (2013)

Tuesday, March 26

Lecture on Sorrentino's reframing of the Eternal City 50 years after La dolce vita

Reading: Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The 'Cinema of Poetry' in *Heretical Empiricism* (Washington, DC: New Accademia Publishing, 2005) pp. 167-186.

Thursday, March 28

Lecture on personal and communal amnesia and the 'stunting of growth' in La grande bellezza

WEEK 12: *L'avventura*, Antonioni (1960)

Tuesday, April 2

Lecture on Antonioni's break from traditional cinematic techniques and traditional plot tropes

- In class, [opening scenes] *Psycho*, Hitchcock (1960)

Thursday, April 4

Lecture on Antonio's camera as voyeur and the difficulty of interpretation after neorealism

- In class, [excerpts] *Michelangelo Antonioni* [documentary], Lai 2001

Reading: Silvia Carlorosi, "Introduction," in *A Grammar of Cinepoiesis: Poetic Cameras of Italian Cinema* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015), pp. viii-xxviii.

WEEK 13: *Blow-Up*, Antonioni (1966)

Tuesday, April 9

Lecture on Antonioni's turning away from Italy, a trend that is simultaneous in the popular mainstream Spaghetti Western films of the 1960s and 70s

ITAL 342 - ITALIAN CINEMA

Thursday, April 11

Lecture on literary citation in postmodern auteur films

- In class, [excerpts] *Austin Powers: The International Man of Mystery* (1997), and *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999)

Reading: Julio Cortázar's short story, "Blow-Up" in *Blow-Up and Other Stories* (New York: Collier Books, (1963), 100-115.

MODULE 3: SPAGHETTI WESTERNS & FOREIGN HEROES

INCLUDED IN THIS MODULE:
VISIT TO GENE AUTRY MUSEUM, DATE TBD

WEEK 14: *Django Unchained*, Tarantino (2012)

Tuesday, April 16

Analysis of Ennio Morricone's score for Django Unchained and lecture on Tarantino's use of Morricone to achieve 'authenticity'

- In class, [excerpts] the *Dollars Trilogy*, with Morricone's groundbreaking, now iconic, scores (1964-1966) and Corbucci's *Django* (1966)

Reading: Christopher Frayling, "Ennio Morricone," in *Once upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in assoc. with Autry National Center. Institute for the Study of the American West, 2005).

Thursday, April 18

Lecture on the history of the Far West in Italy, from Salgari to Puccini and Tex Willer

Reading: Pierpaolo Polzonetti, "Quakers and Cowboys: Italian Mythologies and Stereotypes of Americans from Piccinni to Puccini," *The Opera Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2008): 22-38.

WEEK 15: *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964)

Tuesday, April 23

Lecture on Leone and the possible meaning of his anonymous, nameless, non-Italian heroes, from Clint Eastwood's 'the Stranger' protagonist to Charles Bronson's 'Harmonica'

Reading: Christopher Frayling, "Leone's West: Finding the Fairy Tale," in *Once upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in assoc. with Autry National Center. Institute for the Study of the American West, 2005); and listen to interview with Frayling (2005) [[CLICK HERE for link](#)]

Thursday, April 25

Conclusions: Trauma, nostalgia, and farce in Italian cinema

- In class, [excerpts] Fellini, *Amarcord* (1974)