

Italian Films, Italian Histories II
(Unified Italy to the Present)

Italian Studies ITAL-UA 175/History HIST-UA 176/Cinema Studies CINE-UA 235

Spring 2014

Prof. Ruth Ben-Ghiat

Office: Mezzanine, Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò

Office Hours:

v&email: 212-998-8731, ruth.benghiat@nyu.edu

Teaching Assistant: Valerie Hoagland

Office Hours:

Email: valerie.hoagland@nyu.edu

Description

This course explores the relationship of Italian history and Italian film from Unification to the present day. What are the possibilities and limitations of feature films as a medium for the representation of history? How has cinema functioned with respect to national narratives and dominant systems of power in Italy? What happens when history becomes cinema and when cinema takes on history?

The course meets twice a week. The first meeting (Mondays, 11-12:15) will be devoted to lectures and discussions about theoretical issues, histories, and the films themselves. Each week we will examine a different historical period or topic and a different facet of the film/history relationship. The second meeting (Wednesdays, 11-1:45) is devoted to seeing and discussing the films. Attendance at these sessions is not optional; seeing the films together is an important part of the class experience.

Course materials

The course is conducted in English; knowledge of Italian is not necessary. All of the films we see have English subtitles. Italian and Romance Language majors are encouraged to do the readings in the original. All course readings can be accessed on NYU Classes, or in a reader you can purchase from Advanced Copy Center on La Guardia between Bleecker and West 3rd Streets.

Note on Films

Films with an AF call number are available for viewing at Avery Fischer on the 2nd floor of Bobst Library. I will arrange a collective screening at Avery Fischer or the Casa Italiana for other films. Some clips or films are available on my YouTube channel. Most films can also be rented (Kim's Video on 1st Ave and St.Marks and Netflix are good sources). I do not condone illegal downloads.

Course Requirements

Students will take a midterm examination (30%), a final examination (30%), and write a 10 pp paper on some aspect of the relationship of Italian films and Italian histories (30%). Papers may be from any disciplinary perspective. Topics must be discussed first with Prof. Ben-Ghiat or Ms. Hoagland. Course participation (10%) includes attendance and intervention in weekly class discussions of films. Sleeping and use of devices and websites unrelated to the class during lectures or screenings (texting, FB, etc.) will count against your participation grade.

Schedule of Course Meetings and Readings

- Jan 27-31 Introduction
Clark, 1-10
Rosenstone, "Introduction"
Sorlin, "How to Look at an 'Historical Film'," 3-37
- Feb 3-7 Unification/ Aesthetics and Ideology
Clark, 12-42
Cannon, "Blasetti's 1860"
Film: *1860* (Blasetti, 1933)
- Feb 17-21 The Liberal Nation and its Enemies/Historical Recreations
Clark, 48-55, 69-78, 108-112
Burgess, "The Organizer"
Film: *I compagni/The Organizer* (Monicelli, 1963) AF
- Feb 24-28 Fascism/Moralizing History, Visualizing Trauma
Clark, 230-36, 242-247, 251-262
Benadusi, "Private Life and Public Morals," 173-181, 186-190
Marcus, 285-312
Film: *The Conformist* (Bertolucci, 1970) AF
- Mar 3-7 Fascist Imperialism and its Undoing
Ben-Ghiat, "Narrating War"
Film: *Un pilota ritorna/A Pilot Returns* (Rossellini, 1942)
Midterm
- Mar 10-14 Spring Break
- Mar 17-21 The Resistance, I/Neorealism and Film Style
Clark, 280-316
Muscio, "Paisà"
Dalle Vacche, *The Body in the Mirror*, 180-218 (parts on *Paisà*)
Film: *Paisà* (Rossellini, 1946) AF

- Mar 24-28 Reconstruction/Neorealism as an Innocent Eye?
 Duggan 244-255
 Marcus, 54-75
 De Sica, "Why *Ladri di biciclette*?"
 Film: *Ladri di biciclette/The Bicycle Thieves* (De Sica, 1946)
 AF
- Mar 31-Apr4 The Cold War in Italy/Hybrids and their Histories
 Marcus, 76-95
 Ben-Ghiat, "Liberation: Film and the Flight from the Italian Past"
 Film: *Riso amaro/Bitter Rice* (De Santis, 1948) AF
- Apr 7-11 Modernity, Italian Style/Stardom
 Reading TBA
 Film: *La Dolce Vita* (Fellini, 1960).
- Apr 14-18 Revolution and its Limitations/ Gender and the Filmic Gaze
 Clark, 374-393
 Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation*, excerpt
 Lupo, "The Mafia"
 Film: *Mimi metallurgico/The Seduction of Mimi* (Wertmuller, 1974)
- Apr 21-25 Emigration/The Italian Tragi-Comedy
 Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 210-233
 Cornelisen, *Women of the Shadows*, 1-10, 33-52
 Film: *Pane e cioccolata/Bread and Chocolate* (Brusati, 1974)
 AF
- Apr 28-May2 Media Politics and Postmodernity/History as Clip
 Ginsborg, *Berlusconi*, 32-48
 Jaehne, "The Icicle Thief," *Film Quarterly* (Spring 1990), 34-38
 Film: *Ladri di saponette/The Icicle Thief* (Nichetti, 1988)
 Final Exam
- May 5-9 Immigration/ Contemporary Italy and Globalization
 Clark, 408-426
 O'Healy, *L'America*
 Film: *L'America* (Amelio, 1994) AF
 Papers due May 5
- May 12 Review for Final

Citations for Readings on Syllabus

Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. "Liberation: Italian Cinema and the Fascist Past, 1945-50," in R. Bosworth and P. Dogliani, eds., *Italian Fascism* (London: 1999), 83-101.

Cornelison, Anne. *Women of the Shadows. A study of the Wives and Mothers of Southern Italy* (New York: 1977)

Dalle Vacche, Angela. *The Body in the Mirror. Shapes of History in the Italian Cinema* (Princeton: 1992).

Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, (London: 1990)

Lupo, "The Mafia," in Patrick McCarthy, ed., *Italy since 1945*, 153-170

Marcus, Millicent. "De Sica's *Garden of the Finzi-Continis*," in Marcus, *Filmmaking by the Book. Italian Cinema and Literary Adaptation* (Baltimore and London, 1993), 91-110.

_____. "Bertolucci's *The Conformist*: A Morals Change," in Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton, 1986), 285-312.

_____. "The Taviani Brothers' *Night of the Shooting Stars*: Ambivalent tribute to Neorealism," in Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton, 1986), 360-390.

_____. "De Sica's *Bicycle Thief*: Casting a Shadow on the visionary city," in Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton, 1986), 54-75.

_____. "De Santis's *Bitter Rice*: A neorealist Hybrid," in Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton, 1986), 76-95.

Muscio, Giuliana. "*Paisa*," in Giorgio Bertellini, ed., *Italian Cinema* (London, 2004), 31-40.

O'Healy, Aine. "*Lamerica*" in Giorgio Bertellini, ed., *Italian Cinema* (London, 2004), 245-253.

Rosenstone, Robert. "Introduction," from Rosenstone, ed., *Revisioning History. Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton, 1995), 3-14.

Sorlin, Pierre. *The Film in History*