

Professors Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Virginia Cox

ITAL-GA 1981: LANGUAGE AND POLITICS IN ITALY



This course explores the place and agency of language within the political sphere in Italy from the late middle ages to the twentieth century. Language is understood for the purposes of this course in a broad sense, including visual, as well as verbal, communicative practices and codes. The course will be structured in two principal segments, one examining key topoi of political discourse (appeals to national glory, to destiny, to virility, to renewal, to sacrifice); the other to important media of political communication (public speaking, painting and sculpture, film, and civic ritual). We end with a consideration of the relation of language and politics in twenty-first century Italy with a particular focus on Berlusconi. We aim to give students an opportunity to develop cross-chronological interests and to discern continuities, parallels, and differences between past and present political cultures. This type of comparative work will be encouraged in course presentations and submitted written work.

Course readings

The set readings for each session will be available on the Classes course site, and key works will be placed on reserve at the Bobst Library. Full citations for assigned works are in the bibliography at the close of the syllabus.

Course Requirements: Students will write a seminar paper (70% of the course grade). Paper topics must be discussed with the instructors before research begins. They may reflect any disciplinary formation, *and may be written in either Italian or English*. No incompletes will be given except upon presentation of medical or other documentation. Students also do one or two presentations during the semester based on that week's readings, which count as part of the overall participation assessment (30%). The success of the seminar depends on the interventions and engagement of each one of you.

Schedule of course meetings and readings

Jan 26: Introduction: Language and politics in the rhetorical tradition

Habinek, 1-9; 101-07
Cicero, *De inventione*, I i 1—I v 7
Connolly, "Rhetorical Education"

Feb 2: Culture and politics in twentieth-century social theory

Readings on the relationship between language and power (Foucault, Bourdieu), and on the notion of ideology/hegemony (Althusser, Gramsci, Zizek)
Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*
Foucault, "Discourse on Language,"
Zizek, *Mapping Ideology*

Feb 9 Political topoi 1: Nationalism and national character

Focus on: 'Italian' consciousness prior to Unification; the shaping of *italianità* at critical junctures of modern history (state building after 1870; Fascism); what happens to such topoi when nationalism is discredited (1945)
Maura Hametz on toponyms and names.

Steinberg, "The Historian and the *Questione della lingua*"
Edwards, John, 1985. *Language, Society, Identity*

Feb 16: No Class

Feb 23: Political topoi 2: Providence/destiny

Focus on: the 'heirs to Rome' topos in medieval and early modern Italian culture; Savonarola and the apocalyptic tradition; modern Italian uses of the notion of destiny as linked to the legacies of Rome

March 2: Political topoi 3: Utopia

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Focus on: Fascist remaking of the word and world; 1968 as utopian project and its implications for political language.

Eco, Umberto, 1973. "Il linguaggio politico,"

March 9: Political topoi 4: Virility.

Focus on: the gendering of *virtù* in humanistic political culture; fin-de-siècle and Fascist uses of notions of virility and the gendering of culture.

March 16: Spring Break

March 23: Political topoi 5: Decadence and renewal

Focus on: ideals of reform in late-medieval and early modern Italy; themes of crisis and regeneration in liberal and Fascist Italy; the resistance as a "second Risorgimento"; 1945 as a "zero hour".

March 30: Political topoi 6: Sacrifice and victimhood

Focus on: the Counter-Reformation and the cult of martyrdom; the "proletarian nation" of liberal Italy and Fascist-era victimhood; martyrdom in the Resistance

April 6: Political media 1: The spoken and written word

Focus on: speech culture in the medieval commune; political culture and the impact of print; the radio in Fascist and postwar Italy

April 13: Political media 2: Painting and sculpture

Focus on themes chosen from: Lorenzetti, Sala del Nove, Siena; Piazza della Signoria, Florence; apartments of Eleonora of Toledo, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence; Vatican stanze; the Macchiaioli; Arte Povera, abstractionism, and the turn away from narrative.

April 20: Political media 3: Film

Film as its own means of narrating politics and history; film's relations with artistic and other means of representation; language and/in cinema.

Rossi, xxx,

Ben-Ghiat, "1860"

Rosenstone, "Revisioning History"

April 27: Political media 4: Ritual and spectacle

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Focus: Renaissance civic ritual in Florence, Venice, and Ferrara; Fascist and Communist political spectacle; the reinvention of Renaissance ritual in Fascist Italy; Berlusconi political spectacle
Simonelli, Mussolini

May 4: Language and politics in contemporary Italy

Focus on: Berlusconi's language; the center-right, immigration, and rhetorics of inclusion and exclusion.

May 11: Concluding discussion

Reading list

- Adamson, Walter, 1992. "The Language of Opposition in Early Twentieth Century Italy. Rhetorical Continuities between Prewar Florentine Avant-Gardism and Mussolini's Fascism," *Journal of Modern History* (March 1992): 22-51.
- Artifoni, Enrico. 1995. *Gli uomini dell'assemblea. L'oratoria civile, i concionatori e i predicatori nella società comunale*. In *La predicazione dei Frati dalla metà del '200 alla fine del '300*, Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo.
- Bell, Catherine. 1997. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth 2004. "1860." *The Cinema of Italy*, ed. Giorgio Bertellini. London: Wallflower Press.
- Berezin, Mabel, 1994. *Making the Fascist Self*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.
- Bruni, Leonardo. 1978. 'Panegyric to the City of Florence'. In *The Earthly Republic. Italian Humanists on Government and Society*. Ed. Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald C. Witt. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Cashman, Anthony B. 2002. "The Problem of Audience in Mantua: Understanding Ritual Efficacy in an Italian Renaissance Princely State." *Renaissance Studies*, 16, 355-65
- Connolly, Joy. 2007. *The State of Speech. Rhetoric and Politics in Ancient Rome*. Princeton: Princeton UP
- _____. 2009. "The Politics of Rhetorical Education." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*. Ed. Eric Gunderson, 126-41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Cox, Virginia. 1999. 'Ciceronian Rhetoric in Italy, 1250-1360'. *Rhetorica*, 17/3: 239-288
- _____. 2009. "Gender and Eloquence in Ercole de' Roberti's *Portia and Brutus*." *Renaissance Quarterly*, 62/1: 61-101.
- Dalle Vacche, Angela, 1993. *The Body in the Mirror. Shapes of History in the Italian Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Dogliani, Patrizia, 2008. *Il fascismo degli italiani*, Turin: UTET.
- Drake, Richard, 1980. *Byzantium for Rome. The Politics of Nostalgia in Umbertian Italy*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Eco, Umberto, 1973. "Il linguaggio politico," in *I linguaggi settoriali in Italia*, ed. Gian Luigi Beccaria. Milan: Bompiani.
- Edwards, John, 1985. *Language, Society, Identity*, New York: Blackwell.
- Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta, 1997. *Fascist Spectacle*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Feldherr, Andrew. 1998. *Spectacle and Society in Livy's History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Forgacs, David, 2008 "The Words of the Migrant: Tales of Contemporary Italy," *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 78: 277-97.
- _____. and Gundle, Stephen, 2007. *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Foucault, Michel, 2002. "Discourse on Language," *The Archeology of Knowledge*, New York: Routledge.
- Gibbons, Mary Weitzel. 2001. "Cosimo's *Cavallo*: a Study in Imperial Imagery." In *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, 77-102. Ed. Konrad Eisenbichler. Aldershot: Ashgate

- Ginsborg, Paul, 2004 *Berlusconi*, London: Verso.
- Gregory, Brad. 2005. *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Griffin, Roger, 1991. *The Nature of Fascism*, London: Routledge.
- Habinek, Thomas. 2004. *Classical Rhetoric and Oratory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hariman, Robert. 1995. *Political Style: The Artistry of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Hsia, Ronnie Po-Chia. 2005. *The World of Catholic Renewal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kertzer, David, 1980. *Communists and Christians*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Latini, Brunetto. 1968. *La retorica*, ed. Francesco Maggini. Florence: Le Monnier.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1995. *Il principe*. ed. Giorgio Inglese. Turin: Einaudi.
- Milner, Stephen J. , ed. 2005. *At the Margins: Minority Groups in Premodern Italy*. Medieval Cultures. 39, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Muir, Edwin. 1986. *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Patriarca, Silvana. 2010. *Italian Vices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pitkin, Hannah. 1999. *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*. 2nd edn. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Polizzotto, Lorenzo. 1995. *The Elect Nation: The Savonarolan Movement in Florence, 1494-1545*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rosenstone, Robert, 1996 "Introduction," in *Revisioning History*, in Rosenstone, ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press..
- Savonarola, Girolamo. 1969-74. *Prediche sopra i salmi*. 2 vols. Ed. Vincenzo Romano. Rome: Belardetti.
- _____. 1999. *Trattato sul governo di Firenze*. Ed. Michele Ciliberto. Rome: Editori Riuniti
- Spackman, Barbara, 1996. *Fascist Virilities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- _____. 'Machiavelli and Gender'. In *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John Najemy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Starn, Randolph and Loren Partridge. 1992. *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300-1600*.
- Steinberg, Jonathan, 1987. "The Historian and the *Questione della lingua*," in Peter Burke, ed, *The Social History of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.198-209.
- Stone, Marla, 1999. "A Flexible Rome: Fascism and the Cult of Romanità" in *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture 1789-1945*, ed. Catherine Edwards, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swartz, David. 1997. *Culture and Power. The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trexler, Richard C. 1980. *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press
- Zizek, Slavoj, ed. 1994. *Mapping Ideology*. London: Verso.