



ENG 340
Italian Tales and Stories: Creative Writing Through Literary Models
Course Syllabus
Fall 2019

Instructor: Antonella Valoroso Ph.D.

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisite: None

Class Hours: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Type of Course: Standard Course

Lab/Site-visits fee: TBA

Course Description

This course will explore the process of transforming sensory impressions, individual feelings, personal experiences, and factual information into engaging and effective works of creative fiction and non-fiction. Students will read from a cross-section of Italian authors dealing with a wide range of topics and issues. They will also generate their own writing through a series of exercises designed to help the writer tap into new levels of awareness and creative energy. Class time will be devoted to a discussion and analysis of the assigned readings, and to the exploration of writing strategies and techniques. Students will also be involved in a series of 'literary walks' aimed at enhancing their ability to gather information from the exploration of Italian natural and urban landscapes.

Students will be required to produce seven compositions of two to three pages. By the end of the semester, they will also complete individual or collective projects that will be published in a literary anthology. The course includes a workshop with Mario Pirovano, an internationally acclaimed performer and writer. Pirovano is also the English translator of Dario Fo, the most recent Italian winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have:

- become acquainted with the voices and visions of Italian writers of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries;
- explored the main peculiarities of literary genres such as the novel, the short story, historic nonfiction, investigative journalism, the biography, and the autobiography;
- explored the writing process in general and personal strategies for generating effective work;
- produced fresh and engaging personal essays;
- reviewed the mechanics of writing and honed editorial and proof-reading skills.

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Course Materials

Readings

The required textbook is: Fo, Dario, *Francis the Holy Jester*, translated by M. Pirovano, London: Beautiful Books, 2009. A course reader is also available at the local copy shop. See “Umbra Institute Course Materials - Textbooks and Readers” handout provided in the orientation folder for more information.

Further Readings

The reading of all the books discussed in class, available in the Course Reserve Section of the Umbra Library, is highly recommended.

Assessment

Class Participation and Reading Assignments	20 %
Portfolio of Compositions	60 %
Final Project	10 %
Public Reading	10 %

Grading

Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional Excellent
A-	90% - 92%	
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Course Requirements

Grades are based on students' participation, written compositions, final project, and public reading.

Participation and Reading Assignments (20%)

Students are expected, and strongly encouraged, to engage in active participation as a way to enhance and reinforce their learning. It is therefore crucial for students to study the reading materials and come well prepared to class. Participation in class means paying attention to the lectures, asking questions, responding to questions when asked by the instructor, and sharing ideas and thoughts on the issues addressed in class with other students. Students are expected to refrain from having private conversations and eating during class, as well as turn off cell phones before the beginning of class.

Portfolio of Compositions (60%)

During the semester, students will write seven short compositions, whose topics will be assigned by the instructor, in which they will experiment with a variety of literary genres and writing techniques. Some of their compositions will be published on an online media outlet. Failure to turn in a composition on time will result in a loss of one-half letter grade for each day the composition is late.

The works produced by the students throughout the semester will eventually be included in a literary anthology edited by a small group of students. Each student's portfolio of compositions will be graded as a

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whole at midterm and at the end of the semester. Students cannot submit works that they have already submitted or will submit for credit in another course.

Final Project (10%)

After the midterm, they will start working on an individual or collective project to be submitted by the end of the term (see the syllabus for specific deadlines). The topic and structure of this project will be discussed in advance with the instructor.

Public Reading (10%)

During the Week of Special Academic Events, students will present one of their compositions in a public reading open to the entire Umbra community. Students will learn and strengthen skills and strategies for effective reading in public in the workshop with Mario Pirovano.

Written Work Guidelines

It is important that students leave sufficient time for DEVISING AN OUTLINE, THE WRITING PROCESS (FIRST DRAFT and AT LEAST ONE REVISION), and - equally important - PROOFREADING their work. Reading their own work aloud while someone listens, or asking someone to read their work, are effective means of "quality control". Simply performing a spell-check is not enough to ensure that students' work is well organized and well written.

All written work must be double spaced with 2.54cm (1 inch) margins on all sides and be set in 12 pt. Times New Roman font.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is **mandatory**. Students are allowed two "free" absences, which do not need to be justified. Each additional absence, unless for a very serious reason, will lower the students' grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. It is also the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class. Furthermore, times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important for student performance in class. Missing a mandatory field trip, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to the professor and Umbra Academic Director in a timely manner, will lower students' final grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Academic Integrity

All forms of **cheating** (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and **plagiarism** (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate **respect** for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that **cell phones** must be turned off before the beginning of each class. **Computers and other electronic devices** cannot be used during class lectures and discussions.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Introduction to the course. Presentation of the syllabus.

In-class workshop. Sensuous gifts.

Readings

Dante, *Paradise XI*, 428-432.

WEEK 2

Literary walk #1. On Dante's Footsteps: From Porta Sole to Porta Sant'Angelo.

The importance of liminalia. The epistolary novel.

Readings

Foscolo, U., *Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis*, 1-59 (selected letters).

Work Due

Composition #1

WEEK 3

Literature, Monuments and Memory.

Readings

Foscolo, U., *Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis*, 67-79.

Foscolo, U., *Of Tombs*, 145-153.

Literary walk #2. The Monumental Cemetery of Perugia.

WEEK 4

Fictional Frameworks and Symbolism of Names.

Readings

Manzoni, A., *The Betrothed*, 19-75.

Siena and the Palio.

Readings

Selected excerpts from the book *Visioni di Palio*.

Work Due

Composition #2

SIENA FIELD TRIP

WEEK 5

Capturing the spirit of a place. In-class workshop.

Novels vs Short Stories.

Readings

Pirandello, L., *A Characters' Tragedy*, 145-157; *The Train Whistled*, 99-105; *The Wheelbarrow*, 117-123; *Escape*, 125-129.

Work Due

Composition #3

WEEK 6

Short Stories: Past, Present, and Future.

Readings

Verga, G., *The She-Wolf*, 22-26; *Freedom*, 208-214.

Milani, M., *Ice Cream*, 102-106.

Mizzau, M., *Rita's Trip*, 107-110; *The Salt for Boiling Water*, 111-115.

In-class reading and discussion of your short stories.

Work Due

Composition #4

WEEK 7

Creative non-fiction. Writing about personal experiences.

Readings

Severgnini, B., *An Italian in America*, 33-49; 71-89; 93-96.

In-class workshop. Americans in Italy.

Work Due

Composition #5

SEMESTER BREAK

WEEK 8

The Power of the Writer (and of the Readers).

Readings

Saviano, R., *Gomorra*, 3-37; 282-301.

Ognissanti – Umbra Closed

WEEK 9

The art of re-creating stories.

Readings

Saviano, R., *Beauty and the Inferno*, 3-16; 34-37; 71-90.

In-class workshop. Heroes.

Work Due

Composition #6

WEEK 10

Writing about History. Historical Fiction and Non-Fiction.

Readings

Simonetta, M., *The Montefeltro's Conspiracy*, 105-122; 207-11; 213-15.

The Italian Risorgimento and the Massacre of June 20th.
Analysis of Documents and Video Clips.

Readings

Selected documents on the facts of June 20th, 1859.

WEEK 11

Literary walk #3. Borgo XX Giugno.

In-class workshop. Sharing & Shaping Ideas.

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WEEK 12

In-class reading and discussion of June 20th compositions.

Work Due Composition #7

Dario Fo and the art of Storytelling.

Work Due
Dario Fo, *Francis the Holy Jester*, trad. M. Pirovano.

WEEK 13

WORKSHOP WITH MARIO PIROVANO (1).

Work Due Students' Portfolio.

WORKSHOP WITH MARIO PIROVANO (2).

Work Due Final Project

WEEK OF FINAL EXAMS AND SPECIAL ACADEMIC EVENTS

The Final Exam and Special Academic Events Calendar will be provided later in the semester.