



FLM-ITAL 305 Modern Italian Cinema

Course Syllabus

Spring Semester 2027

Instructor: Professor Teresa Cutler-Broyles

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Mondays, 4pm until roughly 7pm, in the Umbra Cinema Room (Priori Hub)

Office Hours: by appointment after a class or via Zoom (see Moodle site)

Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: \$60

Course Description

Italian film has been vital to the history of film around the world for decades, as well as being important in its own right. From Neorealism just after WW2 to Fellini in the 1960s to current modern Italian filmmakers, Italian film is unique and exciting. In just the last few years a number of rising stars in Italian film-making are receiving recognition across the industry. In short, Italian filmmakers are fast-becoming some of the world-wide film industry's most important voices. And the number of filmmakers from Italy today is extensive.

In our brand new five-week class our focus will be on modern films after an initial foray into Italian film history. Over the course of the class we'll watch, discuss and analyze ten films, relating them to Italian culture and identity and applying film theory and criticism. We will view films produced and set in various regions throughout the country of Italy.

On two trips to the local art-film theater we'll watch American films in English with Italian subtitles, (or try the Italian films on alternate screens). Our big field trip will be to the movie production studios Cinecittà in Rome to tour the site where many important Italian films were created.

Over the course of these five weeks, you will not only learn about Italian film yesterday and today, but you will learn to write professional, publishable film analyses as you integrate the knowledge of context—the country of Italy and its history and people—into your work.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *identify* distinct eras of Italian film history, filmmaking, directors and subject matter;
- *identify* mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing and sound as distinct and important elements of filmmaking;
- *recognize* regional subject matter and identity in films from various regions;
- *analyze* Italian films using film theory and spectator theory;
- *produce* written film analyses as distinct from film reviews and know how to tell the difference.

Course Materials

Readings

The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments. Readings will be drawn from the books below and film scholarship. This list is a recommended list for further study.

- Stam, Robert. *Film Theory: An Introduction*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000.
- Turner, Graeme. *Film as Social Practice*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Barsam, Richard and Monahan, Dave. *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*. Seventh Edition. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2021.
- Staiger, Janet. *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Edwards, Matthew. *Bloodstained Narratives: The Giallo Film in Italy and Abroad*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2023.
- Cottino-Jones, M. *Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- O'Rawe, Catherine. *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Bondanella, Peter. *A History of Italian Cinema*. 2nd Edition. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
- Brunetta, Gian Piero. *The History of Italian Cinema: A Guide to Italian Film from Its Origins to the Twenty-First Century*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Assessment

Attendance	15%
Participation Journal	10%
Presentation	35%
Final Paper	40%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. 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)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (15%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. If you attend all the meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Participation (10%)

Participation is defined as in-class discussion about the films and the theories and concepts from the readings, along with keeping a course journal.

Presentation (35%)

Guidelines will be provided on Moodle.

Final Paper (40%)

Guidelines will be provided on Moodle.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero. As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. All students are allowed **2 unexcused absences**, which do not need to be justified. It is the student's responsibility to keep them in case of real necessity. i.e., sickness or any other unforeseen inconvenience that may prevent students from being in class. More than 2 absences will affect your final grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences (6 or more) may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness includes: death in immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled. Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time (no more than five minutes) to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

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.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Laptop & 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. As a general rule, the consumption of food in the classroom is not permitted. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the professor for specific cases, such as food tastings integral to the course content. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices (e.g., ear buds) cannot be used during class lectures and discussions, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation. This policy also applies to earbuds and headsets.

As an instructor and as a person, I am dependent on both my computer and my telephone. That said: An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, I have a physical notebook policy: I ask you to leave your computers in your bags and phones in your pockets and use a regular notebook. There are four exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if you're using a tablet to take notes, 3) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; or 4) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1 - JAN 19-23

Introduction to Modern Italian Film – Setting the Stage

What does “modern” Italian Cinema even look like? We will discuss that as well as introduce elements of film such as mise-en-scene and cinematography and discuss their relevance to storytelling in film. We discuss Italian film history briefly including its silent film industry, Italian NeoRealism, and its waxing and waning on the filmmaking world stage. We note that the first two films in this class are seminal films in Italian film history and the world.

Beginning discussion of quintessential Italian film genres and Italian film history

Film: *Ladri di Biciclette* (1948) directed by Vittorio de Sica

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

- “Introductions: Describing NeoRealism,” Mark Shiel, *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City*, 2006, pp. 1-16.

WEEK 2 - JAN 26-30

Continuing discussion of Italian film genres and Italian film history.

Begin discussing film production studios – the history of Cinecittà’. The importance of Federico Fellini will be discussed. Surrealism will be discussed.

Film: *La Dolce Vita* (1960) directed by Federico Fellini

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

Required:

- “La Dolce Vita: the Art Film Spectacular,” Peter Bondanella, *The Films of Federico Fellini*, 2002, pp. 65-81

Optional:

- “Federico Fellini: A Life in Cinema,” Peter Bondanella, *The Films of Federico Fellini*, 2002.
 - Fellini’s life, background, beliefs and works.

WEEK 3 - FEB 2-6

Genre - Commedia all’italiana

Continued discussion of Italian film history and genres, focusing this week on the genres of comedy, its importance and its impact on Italian film styles in general. Specific focus this week on commedia all’italiana yesterday and “today” (1992).

Film: *Divorzio all’italiana* (1961) directed by Pietro Germi

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

Required:

- <https://italysegreta.com/a-short-guide-to-the-film-genre-commedia-allitaliana/> (two pages)
- “From Arlecchino to Wertmüller: modern Italian archetypes in the commedia all’italiana,” Georgia Lawrence-Doyle, 2017, pp. 275-287.

Optional:

- “The Gendering of Space in Three films by Antonio Pietrangeli,” Natalie Fullwood, *Italian Studies* Vol. 65, March 2010.

WEEK 4 - FEB 9-13

Genre - Spaghetti Western

Continued discussion of Italian film history, focusing this week on the genre of spaghetti western, its importance and its impact on Italian film styles in general.

Film: *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* (1966) directed by Sergio Leone

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

- “Third Cinema Meets the Spaghetti Western,” Christopher Robe, 2014, pp. 163-173.
- “In Praise of Da Pasta: The Subversive Sadism of the Spaghetti Western,” J. Hoberman, *Film Comment*, (2012, pp. 38-43.

WEEK 5 - FEB 16-20

War and Political Issues / Political Cinema

What is Political Cinema and why is it important in the history of Italian Film?

Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) directed by Gillo Pontecorvo

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

Required:

- “What Am I Doing in the Middle of the Revolution? Ennio Morricone and *The Battle of Algiers*,” Lily Saint in *1968 and Global Cinema*, Ed Gerhardt and Saljoughi, 2018, pp. 43-55.
- “Footprints of Fanon in Gilo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* and Semeben Ousamne’s *Xala*,” Haidar Eid and Khaled Ghazel, *English in Africa*, Vol 35, No. 2, Oct. 2008, pp. 151-155.

Optional:

- “Franz Fanon’s Enduring Legacy,” Pankaj Mishra, November 29, 2021.
- “To Veil or to Unveil: The Dilemma of Feminism in the Algerian Anti-Colonialist Struggle,” Wenqin Zhang, September 2023.

WEEK 6 - FEB 23-27

Political Cinema in Italy, Continued

Film: *Mediterraneo* (1991) directed by Gabriele Salvatores

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

- “Italy’s landscapes of loss: historical mourning and the dialectical image in *Cinema Paradiso*, *Mediterráneo* and *Il Postino*,” Rosalind Galt, *Screen 43:2 Summer*, 2002, pp. 158-173

Mar 2-6 Spring Semester Break - No class

WEEK 7 - MAR 9-13

Politics, Personal Choice and Cinema

Playing with fire. How Pier Paolo Pasolini and his political activism, his personal life, and the history of Italy all came together.

Film: *The Decameron* (1971) directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

- “Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Il Decameron/The Decameron*, Trevor Graham, *Framework: The Journal of Cinema & Media*, Spring 2023, pp. 84-90.
- “Pier Paolo Pasolini: The Bravest and Boldest Italian Director,” Erin Dalton, 2025, pp. 2-5.

WEEK 8 - MAR 16-20

Renaissance Man/Filming the Stage

Franco Zeffirelli, the man and the filmmaker. We will discuss Zeffirelli’s connection to the film industry, Italian opera, Shakespeare, and more.

Film: *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) directed by Franco Zeffirelli

Clips: *La Traviata* (1982) directed by Franco Zeffirelli

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

Required:

- Quick biography – two pages
- “Zeffirelli’s *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare for the Sixties,” Sarah M. Deats, *Studies in Popular Culture*, 1983, Vol. 6 (1983), pp. 60-67.
- Watch these clips:
 - a. *Aida* at the Arena in Verona (2 ½ minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1u0NcfPeBQ>
 - b. *Carmen*, Arena in Verona (3 ½ minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOR9rZblt24>
 - c. *Turandot*, Arena in Verona (1 ½ minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3V-VMI6mJFg>

Optional:

- “Shakespeare in the Cinema: A Film Directors' Symposium,” *Cinéaste*, 1998, Vol. 24, No. 1
- “The Maestro Franco Zeffirelli,” Longer Zeffirelli biography from the *Fondazione Zeffirelli Onlus*

Field trip Mar 21 to the Franco Zeffirelli Museum in Florence

WEEK 9 - MAR 23-27

Updating Italian Comedy/Light-hearted Themes

Discussion of the ongoing influence and impact of Italian comedy. How is the type of comedy in today’s film different from earlier types? What about Wertmüller’s roots in earlier comedy?

Film: *Ciao, Professore!* (1992) directed by Lina Wertmüller

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

Required:

- “Laughter in the Dark: The Black Comedy of Lina Wertmüller,” Darragh O’Donoghue, *Cinéaste*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (FALL 2018), pp. 15-21.
- “Lina Wertmüller: The Seduction of Lina,” Lorenzo Cibrario, “Culture/Cinema,” 3 pgs.
- Review week 3 reading “From Arlecchino to Wertmüller: modern Italian archetypes in the commedia all’italiana,” Georgia Lawrence-Doyle, 2017.

Optional:

- Review and Recap of *Ciao, Professore*
- NYTimes Review of *Ciao, Professore*

WEEK 10 MAR 30-APR 3

Comedy/Narratives of Identity

Continued discussion of comedy, and themes of identity is introduced

Film: *Pane e Tulipani* (2000) directed by Silvio Soldini

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

- “Rethinking Identity in the cinema of Silvio Soldini,” Bernadette Luciano, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 2018, pp. 341-350.

WEEK 11 - NO CLASS

Week 11 - Pasquetta Holiday - No class Apr 6

WEEK 12 - APR 13-17

Narratives of Identity/Italian Identities & Directors

Identity(politics/social commentary/cultural critiques) in contemporary Italian Cinema. What narratives of identity are introduced by Italian filmmakers in their films? Specific to this week what does it mean to be an “Italian” filmmaker? Who can claim that title? Where else do we find Italian filmmakers? What are they making films about?

Film: *Le Fate ignoranti* (2001) directed by Ferzan Özpetek

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

- “Filming Coming Communities: Ferzan Ozpetek’s *Le Fate Ignoranti*,” Luca Caminti, *Italica*, Winter, Vol. 85. No. 4 (2008), pp. 455-463.

WEEK 13 - APR 20-24

The Future and the Past of Italian Film

Continued discussion of narratives of identity in Italian films. Can we watch films made today for echoes of Italian identity in the past? Continued discussion about current Italian filmmakers, who they are, what they are filming, and the future of Italian film.

Film: *La grande bellezza* (2013) directed by Paolo Sorrentino

Readings for the week - must be done before class:

- “The ‘primal scene’: Memory, redemption and ‘woman’ in the films of Paolo Sorrentino, Russell Kilbourn, *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies*, Vol 7. No. 3 (2109), pp. 377-391.

5-minute Presentations of final projects time TBD

Final papers to me by date TBD