



## FLM/ITAL 305: Modern Italian Cinema

### Course Syllabus Summer Session I – 2026

**Instructor:** Prof. Teresa Cutler-Broyles

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 45

**Prerequisites:** none

**Class Meeting Days & Time:** Tuesday and Thursday, 9.15am - 12.45pm

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

**Course Type:** Standard Course

**Course Fee:** USD\$100

#### 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 Franco Zeffirelli museum in Florence..

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	25%
Presentation	30%
Final Paper	30%

### Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note assignment due dates. No alternative due 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
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
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 important part of this course. You have one “sick day,” per Institute policy. As long as you are at all the other meetings, you will receive the full 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

*Participation (25%)*

Participation is defined as in-class discussion about the films and the theories and concepts from the readings.

*Presentation (30%)*

Guidelines will be provided.

*Final Paper (30%)*

Guidelines will be provided.

**Extension & Submitting Late Work**

Each student is allowed **one** extension of 24 hours over the entire summer session. 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 **half off**. After that, work submitted after a deadline will receive a **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. The first absence per course due to illness will be considered an excused "sick day" and does not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student's final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

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 ¾ of 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.

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.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

**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 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. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices cannot be used during class lectures and discussions, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation.

**No computers or cell phones will be allowed in class during the film. Zero-tolerance policy.** As for note-taking, please see me to discuss your reasons for using a computer instead of taking notes by hand; consider that note-taking by hand is more effective, and that computers disrupt your attention and those around you.

## Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

### WEEK 1

#### Introduction to Modern Italian Film – setting the stage/what does “modern” Italian Cinema even look like?

May 19: What does “modern” mean in this context? 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.

We will view one film and discuss.

**Film: *Bicycle Thieves*** (1948)

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

May 21: Continuing discussion of the above concepts and their application. Begin discussing film production – Cinecittà’ and others.

**Film: *La Dolce Vita*** (1960)

- Required: “La Dolce Vita: the Art Film Spectacular,” Peter Bondanella, *The Films of Federico Fellini*, 2002.
- Optional: “Federico Fellini: A Life in Cinema,” Peter Bondanella, *The Films of Federico Fellini*, 2002.

### WEEK 2

#### Modern Italian Film – War and Political Issues / Political Cinema movement

May 26: What is Political Cinema and why is it important in the history of Italian Film? Why are we skipping a number of years in Italian film history? Discuss the gaps in Italian film production on the world stage.

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

- Required: “Footprints of Fanon in Gillo Pontecorvo's "The Battle of Algiers" and Sembene Ousamne's “Xala,” Haidar Eid and Khaled Ghazel in *English in Africa*, 2008.
- Optional: “To Veil Or To Unveil: The Dilemma Of Feminism In The Algerian Anti-Colonialist Struggle,” Wenqin Zhang

May 28: Continue to discuss the above themes.

**Film: *Mediterraneo*** (1991)

- “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.

### WEEK 3

#### Comedy and Tragedy

June 2: Discussion of the era, tradition and impact of Italian comedy, to include 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

- Required: <https://italysegreta.com/a-short-guide-to-the-film-genre-commedia-allitaliana/>
- Required: “Laughter in the Dark: The Black Comedy of Lina Wertmüller,” Darragh

O'Donoghue, *Cineaste*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (FALL 2018).

- Optional: "Lina Wertmüller: The Seduction Of Lina," Lorenzo Cibrario, *Culture/Cinema*, Jan 22 (yr?).

June 4: Shakespeare in Film/Adaptations/Zeffirelli. Discuss the connections between film and opera in Zeffirelli's work.

**Film: *Romeo and Juliet***

Clips from Zeffirelli's operas

- "Shakespeare in the Cinema: A Film Directors' Symposium," *Cineaste*, Vol 24, No 1 (1998)

**Friday, June 5 - Mandatory field trip to the Franco Zeffirelli museum in Florence. Details will be provided.**

**Readings to do before we go to museum**

- "The Maestro Franco Zeffirelli," The Fondazione Zeffirelli Onlus

**WEEK 4**

**Narratives of Identity in Film / Italian Identities & Directors**

June 9: Identity(politics/social commentary/cultural critiques) in contemporary Italian Cinema. What narratives of identity are introduced by Italian filmmakers in their films?

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

- "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).

June 11: 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: *Fate ignoranti*** (2001) directed by Ferzan Özpetek

- "Filming Coming Communities: Ferzan Ozpetek's *Le Fate Ignoranti*," Luca Caminti, *Italica*, Winter, Vol. 85. No. 4 (2008).

**Extra Credit** weekend film - *Gloria* (2024) and/or *Primavera* (2025)

**WEEK 5**

**Narratives of Identity in Film /**

June 16: Continued discussion about current Italian filmmakers, who they are, what they are filming, and the future of Italian film.

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

- "Rethinking Identity in the cinema of Silvio Soldini," Bernadette Luciano, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 2018.

June 18:

**Presentation of final projects**

**Due Date Final Assignment:** Final paper due to me by June 19.

**More extraa credit films:** read one or both of these, watch the film, write a short response.

- <https://italysegrete.com/cinecitta-romes-factory-of-cinematic-dreams/>
- <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/studio-cinecitta-italys-greatest-film-studio/>
- TBD about Spaghetti Westerns

**Films:**

*Lazzaro Felice*

*The Good, The Bad, The Ugly*

*Gloria*

*Primavera*

Readings to go with them (will be updated)

- “Before the Liberation, and After: Alice Rohrwacher’s Happy as Lazzaro,” Karsten Visarius, *Crosscurrents* Vol. 42, No. 4, 2022.
- “A Different Spirituality: On Lazzaro’s symbolic potency,” Roberto Interdonato, *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies*, Vol. 11, No 1 (2023).
- <https://www.collater.al/en/alice-rohrwacher-cinema-collyrium/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/apr/03/happy-as-lazzaro-review-alice-rohrwacher-adriano-tardiolo-nicoletta-braschi>