Course Description

“Around 1930, when Fascism seemed to be ‘the hope for the world,’ some young Italians instead discovered through its literature America, a thoughtful and barbaric America, happy and belligerent, lascivious, fertile, heavy with the past of the whole world, and also young, innocent.”

— Cesare Pavese, Saggi letterari (1946)

This course examines cultural exchange between Italy and North America from the Renaissance to the present. In tackling cultural representations from epic poetry to film, we will piece together a transhistorical mosaic of artistic and material products of exchange and explore how Italians of different eras grappled with the North American continent, its inhabitants, and its many facets of influence. As students analyze canonical works of film and literature, they will develop new perspectives on Italian and American cultural histories. Throughout, we will question how cultural contact and exchange shapes our own understanding of national identity.

We begin with an introduction to theories of how culture enacts the political concerns of the societies that produce it, and we will consider how Italy’s diaspora has affected its conception of itself. Equipped with these analytical tools, we will examine moments of exchange from 1492 to the present and explore North America’s role as artistic inspiration, as cultural and political influence, and even as a source of existential anxiety. For example, how did European discovery of a “new” continent impact Renaissance authors like Ariosto and Tasso and destabilize the center of their known world? How did American literature like Hemingway and Steinbeck offer 20th-century Italian writers new possibilities of literary expression and political resistance? How did Italian immigrants in the U.S. negotiate their hybrid identities? We will consider literature of travel in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as Italians documented their journeys to North America in poetry and prose. We will investigate how Fascism, war and recovery—as well as the physical presence of American soldiers on Italian soil—shifted the political and social stakes of this relationship. We will explore American cultural influence throughout the increasingly globalized 20th century, as U.S. models permeated Italian politics, film, television, music, and food, and pop singers teased teenagers...
who tried to “fa’ l’americano” (“act American”). We will conclude with the exchange between Italy and the U.S. in the context of globalization, with discussions of food, music, and tourism. Throughout the course, we will take advantage of our location in New York City, including an excursion to the Italian American Museum.

**Course Objectives**
You will gain a fuller understanding of Italian history and culture. You will learn how to analyze cultural texts and how they narrate their socio-historical moment, and in the process you will develop your capacity for critical listening, reading, thinking, and writing, as well as aesthetic and historical interpretation and evaluation. You will hone your skills conducting research and engaging with primary and secondary sources, as well as your ability to clearly express your analysis in oral and written projects. Finally, you will be able to apply your critical expertise through the completion of a final research paper.

**Materials**
All required and supplementary reading materials will be provided digitally on NYU Classes. Each text can be found in the bibliography of this syllabus. You are welcome to purchase copies of the texts, should you desire. Full films are on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center in Bobst Library or streaming through Kanopy (accessed through the Bobst Library catalog).

**Teaching Strategies**
This course will have a mix of lecture and active learning exercises to better promote a lively class discussion, and as such it relies on you to help it succeed. I will provide historical context and theoretical structure for each topic, so that you will feel better prepared to analyze our course materials. In addition to my lecture, we will actively engage with primary and secondary sources through student-led presentations, frequent in-class and at-home writing exercises, and group work. These frequent activities discussing and critiquing sources will better prepare you to conduct your own research and analysis in the final project. Assessments are designed not to prove your memorization of information but to demonstrate your ability to engage with the material and articulate your own ideas about it.

**Assessment**
Your grade for the course is composed of five elements: participation, in the form of active engagement during seminar sessions (for which attendance is an implicit requirement); four micro-assignments and in-class activities; and three papers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Each class</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-assignments and in-class</td>
<td>Choose 4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First paper (3 pages)</td>
<td>Feb. 21</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second paper (5 pages)</td>
<td>April 4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final research paper (8-10 pages)</td>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Beyond a measure of how much you speak in class, your **participation** grade will depend on criteria such as material preparedness, completed reading, collaborative work, and meaningful contributions to the class. Please come to class ready to engage.
  - **Please note**: Attendance is mandatory and is part of your participation grade. *More than one absence will begin to affect your participation grade.* If you will miss class to observe religious holidays, please notify me in advance.
- In addition to quizzes and periodic in-class assignments, you will complete **micro-assignments** in two categories, *short papers* and *discussion prompts*.
  - **Two short response papers** should express your thoughts on some aspect of the reading for that week. They should be 1-2 pages long.
Discussion prompts will facilitate our in-class conversations. You will have the opportunity to select two topics for which to prepare a one-paragraph (8 sentences), written discussion prompt. You are free to choose the focus, but it must engage with the materials assigned for that week and conclude with two discussion questions that you would like to pose to the class. They must be handed in in person on the day they are due; late assignments will not be accepted.

- You will write three main papers in this course. For the first two papers, a writing prompt will be given in advance, and you will have the opportunity to develop a short argument using specific examples from texts we have studied.
- For final research paper (8-10 pages), you will propose your own topic, conduct research, and workshop a draft with your classmates. The paper must develop a defined argument using supporting evidence. Papers must include at least one primary and two secondary, scholarly sources (books, articles in academic journals, etc.). You will submit in a 250-word paper proposal on April 25, which we will go over together, and we will workshop preliminary drafts in class.

Late policy: Late papers will be penalized 10% if handed in within the first 24 hours after the lecture at which they are due, and 5% for each subsequent 24 hour period after that (unless accompanied by valid documentation of illness or emergency).

Plagiarism and all other forms of academic dishonesty will be treated with the greatest severity in this course. You must cite any idea, phrase, or passage that comes from an outside source. You should familiarize yourself with the New York University policy for Academic Integrity; see http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.
Unit One: Shifting Worlds  
Week 1: Introduction  

Week 2: Discovery  
2/7 The Discovery of America (print), Galle (ca. 1600)  
Christopher Columbus, “Letter to Luis De Santangel” and “Letter to Ferdinand and Isabella” Writings (15 pp)  
Amerigo Vespucci, “Letter of Amerigo Vespucci to a Magnificent Lord,” Letters (52 pp)  
Walter Mignolo, “Putting Americas on the Map: Cartography and the Colonization of Space,” The Darker Side of the Renaissance (30 pp)

Week 3: Poetry of Destabilized Centers  
2/14 Dante, Canto 10, Inferno (6 pp)  
Ludovico Ariosto, selections from Cantos 6-8, Orlando furioso (18 pp)  
Torquato Tasso, selections from Cantos 15-16, Gerusalemme liberata (29 pp)  
Jane Tylus, “Reasoning Away Colonialism” (15 pp)  
Barbara Fuchs, “Introduction” and Ch. 1 “Truth, fictions, and the New World,” Mimesis and Empire (22 pp)

Unit Two: Immigration and Travel  
Week 4: Looking Westward  
2/21 Pascoli “Italy,” Nuovi Poemetti, (1909)  
G. A. Borghese, selections, Atlante americano (32 pp)  
Mario Soldati, selections, America primo amore (19 pp)  
Stefania Buccini, “Tradition and Revision in Eighteenth-Century Histories of the New World,” The Americas in Italian Literature and Culture, 1700-1825 (20 pp)

~First paper due in class~

Week 5: Moving Westward  
2/28 Italian migration museum, extracts from letters (3 pp)  
John Fante, selections, Wait Until Spring, Bandini (23 pp)  
Mark Choate, selections, Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad (25 pp)

~Class trip to Little Italy and the Italian American Museum~

Unit Three: Fascism and Literature as Resistance  
Week 6: Fascism and the United States  
3/7 Victoria de Grazia, “Nationalising Women: The Competition Between Fascist and Commercial Cultural Models in Mussolini’s Italy” (21 pp)  
John Diggins, Ch. 4, Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America (15 pp)  
David Schmitz, Ch. 3, The United States and Fascist Italy (21 pp)

Week 7: American Literature as Resistance  
3/14 Cesare Pavese, “Yesterday and Today” (4 pp)  
Elio Vittorini, “American Literature: Its Origins and Present State” and “Notes on American Writers” (8 pp)  
Italo Calvino, “Hemingway and Us” (7 pp)
Lawrence G. Smith, Ch. 7 “The Peach of the World,” Cesare Pavese and America (46 pp)
Charles Leavitt, “Impegno nero: Italian intellectuals and the African-American struggle” (27 pp)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Four: World War II and Occupation</th>
<th>3/21</th>
<th><del>No Class/Spring Break</del></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 8:</strong> Prelude to World War II</td>
<td>3/28</td>
<td><strong>Week 9:</strong> World War II and American Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude to World War II</td>
<td>3/28</td>
<td>4/4 Païsà (film), Rosellini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Why We Fight</em>, I, Prelude to War (film) (1942)</td>
<td>3/28</td>
<td>“Tammurriata nera” (song), Mario and Nicolardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Holmes, “The Italian Job: Five Armies in Italy” (14 pp)</td>
<td><strong>Week 10:</strong> “Americanization” of Italy</td>
<td>4/11 Whiskey, Soda, Rock and Roll and the Reconstruction of Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/11 1948 election posters</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td><strong>Week 11:</strong> Spaghetti Cinema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Un americano a Roma</em> (film), Steno</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>4/18 <em>A Fistful of Dollars</em> (film) (1964)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tu vuò fa’ l’americano” (song), Carosone</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>Austin Fisher, Ch. 1 “Imagining America: US Influence and American Mythology in Post-War Italy,” <em>Radical Frontiers</em> (64 pp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Gundle, “The Americanization of Daily Life” (27 pp)</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td><strong>Week 12:</strong> Looking Westward, Pt. II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

~Second paper due in class~

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Five: “Americanization” of Italy</th>
<th>4/11</th>
<th><strong>Week 11:</strong> Spaghetti Cinema</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 10: Whiskey, Soda, Rock and Roll and the Reconstruction of Italy</td>
<td>4/18</td>
<td>4/18 <em>A Fistful of Dollars</em> (film) (1964)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/18</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>Austin Fisher, Ch. 1 “Imagining America: US Influence and American Mythology in Post-War Italy,” <em>Radical Frontiers</em> (64 pp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un americano a Roma (film), Steno</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td><strong>Week 12:</strong> Looking Westward, Pt. II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ara Merjian, “Everything is about to begin” (7 pp)
Alessandro Portelli, “Between Rome, Harlem, and Harlan” (8 pp)

~Final paper proposal due in class~

Unit Six: Italian Culture on the World Stage

Week 13: Musical Exchange
5/2 Vi parlo dell’America (album), Marini
Umberto Fiori, “Rock Music and Politics in Italy” (16 pp)
Simona Frasca, Italian Birds of Passage, “Introduction” and Ch. 1 (40 pp)
Joseph Sciorra, “Hip Hop from Italy and the Diaspora” (14 pp)

Week 14: Pizza, Coffee, and Tourism
5/9 Bernd Roeck, Chapter 7, “The Florence of Foreigners,” Florence 1900: The Quest for Arcadia (10 pp.)
Corrado Augias, “Introduction” and Chapter 1, “Italians as seen from the outside,” The Secrets of Italy (26 pp)
Robert Davis and Garry Marvin, Chapter 5, “Contested Ground,” Venice, the Tourist Maze (25 pp)
John Dickie, Ch. 20, “Turin, 2006,” Delizia! The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food (14 pp)
Carol Helstosky, Ch. 1, “History on a Plate” Pizza: A Global History (27 pp)
Hasia Diner, Ch. 3, “The Bread is Soft,” Hungering for America (35 pp)

~Final paper workshop in class~

~Final paper due in May 15~
Preliminary Bibliography


Columbus, Christopher. 1802. Writings of Christopher Columbus, Descriptive of the Discovery and Occupation of the New World. New York: C.L. Webster & Co.


Merjian, Ara. 2016. “Everything is About to Begin.” *Art in America*.


