

CORE-UA 762
EXPRESSIVE CULTURES
VIVA VERDI: MUSIC, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS IN ITALY FROM THE
RISORGIMENTO TO FASCISM

TUESDAY, THURSDAY 9.30-10.45
194 Mercer Street, Room 306
Professor Thomas Ertman

This course explores the rich artistic life of Italy between the defeat of Napoleon in 1814 and the consolidation of the fascists in power in the 1920's. During this time the Italian states first experiences a cultural and political "resurgence" (the *Risorgimento*) and then, in 1861, united to form a single nation, the new Kingdom of Italy. Although the country entered World War I on the side of the Allies and hence belonged to the victors in that conflict, it fell into a severe crisis after the war's end that culminated in the appointment of Benito Mussolini as prime minister in October 1922.

Italy during the course of this century was above all the home of opera, and we will explore both the economic side of the "opera industry" and the most important works of the peninsula's greatest composers of the day: Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Puccini and above all Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), the most dominant artistic figure in 19th century Italy. We will follow Verdi's stylistic development from the "galley years" of the 1840's through the late masterpieces as well as examine the impact of Italian politics on his operas. The readings for the course will be drawn from the great works of literature of and about 19th and 20th century Italy, beginning with the Frenchman Henri Beyle (Stendhal)'s *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839), an unmatched portrayal of love and politics during the early *Risorgimento*, and Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, a novelistic treatment of Italian unification as experienced by a great southern aristocrat. We will also analyze leading literary examples of both realism (Verga's stories) and decadence (D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere*) before turning to the masterpieces of two modernist writers of the early 20th century, Italo Svevo and Luigi Pirandello. The last weeks of the course will examine the futurist (Martinetti, Boccioni) movement in the visual arts and the relationship of these and other artists to fascism. Three films (Visconti's *Senso* and *Il Gattopardo* and Bertolucci's *Il Conformista*) relevant to the course will be presented in evening showings. Attendance is mandatory at **ONE** of the three film showings.

Course requirements: The requirements of this course are: 1) Weekly attendance and participation in recitation sections (20% of grade). 2) **Eight** weekly two-page response papers (double-spaced, standard font and margins) on something that **inspired or provoked you** in the week's reading, plus **one paper each** on your responses **to one of the films and to a live performance of an Italian opera at the Metropolitan Opera**, for a total of **ten** response papers. They are to be handed in to your preceptor **in class** each Thursday. The papers will be graded check, check plus or check minus (25% of grade). 3) An in-class midterm on **March 24** (25% of grade). 4) A one hour fifty minute final exam on **May 14, 8 to 9.50am** (30% of grade).

PLEASE NOTE: THE USE OF COMPUTERS, IPHONES, IPODS OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING LECTURE IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

WEEK I

Lecture Topics

1. (Jan. 27) Introduction: The Italian Peninsula before and after Napoleon
2. (Jan. 29) Stendhal: Italy's Leading Foreign Observer

Required Reading

Stendhal, *The Charterhouse of Parma* [1839] (Modern Library edition), pp. 3- 125.

WEEK II

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 3) The "Opera Industry" in early 19th Century Italy
2. (Feb. 5) Gioacchino Rossini, Europe's Most Popular Composer

Required Reading

Stendhal, *Charterhouse of Parma*, pp. 126-252.

WEEK III

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 10) The Italian *Risorgimento* in Culture and Politics I
2. (Feb. 12) Bel Canto Opera: Vincenzo Bellini

Required Reading

Stendhal, *Charterhouse of Parma*, pp. 253-373.

WEEK IV

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 17) Bel Canto Opera: Gaetano Donizetti
2. (Feb. 19) Stendhal's Italy: *The Charterhouse of Parma*

Required Reading

Stendhal, *Charterhouse of Parma*, pp. 374-495.

WEEK V

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 24) The Italian Risorgimento in Culture and Politics II

February 24, 6.20pm, 194 Mercer (Room 307): Visconti's *Senso* (1954)

2. (Feb. 26) Giuseppe Verdi and Politics during the "Galley Years"

Required Reading

Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard* (Pantheon Edition), pp. 3-134.

WEEK VI

Lecture Topics

1. (March 3) Verdi's Breakthrough to International Success: *Rigoletto*, *Trovatore*, *Traviata*
2. (March 5) Italy on the Eve of Unification: Lampedusa's *The Leopard*

Required Reading

Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, pp. 135-280.

WEEK VII

Lecture Topics

1. (Mar. 10) The Political Unification of Italy

March 10, 6.20pm, 194 Mercer (Room 307): Visconti's *Il Gattopardo* (1963)

2. (Mar. 12) "Making Italians:" Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Required Reading

Giovanni Verga, *Cavalleria Rusticana and other Stories* [1874-1881] (Penguin Edition), pp. 1-109.

NO CLASSES MARCH 17 AND 19 (SPRING BREAK)

WEEK VIII

Lecture Topics

1. (Mar. 24) **IN-CLASS MIDTERM**
2. (Mar. 26) Artists and Italian Unification

Required Reading

Gabrielle D'Annunzio, *Pleasure* [1889] (Penguin Edition), pp. 5-120.

WEEK IX

Lecture Topics

1. (March 31) Late Verdi

March 31, 6.20pm, 194 Mercer (Room 307): Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1889)

2. (April 2) *Verismo* in Music: Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Required Reading

D'Annunzio, *Pleasure*, pp. 121-206.

WEEK X

Lecture Topics

1. (April 7) Italian Politics in the Age of Depretis, Crispi and Giolitti: Liberalism and Corruption
2. (April 9) Sex, Class and Gender in D'Annunzio's "Decadant" Novel *Il Piacere (Pleasure)*

Required Reading

D'Annunzio, *Pleasure*, pp. 207-328.

WEEK XI

Lecture Topics

1. (April 14) Aron Ettore Schmitz (Italo Svevo) and the Problem of the Italian Diaspora
2. (April 16) A New Verdi? The Operas of Giacomo Puccini

Required Reading

Italo Svevo, *Zeno's Conscience* [1923] (Vintage or Everyman edition) pp. 3-155.

WEEK XII

Lecture Topics

1. (April 21) Martinetti and the Radical Challenge of Futurism in the Visual Arts
2. (April 23) Italian Imperialism and the Arts

Required Reading

Svevo, *Zeno's Conscience*, pp. 156-271.

WEEK XIII

Lecture Topics

1. (April 30) Italy and the First World War
2. (May 2) A Modernist Masterpiece? Svevo's *Conscienza di Zeno*

Required Reading

Svevo, *Zeno's Conscience*, pp. 374-495.

WEEK XIV

Lecture Topics

1. (May 5) The Crisis of Post-War Italy and the Triumph of Mussolini

May 5, 6.20pm, 194 Mercer (Room 307): Bertolucci's *Il Conformista* (1970)

2. (May 7) Fascism and Modernism: Luigi Pirandello

Required Reading

Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author and Other Plays* (Penguin edition), pp. 1-136.

FINAL EXAM on Thursday, May 14 from 8 to 9.50am in our classroom (194 Mercer, Room 306)