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 four 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 on Thursday. The papers will be graded check, check plus or check minus (25% of grade). 3) An in-class midterm on March 22 (25% of grade). 4) A one hour fifty minute final exam on TUESDAY, MAY 17 FROM 2-3:50 (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. 26) Course Introduction

2. (Jan. 28) The Italian Peninsula before and after Napoleon
Required Reading


**WEEK II**

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 2) The “Opera Industry” in early 19th Century Italy

2. (Feb. 4) Gioacchino Rossini, Europe’s Most Popular Composer

Required Reading


**WEEK III**

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 9) The Italian *Risorgimento* in Culture and Politics I

2. (Feb. 11) Bel Canto Opera: Gaetano Donizetti
Required Reading


**WEEK IV**

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 16) Bel Canto Opera: Vincenzo Bellini

2. (Feb. 18) Stendhal’s Italy: *The Charterhouse of Parma*

Required Reading


**WEEK V**

Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 23) The Italian Risorgimento in Culture and Politics II

2. (Feb. 25) Giuseppe Verdi and Politics during the “Galley Years”

**February 23, 6.20pm, Room TBA: Visconti’s Senso (1954)**
Required Reading


**WEEK VI**

Lecture Topics

1. (March 1) Verdi’s Breakthrough to International Success: *Rigoletto, Trovatore, Traviata*

   March 1, 6.20pm, Room TBA: Visconti’s *Il Gattopardo* (1963)

2. (March 3) Italy on the Eve of Unification: Lampedusa’s *The Leopard*

Required Reading


**WEEK VII**
Lecture Topics

1. (Mar. 8) The Political Unification of Italy

2. (Mar. 10) “Making Italians:” The Cultural and Economic Challenges of Unification

Required Reading


NO CLASSES MARCH 15 AND 17 (SPRING BREAK)

WEEK VIII

Lecture Topics

1. (Mar. 22) **IN-CLASS MIDTERM**

2. (Mar. 24) Verdi and Italian Unification

Required Reading
WEEK IX

Lecture Topics

1. (March 29) Verdi in the New Italy

2. (March 31) *Verismo* in Literature and in Music: Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Required Reading


WEEK X

Lecture Topics

1. (April 5) Italian Politics in the Age of Depretis and Crispi

April 5, 6.20pm, Room TBA: Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1889)

2. (April 7) Sex, Class and Gender in D’Annunzio’s “Decadent” Novel *Il Piacere (Pleasure)*
Required Reading


WEEK XI

Lecture Topics

1. (April 12) Verdi’s Final Operas *Otello* and *Falstaff*

2. (April 14) A New Verdi? The Opera of Giacomo Puccini

Required Reading


WEEK XII

Lecture Topics

1. (April 19) Italian Politics in the Age of Giolitti: Liberalism and Corruption

2. (April 21) Martinetti and the Radical Challenge of Futurism in the Visual Arts
Required Reading


**WEEK XIII**

Lecture Topics

1. (April 26) Italy and the First World War

2. (April 28) A Modernist Masterpiece? Svevo’s *Conscienza di Zeno*  

Required Reading


**WEEK XIV**

Lecture Topics

1. (May 3) The Crisis of Post-War Italy and the Triumph of Mussolini

May 3, 6.20pm, Room TBA: Bertolucci’s *Il Conformista* (1970)
2. (May 5) Fascism and the Arts: Luigi Pirandello

Required Reading


FINAL EXAM on TUESDAY, MAY 17 from 2 to 3:50 IN OUR CLASSROOM (SILVER 520)