Cultures and contexts: Italy in global context

Fortunato Depero, *Grattacieli e tunnel (Skyscrapers and Tunnels)* (1930) tempera on cardboard 68 x 102 cm (27 x 40") MART Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto

Fall 2020

Department of Italian Studies

Instructor: David Forgacs
Recitation leaders: Serena Moscardelli, Costanza Paolillo
Cultures and contexts: Italy in global context

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:45pm, starting Thursday September 3

Overview of course

Almost anything one might think of as typically Italian, from pasta to pizza, neorealism to Sophia Loren, Armani to the mafia, has been made or remodeled by contact and exchange with the world beyond Italy. This does not mean that they are “not really” Italian. They are, but what has made them “really Italian” have been circuits of international travel and trade and the accompanying processes of naming and comparison by which non-Italians have defined certain things as typically Italian and Italians have seen themselves mirrored in those definitions, modified them, or branded and marketed themselves through them.

This course looks closely at how all this works. Starting with an overview of ideas of Italy from classical antiquity to the eighteenth century, it moves to an analysis of travel to and within Italy, the Futurist assault on Italy's cultural heritage, the internationalization of Italian food, drink, music and fashion, and the Italian film and television industries in a global system. It examines how movements of people, both out of and into Italy, have involved a remaking of collective identities. It turns, lastly, to international relations and changing perceptions of Italy on the world stage as a result of foreign policies, wars, entry into the European Union and subsequent developments within the EU. Throughout the course students will be invited to reflect critically on how Italy’s culture, political identity and icons have been produced over time, and to consider how far similar process are at work in other nations, including their own.

Italy has always interacted with a wider world and those interactions have helped make and define it, first as a distinctive region and later as a nation. Those interactions took a distinctively modern turn in the nineteenth century. In 1824 Giacomo Leopardi remarked that Italy had become “an object of universal curiosity and travel, much more than in the past and more than any other country.” Shortly afterwards it became also an object of keen attention for foreigners sympathetic to the cause of Italian independence, partly thanks to the contacts made by Italian exiles and revolutionaries abroad. At the same time, non-Italian scholars were giving new names and a new shape to the previous centuries of Italian history. Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt’s The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy, published in German in 1860 on the eve of Italian unification, offered an account of Italy’s golden age that would be widely accepted for around a century and influenced ideas among Italians about their essential national character.

Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries foreign art lovers, artists, connoisseurs, scholars, writers and wealthy tourists descended on Florence, Venice and Rome, contributing decisively to shaping the modern character and international image of those cities. Valéry Larbaud’s fictional diarist, A. O. Barnabooth, described Florence in 1913 as a “strange American city built in the style of the Italian Renaissance”. As millions of Italians began to migrate to northern Europe, north Africa, the Americas and Australia,
new forms of transculturation and cultural exchange took place there, as well as in Italy when former emigrants returned. Industrialization and urbanization led the Futurists and some other artists to reject Italy’s cultural heritage and project their own art towards the future. When the Fascists came to power in the 1920s Mussolini’s government was widely welcomed abroad as giving Italy much-needed political stability, but this sympathy turned sour in the 1930s and ended definitively in 1940 when Mussolini joined World War Two on Hitler’s side. After 1945 Italian cinema played a key role in rehabilitating Italy’s image in the world after the disgrace of its alliance with Nazi Germany. As the postwar era unfolded, Italy became increasingly enmeshed in new international relations and political alliances that once again redefined collective perceptions of its “national identity” inside and outside the country. Since the 1980s new influxes of migrants from Africa, Asia, South America and eastern Europe have started decisively to reshape Italy’s demographic and linguistic profile. How Italian will Italy be by the middle of the twenty-first century?

Assessment and grading

The overall grade for this course is made up of four components, weighted as indicated. Students must complete all 4 components to obtain a grade.

- **Participation** (20%). Active responses and involvement during main classes and recitations.
- **Topics papers** (60%). 6 papers (2-3 pages each), each one to be submitted after the end of each topic on questions to be assigned.
- **Recitation exercises** (15%). Students are required also to write 6 one-page papers throughout the semester, responding to the weekly readings or viewing of visual material, due at recitation. Each student will also be asked to initiate the discussion of a weekly readings or viewing once in the semester through a five-minute oral presentation.
- **Final quiz** (5%). A poll of the main points covered in course.

For an explanation of the grading scale, see “Grading guidelines” in Resources folder.

**NB. Regular attendance at classes and recitations is mandatory.** If you intend to observe a religious holiday, you must notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester. If you miss a class for health reasons you need to provide a medical note. If your absence is justified by other reasons, e.g. bereavement, you must bring this to the attention of one of the recitation leaders. More than three unjustified absences will affect your grade. The fourth absence will lower your attendance grade by 5%; the fifth, by 10%; the sixth, by 15%, the seventh, by 20%. More than seven absences will earn you the grade of F (fail) for the course.

Contact us
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COURSE STRUCTURE
(For calendar dates and details of classes see pages 10-11 in this handbook)

Readings and films given in this list in abbreviated form (author, date or short title) are listed in full in the filmography and bibliography at the end of this handbook, pp. 12-16, and you consult those pages for full details. Where a text is in Italian it is marked * and an English translation or synopsis will be provided. All essential readings not easily available otherwise will be posted on the NYU Classes course site. Film and television clips are posted on the private channel for this course, called “Italy in Global Context”, on NYU Stream, to which you will be enrolled.

The first (introductory) class is on Thursday September 3 at 12:30pm EDT

TOPIC 1 (Weeks 1–3): Ideas of Italy

Week 1. Introduction to course. No preparatory reading required.

Week 2. Ideas of Italy from antiquity to the 18th century. The Risorgimento, exiles, the foreign press and literature.

Reading
Swain, 1997 (3 pages)
Petrarch, “Italia mia” (123 lines)
Machiavelli, 1988. Ch. 26, “An exhortation to liberate Italy from the barbarians” (6 pp.)
Leopardi, “All’Italia” (140 lines)
Gabaccia 2000, 45-52: “Diaspora nationalism: Italians made abroad” (7pp.)

Images to be viewed in class
Francesco Hayez, “Meditation” (1851), “The Kiss” (1859)
Federico Seneca, sketch for Baci Perugina box design (1922)

Week 3. Ideas of national character and identity. The Italian Renaissance as a Franco-Swiss production. Italy from the Grand Tour to mass tourism.

Reading
Leopardi, *Discorso (extract, 5pp.)
Burckhardt 2004 (1860), Part 2: “The development of the individual” (13pp.)
Forster 1908, Chapter 2, “In Santa Croce with no Baedeker” (14pp.)
Roeck, 2009, Chapter 7, “The Florence of Foreigners (10pp.)

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Images to be viewed in class
Francesco Hayez, “The Last Kiss of Romeo and Juliet” (1823)
Martin Rico y Ortega, “Canal in Venice” (1887)
Charles Ebert, “Church in Venice” (1913)

Film clips to be viewed in class:
Romeo and Juliet (1936)
Letters to Juliet (2010)

TOPIC 2 (Weeks 4 & 5): Art, food, music, clothes

Week 4. Futurism, Europe and the attack on heritage. The concept of invented tradition. Pasta, pizza, ice cream, cappuccino.

Reading:
*D’Annunzio 1895 (extracts translated, 5pp.)
Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983 “Introduction: Inventing Traditions” (14pp.)
Montanari 2013 (4pp.)
Serao 2012 (1884) (4pp.)
Helstosky 2008 (18pp.)
Weiss 2012 (20pp.)
Morris 2013 (15pp.)

Paintings and architectural drawings to be examined in class
Umberto Boccioni, “The City Rises” (“La città che sale”) 1910-11; “The Street Enters the House” (“La strada entra nella casa”) 1911; Fortunato Depero, “Skyscrapers and Tunnels” (“Grattacieli e tunnel”), 1930; Antonio Sant’Elia, “Power station” (“Centrale elettrica”) 1914; Erich Kettelhut, Sketch for Metropolis 1925; Giovanni Michelucci and others, Project for Florence SMN train station, 1931; Angiolo Mazzoni, boiler house, control cabin, and personnel facilities at SMN station (1927–34).

Film clips to be viewed in class:
Un americano a Roma (1954)
Eat Pray Love (2010)

Reading:
Frasca 2014 Introduction (12 pp.)
Chambers 2003 (5pp.)
Dyer 2010 Chapter 1 (15pp.)
Rosselli 1992 Introduction (6pp.)
Paolicelli 2009 (16pp.)
Rowland 2014 (2pp.)
Tokatli 2013 (16pp)
Chen 2015 (14pp.)

Film clips to be viewed in class:
The Godfather (1972) (musical score: Nino Rota)
Fortunella (1958) (musical score: Nino Rota)
Le amiche (1955)
Gomorra (2008)
Armani, Dolce & Gabbana and Prada advertising videos

**TOPIC 3 (Weeks 6 & 7) Migration, mobility and identity**


Reading:
Del Boca and Venturini 2003, 1-18 (18pp.)
Cinel 1991, extract (10pp.)
Gardaphe 2004, Chapter 2, “Inventing Italian America” (24pp.).
Dickie 2004, Chapter 5, “The mafia establishes itself in America, 1900–1941” (29pp.)

Film and television clips to be viewed in class:
The Godfather Part II (1974)
The Sopranos, Season 2, Episode 4, “Commendatori” (2000)

Week 7. Migrations into and via Italy since 1980. The Italian demographic landscape since the 1980s. Employment and settlement patterns. Irregular migration to Italy. Deaths in the Mediterranean and in overland transit. Racism in Italy.

Reading:
Del Boca and Venturini 2003, 18-36 (18pp.)
King 2002 (17pp.)

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Lakhous 2008, Chapters 1-3 (29pp.)
Monzini, 2007 (21pp.)

Film clips to be viewed before and in class:
Come un uomo sulla terra (2008)
Niguri (2009)

TOPIC 4 (Weeks 8 & 9) Film and television in global markets


Reading:
Bazin 2011 (1948) (14pp.)
Balio 2010, Chapter 2, “Italian Neorealism” (21pp.); Chapter 10, “The Second Italian Renaissance” (23pp.)
Ruberto and Wilson 2007, Introduction (24pp)

Films to be viewed before class:
Ladri di biciclette (1948)
Roman Holiday (1953)


Reading:
Gundle 1996 (27pp.)
Forgacs 1990 (17pp.)
Eco 1990 (10pp.)

Films/TV program extracts to be viewed in class:
The $64,000 Question (CBS, 1956)
Lascia o raddoppia? (RAI, 1956)
Carosello (RAI, 1960-62)
I giardini di Abele (RAI 1968)
Lady Oscar (First episode, Italia 1, 1982)
Beautiful (Canale 5, episode 1995; original tx CBS 1994)
Videocracy (2009)
Il corpo delle donne (2009)
TOPIC 5 (Weeks 10–11) Italy in international relations 1914–1945

Week 10. 1914–1936: World War One and changing alliances. Italian Fascism as friend of USA and Britain

Reading:
Sraffa 1927 (2p.)
Sturzo 1926. Chapter 1 (24pp.)
Diggins 1972. Chapter 4 (16pp.)
Schmitz 1988. Chapter 3 (21pp.)

Videos to be viewed before class:
Khan Academy, “Italy backs out of Triple Alliance” (4 minutes): https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/history/euro-hist/other-fronts-ww1/v/italy-backs-out-of-triple-alliance
Khan Academy, “Italian front in World War 1”:
https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/history/euro-hist/other-fronts-ww1/v/italian-front-in-world-war-i (9 minutes)

Film clips to be viewed in class:
British Pathé and Fox Movietone newsreels on Mussolini and Fascism 1922–1934

Week 11. 1936–45: Italian Fascism as foe of USA and Britain. The Abyssinian crisis and World War Two.

Reading:
Schmitz 1988. Chapter 8 (28pp.)
Diggins 1972, Chapters 13-15 (extracts) (42pp.)

Film clips and and newsreels to be viewed in class:
*Why We Fight*, I, *Prelude to War* (1942)
Fox Movietone and British Pathé newsreels of bombings of Italian cities and displays of corpses of Mussolini and others in Milan, April 29 1945.

TOPIC 6 (Wks 12–14): Italy, Europe and the wider world 1945-2020

Week 12. 1945–76. Cold War conflicts over Italy’s political belonging. US policy towards Italy and the strategy of tension.

Reading:
Ellwood 1993 (13pp.)
Cheles 2001 (45pp.)
Ferraresi 1995. Chapter 5 (34pp.)

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Images to be viewed in class:
Posters for 1948 and 1953 Italian elections

Film clips to be viewed in class
Strategia della menzogna (1948)
Togliatti è ritornato (1948)
La via della libertà (1951)

Week 13. Italy and Europe from 1945 to now. Intertwining of Italy and EU in financial, political and legal affairs.

Reading:
Spinelli & Rossi 1941-44 (16 pp.)
Bindi 2011. Chapter 3 (29pp)

NO CLASS ON THURSDAY NOVEMBER 26 (THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY)


Reading:
Fabbrini and Della Sala 2004. “Introduction” (17pp.)
Puntscher Riekmann and Wydra 2013 (17pp.)
Forgacs 2016 (24pp.)
Papanicolopulu 2013 (6pp.)
Tintori 2018 (16pp.)
Wallis 2020 (3pp.)

The full ECHR judgement on the case of Hirsi Jamaa and others vs. Italy (81 pages) is available at [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/spa#{%22itemid%22:%22%f%22itemid%22:%22%22001-109231%22}] (downloadable PDF version available there). You are not required to read it, but those interested in the case may want to consult it.

Film extracts to be viewed in class
18 ius soli (2011)
Italy is paying Libya… (2017)

COURSE REVIEW, EVALUATION & FINAL QUIZ

Week 15. The last two classes of the semester will include a review of the course as a whole, online student evaluations and a quiz on the main points covered. The quiz will count 5% towards the total grade for the course.
### FALL 2020  DATES OF CLASSES AND DEADLINES FOR TOPIC PAPERS

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<td>WK 2 Thu Sep 10: The Risorgimento, exiles, the foreign press and literature.</td>
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<td>WK 3 Tue Sep 15: Ideas of national character and identity. The Italian Renaissance as a Franco-Swiss production</td>
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<td>WK 3 Thu Sep 17: Italy from the Grand Tour to mass tourism.</td>
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<td>WK 4 Thu Sep 24: The concept of invented tradition. Pasta, pizza, ice cream, cappuccino.</td>
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<td>WK 5 Tue Sep 29: Italian music at home and abroad: opera, Neapolitan song, film scores, disco music.</td>
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<td><strong>Paper on Topic 2 due Mon Oct 5 before 5pm</strong></td>
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<td>WK 6 Tue Oct 6: Internal migration, language and cultural mixing.</td>
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<td>WK 6 Thu Oct 8: Emigration from Italy: the global Italian diaspora. The reinvention of Italy outside Italy: the case of Italo-American culture. The Sicilian and American mafias.</td>
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<td>WK 7 Tue Oct 13: Migrations into and via Italy since 1980. The Italian demographic landscape since the 1980s. Employment and settlement patterns.</td>
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<td>WK 7 Thu Oct 15: Irregular migration to Italy. Deaths in the Mediterranean and in overland transit. Racism in Italy.</td>
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<td><strong>Paper on Topic 3 due Mon Oct 19 before 5pm</strong></td>
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<td>WK 8 Tue Oct 20: Neorealism: national cinema, export cinema.</td>
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<td>WK 8 Thu Oct 22: American films shot in Italy. Exportable and non-exportable Italian films. Images of Italy in non-Italian films.</td>
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<td><strong>Paper on Topic 4 due Mon Nov 2 before 5pm</strong></td>
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### Weeks 10–11. TOPIC 5: Italy in international relations 1914–1945

| WK 10 Thu Nov 5: | 1919-1935: Italian Fascism as friend of USA and Britain. |
| WK 11 Tue Nov 10: | 1936–45: Italian Fascism as foe of USA and Britain. The Abyssinian crisis and World War Two. |
| WK 11 Thu Nov 12: | 1936–45: Italian Fascism as foe of USA and Britain. Fall of fascism and death of Mussolini. |

**Paper on Topic 5 due Mon Nov 16 before 5pm**

### Weeks 12–14. TOPIC 6: Italy, Europe and the wider world 1945-2020

| WK 12 Tue Nov 17: | Cold War conflicts over Italy’s political belonging 1948-60 |
| WK 12 Tue Nov 19: | US policy towards Italy and the strategy of tension 1969-1976 |
| WK 13 Tue Nov 24: | Italy and Europe from 1945 to now. Intertwining of Italy and EU in financial, political and legal affairs. |
| WK 13 Thu Nov 26: | **NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)** |
| WK 14 Tue Dec 1: | Neo-nationalism and souveranism. Pushbacks and blockades of irregular migrants in Mediterranean |
| WK 14 Thu Dec 3: | New Italians and the *ius soli* debate |

**Paper on Topic 6 due Mon Dec 7 before 5pm**

### Week 15 Course review, evaluation & final quiz

| WK 15 Tue Dec 8: | Course review. Online evaluations to be completed in last part of this class |
| WK 15 Thu Dec 10: | Course review (continued) and final quiz. |
Course filmography and bibliography

Films and television

18 ius soli (Fred Kuwornu, Italy, 2011)
Un americano a Roma (Steno [Stefano Vanzina], Italy, 1954)
Le amiche (Michelangelo Antonioni, Italy, 1955)
Beautiful (Rai 2 1990-94/Canale 5 1994-) (Italian-dubbed version of The Bold and the Beautiful, CBS 1987-)
Carosello (RAI, Italy, 1957–1977)
Cathy Come Home (Ken Loach, BBC, 1966)
Come un uomo sulla terra (Andrea Segre, Dagmawi Yimer and Riccardo Biadene, Italy, 2008)
Il corpo delle donne (Lorella Zanardo, Cesare Cantù, Marco Malfi Chindemi, Italy, 2009)
Eat Pray Love (Ryan Murphy, USA, 2010)
Fortunella (Eduardo De Filippo, Italy, 1958)
I giardini di Abele (Sergio Zavoli, RAI, Italy, 1968)
The Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1972)
The Godfather Part II (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1974)
Gomorra (Matteo Garrone, Italy, 2008)
Gomorra–la serie, Season 1, Episode 1 (Stefano Sollima, Italy, 2014)
Italy is paying Libya to intercept migrants on the Mediterranean (Vice News/HBO, UK-USA, 2017)
Ladri di biciclette (Bicycle Thieves) (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1948)
Lady Oscar (Italia 1, 1982), Italian-dubbed version of ベルサイユのばら (The Rose of Versailles) (Tokyo Movie Shinsha, 1979-80)
Lascia o raddoppia? (RAI, 1955–59)
Letters to Juliet (Gary Winick, USA, 2010)
Niguri (Antonio Martino, Italy, 2009)
Roma città aperta (Rome Open City) (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1945)
Roman Holiday (William Wyler, USA, 1953)
Romeo and Juliet (George Cukor, USA, 1936)
The $64,000 Question (CBS, 1955–58)
The Sopranos, Season 2, Episode 4, “Commendatori” (HBO, USA, 2000)
Strategia della menzogna (Comitato Civico Nazionale, 1948)
Togliatti è ritornato (Basilio Franchina and Carlo Lizzani, 1948)
La via della libertà (Sergio Grieco, Italy, 1951)
Videocracy (Erik Gandini, Sweden-Denmark-UK-Finland, 2009)
Why We Fight, I, Prelude to War (Frank Capra, USA, 1942)
Publicity videos for McDonald’s, Prada, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana
British Pathé newsreels
Fox Movietone newsreels
Marshall Plan films (USIS)
Books and articles


Chen, Calvin. 2015. “Made in Italy (by the Chinese): migration and the rebirth of textiles and apparel.” In *Modern Italian Studies*, 20, 1, 111–126.


Rowland, Suzanne. 2014. “La Dolce Vita: Masculinity and Tailoring.”


Spinelli, Altiero and Ernesto Rossi. 1941-44. *For a Free and United Europe: a draft manifesto* (*Ventotene Manifesto*). English text online at

http://www.federalists.eu/uef/library/books/the-ventotene-manifesto/
Sturzo, Luigi. 1926. *Italy and Fascismo*. Translated by Barbara Barclay Carter. London: Faber and Gwyer.


