

Social Themes in Italian Literature
Course abbreviation: Ital Lit

Instructor's Information

Instructor: TBD
Homepage: TBD
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Office: TBD
Office Hours: TBD
Preferred communication: TBD
Class Schedule: 3 hours per week

Course goals and objectives

Catalog Course Description. This course offers an introduction to Italian literature and its relationship to the dynamics of social change. Through reading, individual research, attendance of plays and films, the student will have the opportunity to explore the different forms of literary expression and the social values they reflect.

Prerequisites: ELI103 or Exemption Exam

Pre/Corequisites: CSE095, ENG099 and ESL098

The course provides the benefit of exploring topics in Italian culture through the perspectives expressed in selected literary works that span the tradition, from Dante Alighieri's medieval outcry against political corruption, to Italo Calvino's surreal modern reflection on Enlightenment principles. The readings will be in Italian, and the discussion will be primarily in Italian, with an opportunity to ask occasional questions in English for purposes of clarification. The course will serve for advanced heritage speakers, native speakers and students who have completed the sequence of elementary and intermediate Italian courses at LaGuardia.

In this course you will:

1. Analyze Italian literature, as well as its relation to the culture of Italy in the life and times of the authors and their audiences.
2. Identify social and political themes in the assigned literary works through active, prepared participation in class discussions.
3. Read, interpret critically and debate indicators of the central themes of the literary works assigned within the context of literary periods and movements.
4. Write short weekly writing assignments and a final critical research paper; and develop more specific, expressive, precise and synthetic writing skills.
5. Describe, analyze and debate the assigned literary themes in Italian as a means to develop language skills.

Textbook, grading, and other class logistics

Textbooks: The following textbooks will support this course.

Gaspara Stampa [Laura A. Stortoni, Ed., and Mary P. Lillie, Trans.] *Gaspara Stampa: Selected Poems*. Italic Press, 1994..

Cesare Pavese [R.W. Flint, Trans.]. *La luna e i falò*. Manchester University Press, 1995

Calvino, Italo. *Il barone rampante*. Mondadori. 1990.

Carlo Goldoni. *Memoirs* Vol. 1 and 2. Nabu Press, 2010

Additional books to support this course.

Elsa Morante [Isabel Quigley, Trans.] *L'isola di Arturo*, Einaudi, 1957.

Dante Alighieri [Robert Pinsky, Trans.] *The Inferno*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994.

Giovanni Boccaccio [Vittore Branca, Ed.] *Decamerone*. Mondadori. 1985.

We will also discuss the following films and audio recordings.

The Decameron, A Film by Pier Paolo Pasolini. MGM Home Entertainment

The Mandrake Root, La Mandragola, The Comely Hit of 1518. European Drama network

Roberto Rossellini's, War Trilogy *Rome Open City/Paisan/Germany Year Zero*. Criterion

Verdi: *Nabucco* (2002). Deutsche Grammophon

Grades: Your final grade will be determined based on the following evaluation points.

Class participation 15%

Final exam 20%

Written assignments (4 x 5) 20%

Final paper (2 drafts x 15) 10 HW x 1) 30%

Presentations 15%

- **Grade distributions:** A: 95-100%, A-: 90-94%, B+: 86-89%, B: 83-85%, B-: 80-82%, C+: 76-79%, C: 73-75%, C-: 70-72%, D+: 66-69%, D: 63-65%, D-: 60-62%, F: -59%, **WU:** Unofficial withdraw (≈F), **W:** Withdraw

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 Overview of contemporary Chinese literature

Week 1

Course introduction: Dante Alighieri (1265-1321),

The Inferno; the Divine Comedy as affirmation of Italian literature; Dante's political exile; Dante's description of the afterlife as an outcry to conform human society to God's justice.

Week 2

Reading: Dante's Inferno V.

Discussion: the role of women in medieval society; poetry attributed to a medieval woman poet, called La Compiuta Donzella (The Accomplished Young Woman); medieval manuscript illuminations of the Inferno; musical settings of poetry in Dante's milieu.

Short weekly writing assignment.

Week 3

Reading: Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), The Decameron, selection.

Discussion: life in the time of plague in fourteenth-century Florence; social satire in

Boccaccio's novelle; Boccaccio's professed advocacy on behalf of women, subjected to the will of menfolk; Boccaccio's concern for good government.

Short weekly writing assignment.

Week 4

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), The Decameron, continued.

Film: Pier Paolo Pasolini's The Decameron (1971), selection.

Discussion: the role of reading Boccaccio in Pasolini's modern social critique.

Short weekly writing assignment.

Week 5

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), The Mandrake

Root, as portrayed in the film, The Mandrake

Root (2008).

Discussion: marriage in the Renaissance; the social and political role of Machiavelli as provider of courtly theatrical entertainment.

Short weekly writing assignment.

Week 6

Reading: Gaspara Stampa (1523-1554), selected poems.

Discussion: comparison to selected poems of

Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374); women's social

= choices in sixteenth-century Venice.

Class presentations of selected poems.

Week 7

Reading: Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina, excerpt.

Discussion: selected letters between Galileo and his daughter; the relationship between faith and science in Galileo's social milieu.

Short weekly writing assignment.

Week 8

Reading: Selections of Goldoni's diaries.

Discussion: Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793), The Beneficent Bear; selections of Goldoni's diaries on the debut of this play for the wedding of Marie

Antoinette (1755-1793); Goldoni's incorporation of Enlightenment principles in gentle parodies of bourgeois aspirations to nobility.

First draft of final research paper due.

Week 9

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), La Traviata and Nabucco.

Discussion: comparison of Nabucco to the Biblical Book of Daniel; comparison of La Traviata to

Alexandre Dumas's play, La dame aux camellias (1848); the role of Verdi as a rallying cry in the social and political unification of Italy.

Short weekly writing assignment.

Week 10

Cesare Pavese (1908-1950), The Moon and the Bonfires, selection.

Film: Roberto Rossellini's Paisà (1946), selection.

Discussion: Italian mass immigration to the United

States and images of America before and after

World War II; the role of the Italian partisans at the end of World War II.

Short weekly writing assignment.

Week 11

Elsa Morante (1912-1985), *Arturo's Island*, selection.

Film: Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960), selection.

Discussion: social critique of the family as a social institution. Week 13 Final Examination

Policies

Classroom policies: The following policies have been instituted to ensure an optimal learning experience for all students:

- Please arrive on time. Three lateness equal 1 absence.
- Please prepare for each class meeting by completing all writing/reading assignments beforehand.
- Please turn your cell phone to silence during class.
- Please turn off your cell phone during the exam and the quiz.

Valuing LaGuardia's Diversity: As a college community we represent a world of perspectives on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and nationality, to name a few. I concur with **the College's Declaration of Pluralism**, if you have any suggestions in helping me to create a welcoming classroom environment, please tell me.

Rules for Personal Conduct: You are expected to obey the rules and regulations of the College about conduct. Disorderly or indecent behavior is not appropriate in a college setting. It is a violation of college rules and is not acceptable.

The student attendance policy: As stated in the college catalog: "Attendance in class is a requirement and will be considered in the evaluation of student performance. Instructors are required to keep an official record of student attendance. The maximum number of unexcused absences is limited to 15% of the number of class hours. Note: Absences are counted from the first day of class even if they are a result of late registration or change of program" (117).

The academic dishonesty policy: As stated in the catalog: "Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in the City University of New York and is punishable by penalties ranging from a grade of 'F' on a given test, research paper or assignment, to an 'F' in the course or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Academic Dishonesty includes:

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Internet Plagiarism
- Obtaining Unfair Advantages
- Falsification of Records and Official Documents
- Misconduct in Internships (117)

Policy on assigning the grade of Incomplete: As stated in the college catalogue: "The Incomplete grade may be awarded to students who have not completed all of the required course work but for whom there is a reasonable expectation of satisfactory completion. A student who is otherwise in good standing in a course defined as complying with the college attendance policy and maintaining a passing average but who has not completed at most two major assignments or examinations by the end of the course may request an incomplete grade. To be eligible, such a student must provide, before the instructor submits grades for the course, a documented reason, satisfactory to the instructor, for not having completed the assignment on time. Instructors giving IN grades must inform students in writing of the conditions under which they may receive passing grades. Departments may designate certain courses in which no incomplete grades may be awarded." (120).

Declaration of pluralism: The Education and Language Acquisition Department embraces diversity. We must respect each other regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability and social class. For detailed information regarding the policy, please refer to Student Handbook 2011-2012 (p.89).

Final Remarks on Course Policies

*Office hours and emails are solely for the purpose of clarification, for further explanation, for further requests for illustrations, for sharing ideas, for talking about difficulties or even to talk more about a topic that you feel you understand. I love ideas and I will always be glad to talk or write about any ideas that come up in class! This, however, is *reserved for people who come to class*. **If you are absent, you will need to find notes and be responsible for what you missed.** We can meet after you have tried to make up for a class. **Emails with the following content will not be answered and will be frowned upon: "I'm sorry I missed class today. Did I miss something important?"**

*A further note on writing emails:

Please be mindful when you write emails. Whenever you come to class and whenever you communicate with others in the College, be aware that *you are* in a professional environment. Similarly, whenever you write an email to your professor, you are writing a professional document. Make sure you always include a greeting (Hello Professor X, Hi Professor X, Good morning Professor X), followed by a well-written text (as grammatically correct as possible and formal). Lastly—depending on the nature of your message—be sure to say "Thank you," or "Hope to hear from you soon," or "Thank you for your time," followed by your name.

* Please no cell phones in class and absolutely no texting. Also, laptops and tablets in class prove to be distracting. Please see me if you must bring one to class.

*Your decision to remain enrolled in this class implies that you agree with Course Requirements and Policies.