



CAPA Florence Center  
The Real and the Fantastic: the Twentieth Century Italian Novel (SPRING only)

The course is a survey of Italian prose fiction from the end of the XIX century to the early 1990s. Authors have been chosen in order to provide significant examples of the main trends in Italian novel writing, from realism to modernism to neo-realism and beyond. The course will also introduce students to the socio-historical context in which the different trends rise and develop. The formal solutions and the themes of the novels will therefore be discussed with special emphasis on the peculiarity of Italian cultural history. Particular attention will be paid to the *geography of the Italian literary imagination* which may prove particularly interesting for students who are planning to travel around Italy during their semester in Florence.

The course will start with an analysis of Giovanni Verga's masterpiece *The House by the Medlar Tree*, a XIX century text which is nevertheless essential to introduce the debate on "a literature of the real" which will be central to the post-war writers. Then several lessons will be dedicated to Italo Svevo and Luigi Pirandello's modernist preoccupations with the notion of identity and self-analysis. The course will then concentrate on the long series of writers who, due to the dramatic change in Italian politics, revived the notion of a literature committed to bring about socio-political change: Sergio Moravia, Elio Vittorini, Italo Calvino, Beppe Fenoglio, Cesare Pavese. This section will analyse the relationship between the literary texts and Fascism, WWII and the Partisan Resistance. Finally, students will be briefly introduced to the radical change brought about by the cultural revolution of the 1960s, in particular concerning the notion of gender. The last novel to be discussed will therefore be Dacia Maraini's *The Last Duchess*, a vivid portrait of women's oppressive lives in XVIII century Sicily and their brave attempts to resist male domination and abuse.

## 2 - OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this course is to introduce students to some of the most significant authors in twentieth century Italian prose. It also aims at providing students with the essential background knowledge and theoretical tools to proceed further in contemporary Italian literary studies.

## 3 - REQUIREMENTS & PREREQUISITES

There are no requirements or prerequisites for this course.

## 4 - METHOD

Lectures, readings and structured class discussions. As the mandatory reading list consists only of primary texts, students are required to take careful notes during lectures. The issues addressed in class are to be considered a fundamental didactic base for the whole course. Individual study of notes, readings, handouts etc. is required on a weekly basis.

## 5 - ATTENDANCE - PARTICIPATION - SEMESTER SESSION ABSENCE POLICY

Students are requested to arrive on time. Late arrival (over ten minutes) will result in an unexcused absence after the roll call. Early departure from class are excused only by previous agreement with the instructor or for serious health problems.

- *Class attendance is mandatory (also in case of make-up classes) and counts towards the final grade. Every absence will lower the attendance grade.*

## 6 - TEXTBOOKS - ASSIGNMENTS - ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Readings required for each lesson are specified below. Students are warmly recommended to read at least 75% of the novel before the lesson.

The only assignment will be an oral presentation. Presentations will be delivered in class by two students at a time working on the same topic. The topic and date of the presentation will be set in accordance with the instructor. Each presentation should not exceed 45 minutes. Powerpoint presentations are welcome but not compulsory. Inquire at the front desk for research facilities offered to CAPA students.

## 7 - EVALUATION - GRADING SYSTEM

- 5% Class attendance
- 10% Participation
- 25% Oral presentation
- 30% Midterm exam
- 30% Final exam

A = 100 - 93%,    A- = 92 - 90%,    B+ = 89 - 87%,    B = 86 - 83%,    B- = 82 - 80%,  
C+ = 79 - 77%,    C = 76 - 73%,    C- = 72 - 70%,    D = 69 - 60%,    F = 59 - 0%

## 8 - TEXT BOOK - COURSE-PACK - READINGS & SOURCES

### Mandatory texts:

- CALVINO, Italo, *The Path to the Spiders' Nest*, Harper Perennial, 2000.
- FENOGLIO, Beppe, *A Private Affair*, Hesperus Press, 2007.
- MARAINI, Dacia, *The Silent Duchess*, The Feminist Press, 2000.
- PAVESE, Cesare, *The Moon and the Bonfires*, New York Review Books, 2002.
- PIRANDELLO, Luigi, *The Late Mattia Pascal*, New York Review Books, 2005.
- VITTORINI, Elio, *Conversations in Sicily*, New Directions Books, 2000.
- BOOKLET PROVIDED BY CAPA

### Critical bibliography:

- *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature*, edited by P. Hainsworth and D. Robey, Oxford University Press, 2002.
- *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel*, edited by P. Bondanella and A. Ciccarelli, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- *The New Italian Novel*, edited by Z.G. Baranski and L. Pertile, Edinburgh, 1993.
- *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*, edited by Z.G. Baranski and R.J. West, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, edited by D. Forgacs and R. Lumley, Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Aricò, S.L., *Contemporary Women Writers in Italy: A Modern Renaissance*, Amherst, MA, 1990.
- *Writers and Society in Contemporary Italy*, edited by M. Caesar and P. Hainsworth, Leamington Spa, 1984.

## 9- EXTRA FEES

Approx. € 80,00 (All books will be bought back from the Paperback Exchange book-shop provided they are kept in good conditions. Contact the bookshop's assistants for details. Second-hand copies of the texts are sometimes available but cannot be guaranteed).

## 10 - VISITS- TRIPS

No field trips are scheduled.

## 11- MATERIAL LIST

No specific materials for this course.

## 12 - MID-TERM AND FINAL EXAMS

There will be a mid-term exam consisting of 10 essay questions regarding the authors and texts discussed up until that point. The final exam will have the same format as the mid-term one and will regard the authors and texts discussed in the second part of the semester.

## 13 - LECTURES

1. Course presentation. The syllabus. Introduction to the analysis of the literary text.
2. Introduction: the novel in Italian literature and culture.
3. Giovanni Verga *The House by the Medlar Tree* (selected chapters - booklet).
4. Giovanni Verga *The House by the Medlar Tree*.

5. Introduction to Italian modernism: Luigi Pirandello and Italo Svevo
6. Luigi Pirandello *The Late Mattia Pascal* (full text)
7. Luigi Pirandello *The Late Mattia Pascal*
8. Italo Svevo *Zeno's Conscience* (selected chapters - booklet)
9. Italo Svevo *Zeno's Conscience*
10. Introduction to neo-realism (first part)
11. Elio Vittorini *Conversations in Sicily* (full text)
12. Elio Vittorini *Conversations in Sicily* (oral presentation 2 students)
13. Question time/ Review for final exam
  
14. Mid-Term Exam
  
15. Neo-realism (second part)
16. Italo Calvino *The Path to the Spiders' Nest* (full text)
17. Italo Calvino *The Path to the Spiders' Nest* (oral presentation 2 students)
18. Cesare Pavese *The Moon and the Bonfires* (full text)
19. Cesare Pavese *The Moon and the Bonfires* (oral presentation 2 students)
20. Beppe Fenoglio *A Private Question* (full text)
21. Beppe Fenoglio *A Private Question* (oral presentation 2 students)
22. Italian fiction after the 60s cultural revolution. Introduction to Italian women writers.
23. Dacia Maraini *The Silent Duchess* (full text)
24. Dacia Maraini *The Silent Duchess* (oral presentation 2 students)
25. Question time / Review for final exam
26. Final Exam

#### 14. ALTERNATIVE EMERGENCY LESSON

*Should the instructor be indisposed or otherwise unable to attend, a substitute professor will conduct a pre-prepared alternative lesson at the regular class time. The alternative lesson will be a showing of the film *Roma città aperta* di Roberto Rossellini with class discussion.*