

UC Davis - Florence Quarter Abroad Program

**FILM STUDIES 121S / ITALIAN 121S
New Italian Cinema**



Le meraviglie [Wonders (2014)], by Alice Rohrwacher

Instructor: Prof. Margherita Heyer-Cáput (mheycaput@ucdavis.edu)
Office : Conference Room, CEA Florence Center
Office Hours: **M/W 3-4 pm (TBC) and/or by appointment**
CRN: FMS 121S: (TBD)
ITA 121S: (TBD)
UC Davis Quarter Units: 4
GE: Art and Humanities, Oral Literacy, Visual Literacy, World Cultures, Writing Experience
Lecture/Discussion: M/W 1:20-2:40 pm (TBC), Aula VASARI (TBC), CEA Florence Center
Film viewing: M 4:30-7:30 pm (TBC), Aula DA VINCI (TBC), CEA Florence Center

Required Textbooks:

- Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*. New York: Longman, 2010 (8th edition).
(To be purchased individually **prior to the end of Spring Quarter**)
- Heyer-Cáput, Margherita (ed). *New Italian Cinema. A Reader*.

Reference Works (available for consultation at the CEA Florence Center Library):

- Bondanella, Peter. *A History of Italian Cinema*. New York: Continuum, 2009. (Ch. 17, p. 557-66)
- Brunetta, Gian Piero. *A Story of Italian Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009. (Ch. 5 and Epilogue, p. 245-321).

Description:

This course explores the thriving Italian cinema of the twenty-first century in relationship with the deep cultural and social changes that Italy has undergone in the last two decades. This class will be particularly interesting for QA students. Immersed in the vibrant urban life of Florence, QA participants will analyze filmic representations of the Italian reality that they will experience in their daily life.

In the course of the quarter we investigate how a young generation of Italian filmmakers - from Emanuele Crialesi to Gianfranco Rosi, from Alice Rohrwacher to Ferzan Ozpetek - has overcome a paralyzing sense of “afterness.” They have infused Italian cinema with a new vitality and international recognition, as the 2014 Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award for Paolo Sorrentino’s *La grande bellezza* underlined. These directors-writers-producers-lead actors have successfully integrated in their works the inspiring but also challenging legacy of the great *auteurs* of Italian Neorealism of the ‘40s and ‘50s (Rossellini, De Sica, etc.) and of the art cinema of the ‘60s and ‘70s (Antonioni, Fellini, etc.). Moreover, these directors have creatively overcome the disillusionments suffered by the political cinema of the ‘80s and ‘90s (Francesco Rosi, Petri, the Taviani Brothers, etc.). The movies analyzed in this course revisit classic genres of Italian cinema, from the *commedia all’italiana* to historical productions, and reinvent **film as a powerful art form with a social reference and a moral accountability.**

Course Content Note:

This semester we will be viewing films of very different genres and about many different topics; some of them may address disturbing events (for example, violence, death, political unrest, sexual abuse, etc.). If you suspect that such material is likely to be emotionally challenging for you, I would be happy to discuss privately any concerns you may have about specific film content or ask me before class. Likewise, if you wish to discuss your personal reactions to course material with the class or with me individually afterwards, I welcome such discussions as an appropriate part of our classwork. Additionally, some of the articles included in the course reader may address these issues.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during a class discussion you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation. Please talk to me in advance so that I can address your concerns.

Experiential Learning:

In order to enhance your global learning experience, our Quarter Abroad Program includes four organized group trips. In addition to **three on-site visits in Florence** (s. Syllabus), **two excursions and one overnight trip** are an integral part of our course as they enable us to explore important filming locations and/or relevant themes of some of our films. In particular, we will visit **Turin** in relationship to *The Best of Youth* (October 4-5), **Bologna** in relationship to *The Bastiani Fortress* (November 8), and the Tuscan countryside during the **Verrazzano** excursion in relationship to *Wonders* (August 31).

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the main developments of contemporary Italian cinema with regard to themes, aesthetics, and genres;
- Achieve a knowledge of (Italian) cinema from a global perspective that integrates cinematic works in the historical and cultural context of Italian and European society of the last fifty years;
- Gain a mastery of film form main aspects and terminology that will allow them to better understand, appreciate, and analyze film as artistic expression and social commentary;
- Express and argue written and oral interpretations of assigned films and readings through weekly response papers (Film Journals), an oral presentation, and structured class discussions (Active Participation);

- Develop analytical and critical thinking skills through informed interpretation of visual texts (primary sources) in light of appropriate film criticism (secondary sources);
- Be able to write a Critical Essay centered on a clear thesis with adequate support of visual and textual evidence and film criticism;
- Indicate grammatical and syntactic written proficiency, an appropriate understanding of register in vocabulary and argumentative style, and a solid grasp of disciplinary standards (MLA Style Format).

Goals:

The goals of this course are threefold. First of all, students will become acquainted with the Italian cinema of the twenty-first century within a **cultural studies perspective that will emphasize the historical and cultural changes of Italian society in the era of globalization**. Secondly, students will acquire **analytical and critical thinking skills** while analyzing and contextualizing different film genres, from romantic comedy to psychological drama. Last but not least, participants will strengthen their **composition skills** by writing **weekly film journals and two versions of a critical essay (approximately 5-6 pages)** on a central theme, character, or stylistic feature of a film viewed in class or chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor.

Course Format:

This class includes two different formats of meetings:

- 1) **MONDAY/WEDNESDAY (TBC): Lecture and discussion. Lecture Notes will be posted on CANVAS as PowerPoint files on Wednesday evenings.**
- 2) **MONDAY EVENING (TBC): Film screening (MANDATORY).**

Students will prepare the **Required Readings PRIOR to the indicated session according to the syllabus, and PRIOR TO THE WEDNESDAY SESSION AT THE LATEST (an asterisk * on both the syllabus and the class reader's content page indicates "Spoiler Alert"!!)**. **On Mondays**, class sessions entail an introductory lecture about the film of the week and the assigned readings. **On Wednesdays**, meetings consist of group discussions of the film screened on Monday evening. 5-10'-long **Oral Presentations** introduce the group discussions. **Weekly Film Journals** consist of your **written reflections** related to **selected discussion questions on which we will concentrate during class activities**. **The Discussion Questions for the class activities and the weekly Film Journals will be posted on CANVAS** at the beginning of each week. Every student is responsible for bringing a **hard copy of the Discussion Questions to the film screenings to take notes and to the Wednesday class meetings for the group conversation**.

Expectations:

Participants are expected to:

- Attend class sessions **regularly** and arrive **on time**;
- Come to class **prepared to discuss** films and readings;
- Contribute **in a constructive way** to class discussions and activities;
- **Switch off all electronic devices** (cell phones, laptops, etc.) during class sessions;
- **Regularly check their UC Davis e-mail and CANVAS resources**

Attendance and Participation:

In order to fully enjoy and perform at your best in this course, your **attendance** and **participation** are crucial. Attendance of both lecture/discussion sessions and screenings is **mandatory** (please see **"Absences," p. 8**). DVDs of the course films will be on reserve at the CEA Library to be checked out **ON THE CEA Global Campus PREMISES** for students working on their critical essays.

During class time, **all mobile phones and laptops must be switched off**. In case of family emergency, students can keep their phones on (silent mode) after asking for permission before class starts. In case you need to use your laptop for note taking, please ask your professor for authorization during the first week of the quarter.

Written Assignments:

FMS 121S/ITA 121S is a GE course that fulfills the **Writing Experience** requirement as well. For this reason, you should pay particular attention to the **quality of your writing, including structure and organization, presentation of concrete examples to support your assertions, style, grammar, and punctuation**.

1) **WEEKLY FILM JOURNALS** (see "Format") focus on **WRITTEN REFLECTIONS** about **SELECTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** as indicated by your professor, which we will discuss during class activities. Each Film Journal includes a **REFLECTIVE QUESTION** related to the film of the week in the context of the broader (Italian) study abroad experience. **MINIMUM LENGTH: 400 characters (with spaces) per question**. Film Journals will be graded according to **timeliness (see "Late Work Policy") completeness, content, and formal accuracy (i.e. mechanics of writing and document formatting, see #4)**.

2) **TWO VERSIONS of a CRITICAL ESSAY** on the films or topics discussed in the course of the quarter. The essay has to be **5-6 pages long, typed in 12-point font, double-spaced with 1-1.25 inch margins, and proofread for spelling and grammatical errors**.

Detailed **ESSAY GUIDELINES** will be posted on CANVAS.

Late submissions will be marked down a full letter grade for each day of delay (s. "Late Work Policy").

Academic Integrity

The **Code of Academic Conduct** emphasizes the relevance of academic integrity at UC Davis and the shared responsibility of faculty and students in maintaining an honest academic environment. **Every student is required to acknowledge the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct:** <https://participate.ucdavis.edu/>

• **PLEASE NOTE: Plagiarism of any kind on any assignment will result in an automatic F and will be referred to Student Judicial Affairs.**

• **For more information regarding UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct, please refer to the resources posted on CANVAS and visit:** <https://participate.ucdavis.edu/> <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/cac.html>

Grading:

Active Participation:	20 points	20%
Oral Presentation:	20 points	20%
Weekly Film Journals:	20 points	20%
Essays:	40 points	40%
Essay #1 (First Version)	20/40 pts	
Essay #2 (Second Version) (due FRI 12/6, 5 PM Florence Time)	20/40 pts	
Final Exam (FRI, 11/15)	20 points	20%
TOTAL:	100 points	100%

Grading Scale:

A 93-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 0-59
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Late Work Policy:

50% of the point score will be deducted for each day of delay in submitting your **weekly film journals**, while your **critical essays** will be marked down a **full letter grade** for each day of delay. If you need to ask for a **JUSTIFIED EXTENSION**, you may do so by contacting your professor in person or via email **no later than 24 hours prior to the due date/time**.

Absences:

As stated in the *UC Davis QA Florence Guidebook*, “a maximum equivalent of one week of accumulated absences due to sickness, personal emergency, inevitable transport delay and other related impediments will be tolerated. **Illness may be tolerated if students provide written justification signed by health care provider [no photocopies, please]. Your final course grade will drop one full letter grade (e.g. A- to B-) for each additional class missed beyond this one-week period**, regardless as of the reason. You will automatically fail a course if your absences exceed the equivalent of two weeks of class” (p. 9).

FEATURE FILMS and SITE VISITS INCLUDED in the COURSE (subject to change):

- Week 1: *La meglio gioventù [The Best of Youth (2003)]* by M.T. Giordana, (Part 1)
- Week 2: *La meglio gioventù [The Best of Youth (2003)]*, (Part 2)
SITE VISIT: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze [National Central Library of Florence, a shooting location of *La meglio gioventù*]
- Week 3: *Terraferma [Dry Land (2012)]*, by Emanuele Crialese
Related SITE VISIT: Museo Nazionale del Cinema Torino [National Museum of Cinema, Turin, included in the overnight trip to Turin, and a shooting location in *La meglio gioventù*]
Fuocammare [Fire at Sea (2016)] by Gianfranco Rosi
- Week 4: *Io sono Li [Shun Li and the Poet (2011)]*, by Andrea Segre
- Week 5: *Nuovomondo [The Golden Door (2006)]*, by E. Crialese
- Week 6: *I cento passi [The One Hundred Steps (2000)]*, by M.T. Giordana
- Week 7: *La finestra di fronte [Facing Windows (2003)]* by Ferzan Ozpetek
- Week 8: *Le meraviglie [The Wonders (2014)]*, by Alice Rohrwacher
Related SITE VISIT: The Chianti Region [included in the orientation, and the exclusive shooting location of *Le meraviglie*]
- Week 9: *Fortezza Bastiani [The Bastiani Fortress (2002)]* by M. Mellara and A. Rossi
Related SITE VISIT: Bologna (OPTIONAL) Day-trip, in particular: University of Bologna [the oldest institution of higher education in the Western world, and the exclusive shooting location of *Fortezza Bastiani*]
- Week 10: ☺ FALL BREAK ☺ [dates TBC]**
- Week 11: *Mine vaganti [Loose Cannons (2010)]*, by Ferzan Ozpetek
- Week 12: Review and Essay Writing Workshop!!! ☺**
- Week 13: ESSAY #1 (1. Version) DUE**
- Week 14: ESSAY #2 (Second Version – based on graded #1) DUE**