



## J.F. ROME CENTER – L.U.C.

LITR 264-[A03]

### - ITALIAN CINEMA - FALL 2026



Tuesday 6:45-9:15 PM & Thursday 5:15-6:30 PM / Sala Felice

**Professor:** Dr. Flaminio Di Biagi **Office:** B-10 (tel.-333) **e-mail:** [fdibiag@luc.edu](mailto:fdibiag@luc.edu)  
**Office Hours:** Tue. 4-5 PM - Thu. 12-1 PM [or after class] (and by appointment)

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is a survey study of the development of Italian Cinema, from its origins to the present, focusing on major *genres* (such as Mythological, Fascist Propaganda, Neo-realism, Comedy Italian Style, Spaghetti Westerns, Political Movies), mostly relying on significant directors (such as Rossellini, De Sica, Antonioni, Fellini). The Italian movie industry and its central topics will be followed through the decades, against the backdrop of a changing society; from the Belle Époque to the WWI crisis, from the Fascist idea of “strongest weapon” to the outburst of a new post-war democracy, from the “economic miracle” to the shifting realities of the 1980-90s, and years 2000. The course is therefore specifically based on Italian movies; they will be presented as “samples” and analyzed in class, in a chronological order; hopefully they will provide a deeper knowledge of the Film Industry, Cinema as an artistic form of expression, and Italy. Class discussions focus mostly on a “textual” analysis of the films, but they imply (and provide) a general, background understanding of Italy. Indeed, the course maintains an historical/sociological perspective in its setting, since many of our movies can also be considered a peculiar “reservoir” of information about Italian history, lifestyle, culture, politics, economic situation and social transformations in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (and early 21<sup>st</sup>). As in a sort of “on location” course, we’ll “see” and compare the movies to the society they represent: Italy and its cinematic expressions, the image and the mirrors. Offered in English. No knowledge of Italian is required, yet all films are in Italian with English subtitles.

#### **CLASSWORK**

Attendance is a **must** (at every single lesson there will be an official **sign-up sheet**). Students are expected to come to each class well prepared, and having read textbooks. Any assigned material should be read thoroughly for the class day indicated. During projections all are expected to **pay attention to the film, take notes**, and then contribute to the following in-class discussion. Films will be only shown once, in class, usually on Tuesdays, but times may vary, according to length of movies (expect subtitles, some extra-long, challenging movies, some simultaneous translations in class!). Screenings will be introduced & followed by lectures and class discussions (usually on Thursdays), with comments, questions, etc. Each screening will provide: *a)* background info on the director; *b)* historical, political, cultural perspectives; *c)* textual analysis of the film. Discussions focus on a narrative-literary-formal-thematic-aesthetical-stylistic analysis of the film. This course satisfies Core Artistic Knowledge and Experience requirement.

## TEXTBOOKS

**Peter Bondanella & Federico Pacchioni**, *A History of Italian Cinema*, New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2017; many other photocopied handouts will be distributed in class, or loaded into Loyola's **Sakai**, and these will also be considered study texts. Optional supports can be found in JFRC Library, sometimes on-line. Students should often refer to those texts as well, particularly: **Louis Giannetti**, *Understanding Movies*; **Geoffrey Nowell-Smith**, *The Companion to Italian Cinema*; **John Moscovitz**, *Critical Approaches to Writing about Film*; **Ira Konigsberg**, *The Complete Film Dictionary*. Useful web sites: British Film Institute (<http://www.bfi.org.uk>; <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news/50-greatest-films-all-time>), RAI (Italian TV) (<http://www.italica.rai.it/eng/cinema/index.htm>), or: <http://www.tasteofcinema.com/2015/30-essential-films-for-an-introduction-to-italian-cinema/> or: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinema\\_of\\_Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinema_of_Italy).

## GRADING

Final Grade is actually the result of reading texts, attending classes, studying, “being alive & thinking”. Anyhow the following **scale & percentages** will be used to determine the student's grade: SCALE: **A** = 100-94 **A-** = 93-90 **B+** = 89-87 **B** = 86-84 **B-** 83-80 **C+** = 79-77 **C** = 76-74 **C-** = 73-70 **D+** = 69-67 **D** = 66-63 **D-** = 62-60 **F** = Below 60; PERCENTAGES: Midterm ex: 20% - Final ex: 25% - Reviews/Quizzes: 10% - Take Home ex: 10% - Film Reports: 20% - Class discussion/participation: 10% - Extra film: 5%.

## EXTRA INFORMATION:

**Exams:** will require tasks such as: identifications, definitions, questions, control of data, writing brief essays. Midterm and Final Exam will include and cover: textbooks, reading materials, the films, and all topics presented or discussed during lectures. To perform well on these exams, students must make an effort to come to class regularly. **Film reviews:** must be 2 pages long (Times New Roman, font 12, double-spaced). Students are requested to use a proper academic vocabulary, and apply the technical terminology (refer to *Understanding Movies* and *The Complete Film Dictionary*). Reviews should **not** be a summary of the film, but a personalized “reading” (i.e. a critical interpretation and evaluation). Criticism must always be grounded on specific scenes, events, lines, characters, images, acting skills, cinematic styles, camerawork, director's point of view, etc. of the film reviewed. When using some scholar's idea in building their criticism, students must directly refer to their source, by quoting the author's name, title of the book, date, page. Last Film Review will be on any Italian film post-2000 (you choose). **Final paper:** this is to be a personal research paper, and should develop a specific analysis in at least 5-6 pages (Times New Roman, font 12, double-spaced). Students can study a *genre* or a director, analyzing and comparing in a proper cultural/historical perspective one or two more of his films. In finding a topic, students are requested to consult and discuss with the instructor before final approval of a basic one-page outline. **Class participation:** active participation is very important for the success of a course such as this, therefore students are encouraged to discuss, and intellectually interact with the instructor and all the other colleagues in class. **Attendance is mandatory**, especially since our “texts” are films presented only in class, once. Please be aware that absences will not only weaken your performance, but also influence your grade: **absences will lower your final grade by 2% for each missed class, missing 6 classes will result in an automatic failure.** Students should be familiar with the honor code of University life, abide by its standards at all times, and expect similar behavior from their peers. **Note:** all classes, whether on Tuesdays or Thursdays can be used for projections (check program below).

## Elements to discuss:

- 1) the Director (**a.** biography, **c.** main films, **d.** typical themes)
  - 2) the Times (historical-social-economic background in the years of production)
  - 3) the Movie (story, plot, place[s], protagonist [age/job/status/etc.], secondary characters)
  - 4) the Commentary (style, techniques, content, themes, viewpoint, “message”)
  - 5) the Actors/Cast (roles, curiosities, gossip, anecdotes, etc.)
  - 6) the Locations (streets, monuments, areas, etc.)
  - 7) the Facet of Rome [or any Italian city] conveyed by the movie
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## PROGRAM

- September 1, Tue: intro, syllabus, policies, tools, requirements, technical terms, optical devices before film, beginnings of Cinema, silent Era, Italian pioneers, King & Queen Strolling in the Park (Calcina, 1896), The Taking of Rome (Alberini, 1905), Last Days of Pompeii/Odyssey [clips], Cabiria (Pastrone, 1914)
- September 3, Thu: Cabiria [part II] (Pastrone, 1914)
- September 8, Tue: class discussion, Fascism and cinema, Bengasi (Genina, 1942) [clips]
- September 10, Thu: Il Signor Max (Camerini, 1937) [clips], other genres during Fascism, WWII, introduction to Neorealism
- September 15, Tue: Open City (Rossellini, 1945)
- September 17, Thu: class discussion
- September 22, Tue: Bicycle Thief (De Sica, 1948)
- September 24, Thu: class discussion, other Neorealist directors & films (legacy);
- September 29, Tue: Bitter Rice (De Sanctis, 1949)
- October 1, Thu: class discus., Bread, Love & Dreams (Comencini, 1953 [clips]), Legacy of N-R, pink-Neor., the 1950's, Totò (Totò a colori, 1952 [clips]), the Melodrama, etc.
- October 6, Tue: L'avventura (Antonioni, 1960), class discussion, auteurs, review
- October 8, Thu: **Midterm Exam – 1<sup>st</sup> Review due**
- October 9 – 18: FALL BREAK [no classes]
- October 20, Tue: Eight and ½ (Fellini, 1963)
- October 22, Thu: class discussion
- October 23, **Friday**: commercial/popular genres of the 1960's (peplum, spaghetti westerns [In nome della legge (Germi, 1949), C.I.S., etc.] [clips])
- October 27, Tue: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (Leone, 1966)
- October 29, Thu: class discussion, the Western tradition
- November 3, Tue: Divorce Italian Style (Germi, 1961)
- November 5, Thu: class discussion, introduction to Comedy Italian Style
- November 10, Tue: Investigation on a Citizen Above Suspicion (Petri, 1970)
- November 12, Thu: class discussion, political films of the 70's, other 70's genres: horror/sexy comedy/police/etc. [clips]
- November 17, Tue: Cinema Paradiso (Tornatore, 1989)
- November 19, Thu: class discussion, the 80's/the 90's, **2<sup>nd</sup> Review due**
- November 24, Tue: The Great Beauty (Sorrentino, 2013)
- November 26 – November 29: THANKSGIVING [no class]
- December 1, Tue: They Call Me Jeeg (Mainetti, 2015)
- December 3, Thu: class discussion, recent developments, laws, TV & Movies, recap, conclusions, evaluations, final exam, **Take-Home Exam due**

December 8, Tuesday: **Final Exam** (5:30-7:30 PM, Sala Felice)

**Note:** also **due** Dec.8 is your **Extra Film Review** [choose a film from list below\*]

### \* LIST OF EXTRA FILMS (from Kanopy/JFRC Library):

<i>Paisan</i> (Rossellini, 1946, Neorealism)	<i>A Fistful of Dollars</i> (Leone, 1964, Spaghetti Western)
<i>Bitter Rice</i> (De Santis, 1949, "Pink" Neorealism)	<i>Suspiria</i> (Argento, 1977, Horror) <b>or</b> <i>Deep Red</i> , 1975]
<i>Nobody's Children</i> (Matarazzo, 1951, Melodrama)	<i>Ignorant Fairies</i> (Özpetek, 2001, Contemporary issues)
<i>Umberto D</i> (De Sica, 1952, Neorealism)	<i>Days and Clouds</i> (Soldini, 2007, Contemporary issues)
<i>The Eclipse</i> (Antonioni, 1962, Auteurs)	<i>The Dinner</i> (De Matteo, 2014, Contemporary issues)
<i>Il sorpasso</i> (Risi, 1962, Comedy Italian Style)	Or: any other Italian movie made <u>after year 2000</u> .