

## HRL\_201 CONTEMPORARY ITALY: CULTURE & SOCIETY

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**Learning Facilitator:** Erica Cacopardo [courses@gustolab.com](mailto:courses@gustolab.com) / Whatsapp: +39 340 261 7898

**credits:** 3

**contact hours:** 45

**offered:** spring

**language of instruction:** English

**Prerequisites:** none

**UIUC Articulation:** To be discussed with your Ullinois Academic Advisor

Recommended for students interested in History, Anthropology, Sociology, European studies, Italian Studies, Cultural Studies, communication, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

“And dead an epoch of our existence, which in a world destined to humiliate us was moral light and resistance.”

— *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Poems*

### Introduction

In this interdisciplinary course, we will examine the evolution of Italian political society and culture from 1861 to the present, through the lenses of history, politics, cinema and mass-media.

In the past century and a half the country has undergone a number of changes and transformations: from a late-founded regional power kingdom to its political unification with the participation to World War I; from a poor Fascist dictatorship to a rich Western republic democracy central to geopolitically strategy during the Cold War; from a nation of emigrants to a land of hope for migrants from Africa and Eastern Europe; and from an inert political arena dominated by political parties to a system dominated by individual leadership.

After having very briefly set the context of the historical geopolitics of Italy from the foundation of Rome into the 19th century, the course will provide a general historical introduction from the last years of the Risorgimento until current times. We will highlight the difficult path of developing a national Italian identity in compliance and fight with localism and the Catholic church. We will focus on the persistent differences between North and South Italy, on the anti-fascist reaction to the regime and the civil war, as well as on the role of the anti-fascist political forces in influencing the 1948 new Constitution.

Then the course will look at Italy's frontier position during the Cold War, the economic boom of the 1950s, the political domestic conflicts from the 1960s to the 1980s, the end of the First Republic and the political scene since 1992, up to the birth of the Second Republic. The Italian educational system, trade-unions movement, and the “Made in Italy” business will then be discussed.

Identity is addressed including the issues of ethnicity, gender, nationalism, regionalism, separatism, federalism, and Europeanism.

Cinema, television and academic articles will be one means through which we will study the effects of the historical changes in society. The works that we will analyze - with forays into political writing, the figurative arts, and cinema - will help us bring to life the complexities of the political, social, and cultural landscape that define modern Italy and to better understand their historical roots.

This course aims to give an overall image of contemporary Italian society through the analysis of general aspects such as language, family, politics, religion, interaction between economic and social progress. Stereotypes and clichés related to Italian culture will be analyzed and challenged.

The main goal of the course will be to deliver an up-to-date approach to a wide range of topics shaping the contemporary Italian culture and stimulating a fruitful confrontation with the original culture of the participants.

## Learning Outcomes

Students will develop the ability to critically analyze the background and the present state of Italian politics. They will be able to relate Italian political ideas, events, and players to the broader European and global political context.

The course is aimed at familiarizing students with Italy's contemporary history, culture, literature and cinema.

Ideally, upon the completion of this course, each student will be able to answer some typical questions that foreign visitors make to Italians: "What is the Mezzogiorno question?", "Why are Italian women still fighting for equal socio-economic levels?", "How was Mussolini elected?", "How was Italy able to become an economic power just a few years after having lost WW2?", "What is the so-called *Made in Italy*", "Why did Italy have the most powerful Communist Party of the Western World?", "What drove the transition from Monarchy to Republic and from the First Republic to the Second one?", "How did Berlusconi become a political leader?", "What is the Five-Star Movement?", "Which is Italy's position in geopolitical transformations today?"

In addition to this, by the end of the course students will:

- develop the ability to critically analyze the background and the present state of Italian politics.
- be able to relate Italian political ideas, events, and players to the broader European and global political context.
- understand Italian history from the creation of the kingdom to present days;
- understand Italian society and culture and the intellectual debate currently underway in Italy
- be able to historically contextualize a film and to read the history of a country in between the lines of its films
- develop the ability to conduct basic research, organize and present their findings in a logical and independent way.

## Expectations

You will be expected to discuss course readings in class including reactions to the readings. Take notes from the lectures and the sites that we visit to draw from for your assignments.

All work in the class will be based on lectures, readings, film screenings, and on-site presentations. Stay close and stay alert. Ask questions.

In all activities in or outside the classroom students are expected to behave with maturity and respect for their classmates, professors, and the general public. When on-site, the group must stay close together.

All work must be completed on time following precise instructions regarding file-types and names.

## Attendance and Participation

Classroom attendance is a necessary part of the course. Students are allowed no more than 2 unexcused absences; after the 3rd absence the grade will decrease by 1/2 letter grade or 5% per absence.

Unexcused absences include injury and illnesses that do not require medical attention; therefore, while it is your choice to skip class to travel or spend time with a guest who is visiting, you may regret that choice if you later become ill and have already used up your allowed absences. If you experience prolonged illness or more than 3 days that will adversely affect your attendance, you will be asked to provide documentation of the illness, an absence letter from the Office of the Dean of Students, and a plan approved by the instructor for making up for the missed work.

As soon as you know you will not be attending a class for whatever reason you are responsible for informing both your Instructor and Learning Facilitator by text message.

This attendance policy is to be considered integral to the University of Illinois policies on class attendance as described in the [Student Code](#).

Participation is part of your grade in the course. To participate you must attend class having prepared the material for the day. All students are responsible for reading all materials assigned.

Punctuality is a requirement for the course; students are expected to come to class on time and remain for the full class period. Please calculate appropriate time for transportation depending on the meeting place.

Eating is not allowed during classes, in churches, museums, galleries.

All cell phones or any other electronic devices must be absolutely turned off during classes unless arrangements have been made to use them to take notes. Photographs can only be taken to record relevant information only; selfies and touristic shots can be made outside of class time.

In case of remote participation, students are required to have access to a laptop/computer with audio capabilities and a functional webcam. Participants are required to have reliable access to internet/WiFi.

## Assignments

Specific assignment briefs will be given during the first week of the course; the description here is generic and subject to modification.

**30% Class Presentation (15 slides+1 bibliographic slide)**  
30-to-35-minute presentation

**30% Final Exam**  
Final Exam (Italian Cinema and History, 2 hours). Final exam composed of: 1) Short open answers (notions/information); 2) Critical explanation of key-concepts; 3) multiple choice on history and cinema

**30% Reaction Paper** (circa 500 words, Arial 12)

**10% Class Participation**

Students' attentive presence in class is an important component of the final grade. To earn maximum credit for class participation students are expected to answer questions posed during lessons and voice relevant questions and observations.

### What is a Class Presentation?

For this course, it's a 30-to-35-minute presentation in which you come "to the podium" to address your peers about:

- One of the films viewed in this course, or
- One historical period of Italy presented in class by the prof, or
- A combination of a) and b), relating the movie that stroke you the most with the period of history you consider to be more appropriate

How are you supposed to do so? You need to come with an original PPT presentation of yours (i.e. not downloaded from any site, nor done from anybody else other than yourself alone, of 15 slides+1 bibliography slide, font Calibri 24), and you will be evaluated on the content, which has to be based on the readings and the lectures, but also on the quality of the work you put together, i.e. the graphic/artistic side of your PPT, the way you address the class, the quality of questions that you will bring up to our attention, if you have done some personal research in addition to what was given to you as a base reading, if your PPT has a few seconds of film citation, the quality of analysis presented in relation to cinema studies). It's also possible to work in pairs to a class presentation, and in that case your presentation will have to be 60-minute long, with a minimum of 30 slides+1 bibliography. The mark on a pair presentation might still be different according to the evaluation of the professor.

### **What is a Reaction Paper?**

A Reaction Paper is not an academic paper. It's a short paper (circa 500 words, maximum 2 pages, 1.5 line spacing, Arial 12 pt) in which you are allowed to use the "I" form and do not have to engage in academic research, nor summarize the plot of the movie or the reading you chose. You "only" need to write the emotions that a given film or reading and the class debate evoked in you. For example:

I liked this movie/reading because...

- I liked this movie/reading because...
- I didn't like this movie /reading because...
- This movie/reading left me indifferent because...
- I had already seen this movie/read this text, yet now rewatching/rereading has changed my mind about it because...
- At first I didn't understand what this movie/reading was about. Then, after having listened to the class debate, I share the opinion of Mr. Smith who pointed out how this meant that... Which is convincing in light of this and that...

Moreover, if you choose to speak about a movie, you may choose one character that you particularly loved or hated, and explain the reasons you are partial to that character. You may, as well, address technical issues, as:

- I believe the direction/photography/soundtrack/acting/script of this movie was striking/not striking because... (with detailed examples about why you appreciated/didn't appreciate the director's cut or the issue addressed)

### **Citation Method**

Use the MLA style for your footnotes/endnotes and bibliography (this is required both for direct quotations and for paraphrasing other people's work). See Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1998. Also for your PPT you need to quote every picture and source you use in your concluding bibliography slide.

### **Grading Criteria**

The following general criteria will be used when grading all assignments:

1. **Research:** the degree to which the student demonstrates that the subject matter has been adequately investigated. Grades will be determined by the ability to demonstrate in the assignments that material supports knowledge building by using empirical research –such as field observations–, theory, and practice wisdom.
2. **Conceptual Ability:** the ability to grasp abstract concepts, think logically and organize ideas into a conceptual whole. Grades will be determined on the basis of the student's ability to move along a

continuum from abstraction to concreteness, to deal systematically with material presented in class, in readings and in field observations.

3. Communication: the ability to organize and transmit ideas in written, graphic, and, when appropriate, oral form. Students should strive to use proper syntax; express ideas clearly, punctuate, spell and, where appropriate, employ symbolic and visual modes of communication.
4. Analytical Thinking: the ability to analyze, present and evaluate concepts.
5. Timeliness and Completeness

Final grades are reported at the end of each term in the following way:

100%	A+	Exceptional; significantly exceeds the highest expectations for undergraduate work
95%	A	Outstanding; meets the highest standards for the assignment or course
90%	A-	Excellent; meets very high standards for the assignment or course
85%	B+	Very good; meets high standards for the assignment or course
80%	B	Good; meets most of the standards for the assignment or course
75%	B-	More than adequate; shows some reasonable command of the material
70%	C+	Acceptable; meets basic standards for the assignment or course
65%	C	Acceptable; meets some of the basic standards for the assignment or course
60%	C-	Acceptable, while falling short of meeting basic standards in several ways
55%	D	Minimally acceptable; lowest passing grade
50%	F	Failing; very poor performance

## Class Organization

The course will use experience-centered design approaches to the subject matter, and active participation by the students will be an essential element of the course.

Occasionally class will take place on site with thematic visits to parts of the city where the themes discussed in the lectures and readings can be observed.

For site visits, please arrive at the assigned meeting place before the appointed time as we cannot wait for stragglers. Dress appropriately for the weather and respectable appearance; ask if you are unsure of what is considered appropriate.

### Notes on on-site lessons

Apart from occasional in-class lectures most of the information in the course will be delivered on-site. These notes are to help students get the most out of the unique field learning experience:

- Stay close and stay alert. Ask questions.
- Take notes and maintain sketches from the lectures and the sites that we visit to draw from for your assignments.
- Students will be required to have all the needed material with them, including the right clothes for outdoor visits.

During the visits the students will need the following material/items:

- Map, meeting address and suggested bus route. Don't forget your monthly bus card
- Comfortable walking clothes and shoes
- Bottle of water
- Depending on the weather, umbrella and rain boots /sunscreen, hat, sunglasses
- When visiting church: no shorts or short skirts, no tank top

- Notebook with rigid cover, pen

During the onsite classes students will be provided with audio headsets. All students are responsible for the integrity and safety of their own headset and headphones. The audio-guides must be returned to the professor at the end of the class.

### **A note on “Critical Field Studies”**

At the Borromini Institute we use ‘critical field studies’ to refer to courses where considerable time is spent observing and participating in activities in the ‘field.’ We recognize this as a distinct method of learning and one quite distinct from normal classroom activities. It requires students to be active learners, and to seek out learning opportunities often while working with or observing local people or specialists. Such opportunities are often explored with other members of the student group in research or ethnographic projects. Projects give students the opportunity to grasp the significance of behaviour occurring in a second culture and to situate it using the best available ideas in today’s academy.

In the same way, we encourage our students to always carry a notebook and to use it to take notes or draw sketches whenever confronted by unusual behavior. Increasingly students are taking advantage of digital ways to record and edit local culture. Indeed, it is not unusual for students to present digital portfolios at the end of courses as part of their assignments.

Our courses are ‘critical’ in the sense that we ask students to study the way the world “is” but also to think about or design how it “might be” or “should” be. This argument goes beyond a “value neutral” position and suggests that we have created ourselves – and our world -- in the Anthropocene era and bear responsibility for our collective future. It is, indeed, ‘our world’ and its future is in our hands.

### **Communication**

The Instructor is always available during and after class to answer questions and can be contacted by email for additional feedback or clarification. Emails will be answered within 24 hours, and usually more quickly, unless otherwise indicated. To request an appointment to speak in person or video-conference send an email indicating the issue and possible times.

There is an expectation of professional tone in verbal and written communication. Salutation and sign-off are required in emails (essential to determine the intended recipient and sender) and avoid emojis and slang. Check your spelling and grammar before submitting any written work, including an email to your professor. (It’s a good habit to get into now).

### **Learning Facilitator**

Students may also reach out to the Learning Facilitator (Erica Cacopardo [courses@gustolab.com](mailto:courses@gustolab.com)) to discuss general matters related to the course. The GLi Learning Facilitator is available to provide practical support as well as assist students should any misunderstandings emerge in relation to their academic courses. For instance, any needs related to learning accommodations, drop/add period, or attendance policy should be taken up directly with the GLi Learning Facilitator.

### **Freedom of Speech**

Borromini Institute supports and upholds the protection of freedom of speech and the principle of academic freedom in order to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech as long as student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and conveyed in an appropriate manner.

### **Academic Integrity**

It is the responsibility of each student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions. The university [policy on academic integrity](#) should be consulted

Plagiarism is a serious academic violation and should be taken seriously. One is responsible for plagiarism when: the exact words of another writer are used without using quotation marks and indicating the source of the words; the words of another are summarized or paraphrased without giving the credit that is due; the ideas from another writer are borrowed without properly documenting their source. For more information on plagiarism policies see: <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-402/>

### Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Per our policy, students with a documented disability are entitled to, and will receive, reasonable academic accommodations to ensure their ability to successfully participate in and complete this course.

According to University of Illinois policy, such students must "disclose disability-related condition(s) in a timely manner within the planning process to study abroad and initiate discussion or communicate needs to DRES, study abroad coordinator, and host institution—these offices will be unaware of any questions or concerns unless they are brought to their attention." Please make an appointment during office hours to discuss any such disability with the instructor. Students are responsible for bringing to the instructor's attention any accommodation needs prior to or early in the term.

### COVID-19 health and safety requirements

Students are responsible for abiding by their university's and COVID-19 health and Borromini Institute's safety expectations. All students attending this class in-person are required to follow university policy regarding health, safety, and face coverings.

## Course Calendar

This outline is intended merely to present the seminar's organization and its principle themes. Refer to the academic calendar for further details.

WEEK	Content	Task
WK 1	Course Introduction, Concepts and Themes, Assignment brief preview.	Reading: no reading
WK 2	The cultures of Italy FILM: P. Sorrentino, <i>The Great Beauty</i> , 2013	Reading: "Mary Beard: why ancient Rome matters to the modern world." The Guardian, 2nd Oct 2015. Downloadable at: <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/02/mary-beard-why-ancient-rome-matters">https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/02/mary-beard-why-ancient-rome-matters</a> Mignone 2008: pp. 6-11; 12-28
WK 3	Italy enters the modern world FILM: M. Martone, <i>Noi credevamo</i> , 2010	Reading: Gilmour, D. pp. 7-38 Modern Italian Culture: pp. 35-62 by Anna Cento Bull "Social and political cultures in Italy from 1860 to the present day"
WK 4	Visit to sites of Italian political institutions. Meet in Piazza dell'Orologio (Città Metropolitana)	Reading: Clark, 74-81 "Parliament";
WK 5	Liberal Italy FILM: Bertolucci 900, ACT 1	Reading: Clark, 244-73 "The strange death of Liberal Italy, 1919-25"

WEEK	Content	Task
WK 6	Film: Monicelli, La Grande Guerra	Reading: Clark, 193-200 “An Italian People?”; 217-41 “Italy and the Great War”
WK 7	Class Presentations	Reading: Clark, 164-192 “Politics in the age of Giolitti”
WK 8	BREAK	
WK 9	Fascism and its victims Visit to the former Jewish ghetto of Rome Meet in Piazza dell’Orologio	Reading: Clark, 276-89 “The Fascist State: the new authoritarianism”;
WK 10	Rome’s post-war dialectic center-periphery <b>Visit to Rebibbia</b> <b>Meet outside Metro Rebibbia</b> FILM: F. Fellini, La dolce vita	Reading: P.P. Pasolini, “Selection of poems” Reading: E. Flaiano, A Martian in Rome
WK 11	Fascist Identity  <b>Visit to EUR district of Rome</b> <b>Meet at Porta San Paolo</b>	<b>Reaction Paper due</b> Reading: Clark, 290-313 “The Fascist regime: the quest for consensus” Reich Jacqueline, “Mussolini at the Movies: Fascism, Film, and Culture” from J. Reich and P. Garofalo (edited by), “Re-viewing Fascism. Italian Cinema, 1922-1943.
WK 12	The Church in Modern Italy FILM: The Young Pope (eps. 1-2)	Reading: Allum, <i>Catholicism</i> from Z. Baranski and R. West (eds.), <i>Modern Italian Culture</i>
WK 13	68, Anni di Piombo FILM: Good Morning, Night, M. Bellocchio	Contemporary Italian Terrorism and Its Limits from R. Drake, <i>The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy</i>
WK 14	New Identity for Italy  <b>Museo delle Periferie – Tor Bella Monaca</b>	Reading: F. Mazzara, <i>Redefining Italian Spaces: Piazza Vittorio and Migratory Aesthetics in Rome: Modernity, Postmodernity and Beyond</i> , L. Caldwell – F. Camilletti (eds)
WK 15	Organized Crime in Italy Film: M. Bellocchio, The Traitor	Reading: <i>Reversible destiny : mafia, antimafia, and the struggle for Palermo</i> / Jane C. Schneider [and] Peter T. Schneider.
WK 16	Final Exam	



## Bibliography

A digital copy of all required readings will be provided in pdf format. An additional bibliography of suggested and recommended readings is provided below to assist students in their research.

### Required

Beard, Mary. "Mary Beard: why ancient Rome matters to the modern world." *The Guardian*, 2nd Oct 2015. Downloadable at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/02/mary-beard-why-ancient-rome-matters>

Clark, Martin. *Modern Italy. 1871 to the Present*. Third Edition, Longman, 2008. 978-1405823524.

Garau, Salvatore. *Fascism and Ideology. Italy, Britain and Norway*. Routledge, 2015.

Gilmour, David. *The Pursuit of Italy. A History of a Land, Its Regions and Their Peoples.* Penguin, 2011.

Leonardi, Robert. *Government and Politics of Italy*. Palgrave, 2017.

Stone, Marla, "The Last Film Festival: The Venice Biennale Goes to War", from J. Reich and P. Garofalo (edited by), "Re-viewing Fascism. Italian Cinema, 1922-1943.

### Recommended

Mignone, Mario B. *Italy Today: Facing the Challenges of the New Millennium*. Peter Lang Publishing, 2008

Mammone, Andrea and Giuseppe A. Veltri (eds.) *Italy Today. The Sick Man of Europe*. Routledge, 2010.

Cento Bull, Anna. Social and political cultures in Italy from 1860 to the present day. In: Baransky, Zygmunt G., West, Rebecca J. . *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. 35 - 62.

Cento Bull, Anna and Cooke, Philip. Studying how terrorism ends: the Italian case. In: *Ending terrorism in Italy*. Routledge, 2006, 17 - 29.

### Films

1954, Roberto Rossellini, *Journey to Italy*

2010, Mario Martone, *Noi credevamo*

1976, Bernardo Bertolucci, *Novecento, atto I*

1945, Roberto Rossellini, *Roma città aperta*

1973, Federico Fellini, *Amarcord*

1978, Ermanno Olmi, *L'albero degli zoccoli*

2008, Paolo Sorrentino, *Il divo*

2008, Matteo Garrone, *Gomorra*

2009, Erik Gandini, *Videocracy*

Comencini Cristina, "Latin Lover"