



SYLLABUS

NEOREALIST CINEMA

Instructor: Sergio Rigoletto
Language of Instruction: English
UO Credits: 4
Contact Hours: 40

SIENA, ITALY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The term Neorealism refers to a set of films made in Italy at the end of World War 2. This was a time when the country was in ruins and the Italian film industry was on its knees: the main film studios in Rome (Cinecittà) had been expropriated and turned into refuge camps; equipment to shoot films was extremely hard to find and electrical power supply was very limited. Rather than making film production impossible, these obstacles actually instigated the emergence of a new way of making films. Shooting on location and in available light became a necessity; and because of the impact of the war on the landscape, contemporary reality became the inevitable prime subject matter. In addition, non-professional actors were widely cast to play leading roles, often next to more experienced actors. This particular way of making films had a huge influence around the world: the famous Indian director Satyajit Ray talked about his encounter with neorealism as a life-changing experience; but Neorealism also influenced heavily Hollywood cinema and represented an ideal reference point for the French New wave.

The course will provide an overview of Neorealist cinema within its particular social, economic and industrial contexts. Students will learn what particular formal and technical specificities characterized Neorealist filmmaking. They will also explore the aesthetic and ethical significance of Neorealism in the context of world cinema and its particular attitude to reality.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Expected Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the term, students will:

1. be able to relate films to some of the major events in 20th century Italy (including WW2, post-war reconstruction etc.).
2. be able to relate the style and content of films to the context of a world media market.
3. acquire a basic vocabulary for articulating the relationship between words, images, sounds and meanings.
4. gain familiarity with the technology of cinema and with techniques of filming and editing.
5. outline the thematic concerns and formal features of these films.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Introduction

Reading:

- Wagstaff, Christopher, 'Appendix 2: Historical background for neorealism' in Wagstaff, Christopher, *Italian Neorealist Cinema; An Aesthetic Approach*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007), 414-419.
- Shiel, Mark, 'Introduction: Describing Neorealism' in Shiel, Mark, *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City* (New York: Wallflower, 2006), 1-16.

Week 2: Beginnings

Film: *Rome Open City* (1945)

Reading:

- Sorlin, Pierre, *Italian National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 88-107.
- Shiel, Mark, 'Rome, Open City', in Shiel, Mark, *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City* (New York: Wallflower, 2006), 46-53.

Week 3: A Cinema of Liberation: Cinema as Documentary

Film: *Paisan* (1946)

Reading:

- Bazin, André, 'Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation' in Cardullo, Bert (Ed.), *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 29-50.
- Marcus, Millicent, 'National Identity by Means of Montage in Roberto Rossellini's *Paisan*' in Marcus, Millicent, *After Fellini* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 15-38.

Week 4: Bazin, Realism and De Sica/Zavattini

Film: *Bicycle Thieves* (1948)

Reading:

- Bazin, André, 'Bicycle Thieves' in Cardullo, Bert (Ed.), *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 61-73.
- Bazin, André, 'De Sica: Metteur-en-Scène' in Bazin, André, *What is Cinema? Vol. 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 59-76.

Week 5: Re-discovering Reality

Film: *Umberto D.* (1952)

Reading:

- Zavattini, Cesare, 'Some Ideas on the Cinema' in Curle, Howard and Snyder, Stephen (eds.), *Vittorio De Sica. Contemporary Perspectives* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2000), 50- 61.
- Bazin, André, 'Umberto D.: a Great Work' in Cardullo, Bert (Ed.), *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 111-116.

Week 6: Neorealist Heterodoxies

Film: *Bitter Rice* (1949)

Reading:

- Marcus, Millicent, 'De Santis's *Bitter Rice*: A neorealist hybrid' in Marcus, Millicent, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 76-95.

*** First assignment due**

Week 7: Ideology and Social Change

Film: *La terra trema* (1948)

Reading:

- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, 'La Terra Trema' in Nowel-Smith, Geoffrey, *Luchino Visconti* (London: BFI, 1973), 33-54.
- Bazin, André, 'La Terra Trema' in Cardullo, Bert (Ed.), *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 51-56.

Week 8: Neorealist Stardom and Performance

Film: *Bellissima* (1951)

Reading:

- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, 'Bellissima' in Nowel-Smith, Geoffrey, *Luchino Visconti* (London: BFI, 1973), 55-68.
- Marcus, Millicent, 'Luchino Visconti's *Bellissima*' in Marcus, Millicent, *After Fellini* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 39-58.

Week 9: The End of Neorealism?

Film: *The Nights of Cabiria* (1957)

Reading:

- Bazin, André, '*Cabiria*: The Voyage to the End of Neorealism' in Cardullo, Bert (Ed.), *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 195-203.

Week 10: Presentations

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METHOD OF EVALUATION

Assessments:

- First assignment (Mid-term) (40%)
- Presentation + Research paper (60%)

The first assignment (Mid-term) will be handed in class on week 5 and is due the following week.

The research paper should be 2,500 words long and is due on the final/exam week. This final piece of coursework will be a paper on a particular topic chosen by the student. Students are strongly encouraged to consult me to discuss their ideas for the paper beforehand. On week 10, students will give a presentation in class on the topic chosen. The presentation should last no more than 10 minutes (longer or excessively shorter presentations will be penalized).

Late course work

No late papers will be accepted unless you contact me *in advance* about a serious illness or other emergency. Hard copies of assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day listed.

Missing course work

If you fail to submit your work or fail to do your presentation, you will lose all points for that particular component of the course.

Attendance

You are expected to arrive on time and stay the full class. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet every time. If you miss a class, you must check with your classmates to find out what you have missed. *Three absences will affect your grade, without notice. Four absences will result in failure for the course.*

Readings

All readings are available digitally on Blackboard under Course Documents.

Paper grading

A – The paper addresses all elements in the prompt comprehensively and (as far as possible) exhaustively incorporates material from lectures, discussions and readings. It provides extra insights and makes further arguments in addition to what was discussed in class. All supporting details serve to substantiate the argument and give the reader important information that goes well beyond the obvious and predictable. The arguments are logically structured, the conclusions drawn are strong and the paper provides a clear answer to the question “So what?” The paper contains explanation, analysis, discussion, comparison/contrast that demonstrate mastery and depth of understanding. The text is written clearly and elegantly, it is proofread and there are no grammatical or

spelling mistakes. Sources are documented and the paper is formatted correctly.

B – The paper adequately addresses the prompt and most ideas are supported with arguments from lectures, discussions, and with references to class readings. However, the paper only provides limited extra insights and makes hardly any further arguments. The paper clearly structures the arguments, the conclusions drawn are logical and the paper adequately answers the question “So what?” The paper contains explanation, analysis, discussion, comparison/contrast that logically support the concrete details. The text is written clearly and contains no more than two errors in spelling or grammar. Sources are documented and the paper is formatted correctly.

C – The paper addresses the prompt and reflects an adequate exploration of the issues. Material from lectures, discussions and readings is incorporated, but no extra thoughts, comments, or answers are provided. Supporting details are relevant, but some ideas remain unsupported. The paper lacks concrete details and contains explanation, analysis, discussion, comparison and/or contrast that is weak or off topic. The structure is clear and conclusions drawn are logical, but do not always answer the question “So what?” The text shows three or four errors in spelling or grammar. Sources are used, though not always documented. For the most part, the paper is formatted correctly.

D – The paper addresses the prompt only partially and only superficially incorporates material from lectures, discussions and readings to support its claims. The paper hardly shows evidence of engaged reading. It gives few concrete details, ideas are often unsupported and the paper clings to generalities. The text shows five or six errors in spelling or grammar. Formatting and source documentation do not meet the standard.

F – Superficial attempt at addressing the prompt. Few details are given and it is questionable whether the student has engaged with the material presented in class. There are more than six errors in grammar or spelling. Overall impression of carelessness and minimal effort.

Academic Misconduct

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional

information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Reporting

Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources and help at safe.uoregon.edu. To get help by phone, a student can also call either the UO's 24-hour hotline at 541-346-7244 [SAFE], or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator at 541-346-8136. From the SAFE website, students may also connect to Callisto, a confidential, third-party reporting site that is not a part of the university.

Students experiencing any other form of prohibited discrimination or harassment can find information at respect.uoregon.edu or aaeo.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential AAEO office at 541-346-3123 or the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 for help. As UO policy has different reporting requirements based on the nature of the reported harassment or discrimination, additional information about reporting requirements for discrimination or harassment unrelated to sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment is available at [Discrimination & Harassment](#).

The instructor of this class, as a Student Directed Employee, will direct students who disclose sexual harassment or sexual violence to resources that can help and will only report the information shared to the university administration when the student requests that the information be reported (unless someone is in imminent risk of serious harm or a minor). The instructor of this class is required to report all other forms of prohibited discrimination or harassment to the university administration.

Specific details about confidentiality of information and reporting obligations of employees can be found at titleix.uoregon.edu.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

UO employees, including faculty, staff, and GEs, are mandatory reporters of child abuse. This statement is to advise you that your disclosure of information about child abuse to a UO employee may trigger the UO employee's duty to report that information to the designated authorities. Please refer to the following links for detailed information about mandatory reporting: [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

Students with Disabilities

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uaec@uoregon.edu.

