

Rome in Cinema: Representations of The Eternal City in Italian and American Cinemas

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Semester: Fall 2023

Meeting time: TR 12pm-1:30pm

Location: BENN 244

Office hours: WILL 537. Tuesday, 10am-11am; Thursday, 2pm-3pm; By appointment.

Course Description: In this course we will look at the different ways in which Rome's cityscape has been represented in 20th and 21st century Italian and American cinemas, intersecting with historical events such as WWI, the rise of Italian fascism, WWII, the 1960s economic boom, as well as the political impact of the current migratory crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. Why is Rome often referred to as "The Eternal City"? In what ways has the myth of Rome's eternality been politically exploited throughout Italy's modern history? Students will acquire technical vocabulary to improve their visual interpretation skills, as well as knowledge of some of the most impactful historical and cultural events of last century. Requirements will include readings in cultural and film history, active participation in class discussion, reading responses, blog posts, a midterm paper (or a Project, or a Movie Review), and a final exam. Films may include *Roman Holiday* (William Wyler, 1953), *La Dolce Vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960), *Accattone* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1961), *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999), *The Great Beauty* (Paolo Sorrentino, 2013).

Course Requirements:

- 1) **Participation (20% of grade).** Participation is a substantial part of your grade and is **extremely** important to your success. You are required keep track of our Canvas site and review the week's course material. Watch the film, read the assigned material, submit the weekly assignments in a timely fashion (reading and film responses). I'd recommend you to read the assigned readings and watch the weekly movie before the beginning of the next week.

Once you have been absent more than two classes, your grade will be lowered one sign (i.e., a B+ will become a B). Each subsequent absence will result in the final grade being lowered by an additional sign. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out assignments and be prepared for class. You are expected to come to class on time. Repeated tardiness will be counted toward an absence. You must report absences through the **Course Action Notices** available through Path@Penn. For further information regarding attendance, consult the College webpage on Policies Governing Class Attendance: <https://www.college.upenn.edu/attendance>

- 2) **Reading/Movie Responses (20% of grade).** I will ask you to write a reading response for some essays, or a movie response for some movies, and upload it on Canvas. The aim of this assignment is to help you coming to class with a clearer idea of the meaning of the assigned

readings. You are also expected to contribute to class discussion with your questions about the readings.

- 3) **Blog Posts (20% of final grade).** Three times during the semester, students will have to write and post a blog post on Canvas (around 500 words). This online response, to be presented orally in class on the following day, will perform a close reading of a sequence/image taken from the weekly film. In your post you are not only expected to produce some original insights about the assigned movie, but also to connect your reading of the movie to the readings of the week. If you fail to connect the blog post to the readings of the week your grade is going to be lowered by 1/2 letter grade. The students who are not assigned to write the post on that week will be responsible for responding to the post, always on Canvas (around 100 words). This is going to be the foundation of our class discussion.
- 4) **Midterm Paper, or Project, or Movie Review (20% of final grade).** For this assignment, you will work through an aspect, or a movie, of the first half of the course, developing or a paper or a project or a movie review. I will provide prompts and specific instructions regarding these assignments a few weeks in advance of due dates.
- 5) **Final Exam (20% of final grade).** Exam is composed of True and False statements, short questions, film analysis and essay questions. The exam questions can include the history of the mafia, the films analyzed, as well as all the readings discussed throughout the semester. It's essential that you keep up with the readings and watch the films throughout the semester.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Grade %</u>
Participation & Attendance	throughout semester	20%
Reading Responses	throughout semester	20%
Blog Posts	Weekly	20%
Midterm Paper	TBD	20%
Final Exam	TBD	20%

Grading:

I will base your grades on your class participation, the quality of your writing, and your responses to the work of others, both written and oral. Assignment guidelines and grading criteria will be available on Canvas. Please note that grades cannot be changed without a rewrite (allowed only for grades of C or lower unless otherwise stated). Final grades will be determined on the basis of the rubric below. I will be using the plus/minus system for final grades. Please note: to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. Thus a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.000 through 83.999. A+ is only given for truly outstanding, exceptional work.

A+ = 99-100	A = 94-98	A- = 90-93	B+ = 87-89	B = 84-86	B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79	C = 74-76	C- = 70-73	D+ = 67-69	D = 64-66	D- = 60-63

Late Submission of Work Policy

All course work (reading responses, blog posts, midterm paper, final exam) must be submitted on due time and date, unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor, and a new date is established. Late work will be penalized 1/3 letter grade for every day that it is late. Unless agreed upon beforehand, if you miss a presentation, you cannot reschedule it. Please utilize office hours if you are struggling with this course, particular assignments or simply want to talk about a paper topic.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence and other tools may be accurate but often fail to consider the context, register, and cultural backgrounds/implications of a language. One of the things to remember is that these tools are only useful if they aid your learning and not replace it; mistakes are important for learning, as are revisions and practice. If you use any tools to complete your assignments, be sure you acknowledge their use and indicate why you used them (grammar, vocabulary, ideas, other reasons).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism results in failure for the course and action by the university; if you are unclear about what it is please consult Chapter 14 of *TFE* and the SAS policy on plagiarism.

Tentative Course Schedule:

Week 1 – The Eternal City

Read:

- Stephanie Malia Hom, “Consuming the View: Tourism, Rome and the Topos of the Eternal City”
- Alberto Zambenedetti, “Roman Holidays: Rome as an International Destination On- Screen”
- Tim Corrigan and Patricia White, “Elements of the Mise-en-scene”

Watch:

- *Roman Holiday* (William Wyler, 1953)

Week 2 – Ancient Rome, and its importance in the Italian history.

Read:

- Seden Dogan, “A brief history of Rome”
- Carl J. Mora, “The Image of Ancient Rome in the Cinema”
- Jonathan Stubbs, “ ‘A more permanent world’: *Quo vadis* (1951), Runaway Production, and the Internationalization of Hollywood”

Watch:

- *Quo vadis* (1951, Mervyn LeRoy).

Week 3 – Rise and Fall of Fascism

Read:

- John Agnew, “Ghosts of Rome: The Haunting of Fascist Efforts at Remaking Rome as Italy’s Capital City”

Watch:

- *The Conformist* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970)

Week 4 – Fascism and Its Others

Read:

- Brian Tholl, “Italy Must Be Defended. Surveillance and Biopolitics in *Una giornata particolare*”
- Dana Renga, “Screening *Confino*: Male Melodrama and Exile Cinema”
- Sandra Ponzenesi, “Queering European Sexualities Through Italy’s Fascist Past”

Watch:

- *A Special Day* (Ettore Scola, 1977)

Week 5 – World War II

Read:

- Tim Corrigan and Patricia White, “Elements of Editing”
- David Forgacs, “Space, Rhetoric, and the Divided City in *Rome, Open City*”

Watch:

- *Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945)

Week 6 – The Age of Neorealism

Read:

- Peter Bondanella, “Italian Neorealism. The Postwar Renaissance of Italian Cinema”

- Helio San Miguel, “Neo-realist Rome: The Gritty Side of the Eternal City”

Watch:

- *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948)

Week 7 – Gender in the City

- John David Rhodes, “Watching Italians Turn Around: Gender, Looking, and Roman/Cinematic Modernity”
- Laura Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative

Cinema”

- Watch: *Bellissima* (Luchino Visconti, 1953)

Week 8: Midterm Exam

Week 9 – Peripheral Margins

Read:

- John David Rhodes, “A Short History of the Roman Periphery”
- John David Rhodes, “Scandalous Desecration: *Accattone* against the Neorealist City”

Watch:

- *Accattone* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1961)

Week 10: Boom and Ennui

Read:

- Eugenia Paulicelli, “Reframing History: Federico Fellini’s Rome, Fashion and Costume”
- Manuela Mariani and Patrick Barron, “Cinematic Space in Rome’s Disabitato: Between Metropolis and Terrain Vague in the Films of Fellini, Antonioni, and Pasolini”

Watch:

- *La dolce vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960)

Week 11: American Fantasies

Read:

- Jacqui Miller, “An American in Europe: US Colonialism in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*”

- Tim Corrigan and Patricia White, “Elements of Sound”

Watch:

- *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999)

Week 12: 1970s Terrorism

Read:

- Alan O’Leary, “Italian Terrorisms/Italian Film”
- Allison Cooper, “Romanzo criminale: Roma Caput Violandi”

Watch:

- *Romanzo criminale* (Michele Placido, 2004)

Week 13: Queer Rome

Read:

- Derek Duncan, “Stairway to Heaven: Ferzan Özpetek and the Revision of Italy”
- Millicent Marcus, “The Present through the Eyes of the Past: Ferzan Ozpetek’s *La finestra di fronte*”

Watch:

- *Facing Windows* (Ferzan Özpetek, 2004)

Week 14: Postmodern Rome

Read:

- Dom Holdway and Filippo Trentin, “Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a

Cityscape”

Watch:

- *Roma* (Federico Fellini, 1972)

Week 15: Final review