



HIST 350 - Special Topics: Cultural Dialogues: Italy and United States

(45 contact hours, 3 credits)

Faculty: Dr. Alessandro Buffa

Spring 2022

This course surveys cultural relations between Italy and the United States from the end on 19th century to the present. Rather than just comparing historical events we will place them in juxtaposition focusing on unexpected and critical connections. We will embark on a transatlantic journey tracing multiple histories that connect past and present, global and local: Migration, sounds, moving images, international relations and politics, radicalism, race and racialism, the American Century, the truly global aspect of World War II, organized crime, the urban crises of the 1970s, global media flows, power and mass communication, youth culture, and imperialism.

Course Materials:

P. Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, MacMillian, latest edition.

M. Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

A list of readings will be also provided by the instructor.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate creative thinking by linking content and insights from multiple disciplines;
2. In written, oral, and/or visual communication, students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organization structure;
3. Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues;
4. Students will understand and practice academic honesty.
5. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interconnectedness of global dynamics (issues, processes, trends, and systems)

Course requirements

- Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required and will be taken daily. Students coming in late will be considered absent. Excessive absences will impact the final grade significantly. Students are responsible for all material covered in class meetings, regardless of their physical presence in the room. Students are expected to come prepared to engage with and discuss the assigned material. This means preparing the assignment before class and bringing the reading material to class.

All students are expected to participate in class discussions and to contribute their thoughts, ideas, and questions to our collective exploration. Students are especially encouraged to bring their questions to class. Both students and instructor will create and uphold an intellectual environment in the classroom where we can listen to and consider others' arguments and opinions with an open mind and where we respect viewpoints other than our own.

- Assignments

Film Reviews: students will write two film reviews and two short papers over the course of the term. The film papers are due as indicated in the Course Schedule. These should be 2-page reviews (double-spaced,

standard font and margins) of the film that summarizes the message of the movie and highlights its significance.

Papers: the two papers are due as indicated on the Course Schedule. Each paper should be 3-5 pages in length, and include a thesis statement and evidence that supports that thesis. Papers should be double-spaced, with standard margins and font. Papers should cite all words and ideas that are not the student's own using a recognizable citation system. Papers should draw from class materials and discussions but may also pull in outside research as necessary. Each paper should refer to at least two different sources.

Class Journal: A weekly journal based upon the reading and discussion.

Final Project: Each student will complete a final project that addresses an aspect of the course. These projects will be presented both orally and visually. Preparation for the final project will take place over the course of the semester and will build on other work completed. Students should choose their final topics fairly early in the semester and gear their papers toward that goal. Final projects will contain three elements:

- 1) a visual presentation with images and text (properly cited);
- 2) a 3-5 page working paper that presents the issue at hand and the student's assessment of that issue (with proper citations);
- 3) an annotated bibliography of at least academic 5 sources from at least three different disciplines

Grade Breakdown:

- Attendance/Participation: 10%
- Film Reviews: 10%
- Papers: 25%
- Class Journal: 25%
- Final Project: 30%

Grading

95-100 = A

90-94 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

70-72 = C-

67-69 = D+

63-66 = D

60-62 = D-

59 or less = F

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Students are encouraged to contact the professor for any and all reasons whatsoever.

COURSE PROCEDURES/POLICIES

- Classroom Behavior

All students are expected to observe basic tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior. This means turning off cell phones, pagers, iPods, and other devices, and putting away newspapers and other forms of distraction, for the duration of the class period (exceptions will be allowed for emergencies with advance permission of the professor). Please come to class on time and plan to stay for the entire period. Coming late and/or disrupting the learning environment shows disrespect for the Faculty and your colleagues.

- Late Assignments

Late assignments may be accepted only with the advance approval of the professor and will be assessed a late penalty of one letter grade per day late. If you have a problem with a due date because of a specific emergency, please notify the professor in advance or plan to turn the assignment in early. To pass this class, all assignments must be completed. Any missing assignments at the end of the course will result in an overall

course grade of D or F.

- **Contesting a grade**

If students wish to contest a grade they must make an appointment to do so in person. The student should contact the instructor with any concerns within ONE week of receiving the grade. The student must also demonstrate that they have read the comments accompanying the grade by presenting a brief written statement specifying why the grade does not reflect the quality of the work.

It is at the discretion of the instructor to decide whether the work and the student's request warrant any increase or decrease in the grade. Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments and feedback (in case of loss) and should also retain all of their marked assignments.

- **Academic Honesty Statement**

Academic dishonesty is NOT tolerated in this course. Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship.

Cheating and plagiarism are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity. If you refer to someone else's work, appropriate references and citations must be provided.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Introduction

Unit 2: Southern Questions: Italy and the US

- ✓ Jim Crow Laws in the US
- ✓ The Southern Question in Italy

Unit 3: Italian Immigration to the United States

- ✓ Italian and Southern European immigration to the US
- ✓ The Voyage of Film Image (Early cinema)
- ✓ Italian Anarchists
- ✓ *Paterson* (by Jim Jarmusch)

Unit 3: The Age of Empires

- ✓ Cultures of US Imperialism
- ✓ Italy in the Age of Empire
- ✓ Responses to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in Harlem, N.Y.
- ✓ "Italiani brava gente"
- ✓ Encountering Mass Culture

Unit 4: The 1920s

- ✓ Woodrow Wilson
- ✓ the American Century
- ✓ Jazz in the World
- ✓ Italian American Musicians
- ✓ Fascism in Italy
- ✓ Perception of Italian fascism in the US

Unit 5 The New Deal in Global Perspective

- ✓ Listening in: Radio in the 1930s
- ✓ Public Space and Architecture
- ✓ Making the New Deal: A Transatlantic Perspective

Unit 6 World War II: The War at home and Abroad

- ✓ Allied Troops in Italy
- ✓ "Buffalo Soldiers"
- ✓ Air Strikes
- ✓ Global War

- ✓ The War at Home
- ✓ *Paisan*, by Roberto Rossellini, 1945
- ✓ *Miracle at St. Anna*, by Spike Lee, 2008

Unit 7: Cold War

- ✓ The Truman Doctrine
- ✓ Containing Communism
- ✓ NATO

Unit 8 The Marshall Plan and Italian Political Parties in Postwar Years

- ✓ The Communist Party in Italy
- ✓ Christian Democracy in Postwar
- ✓ *Mani sulla città*, by Francesco Rosi, 1959

Unit 9 The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture

- ✓ Americanization
- ✓ Ambassadors of Culture
- ✓ The advent of Television
- ✓ Rock and Roll Italian Way
- ✓ Hollywood in Italy

Unit 10 Transnational Legacies: 1968 in Europe and United States

- ✓ Blues Legacies and the Roots of 1968
- ✓ Free Jazz in Europe
- ✓ The Movements of the New Left in US and Europe
- ✓ *Zabriskie Point*, by Michelangelo Antonioni, 1969

Unit 11 The Urban Crisis in Italy and United States

- ✓ Social Scientists in Conversation: Italy and the US
- ✓ Urban Cinema and the Poetics of Violence
- ✓ From one Bronx to the Other

Unit 12 A Global History of Italian Mafia

- ✓ Naples – Palermo – New York
- ✓ *Lucky Luciano* by Francesco Rosi, 1959

Unit 13 Whiteness of a Different Color in late twentieth Century

- ✓ Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- ✓ *Do the Right Thing* by Spike Lee, 1989
- ✓ The New Italian Migration

Unit 14 From Berlusconi to Trump

- ✓ Media Power
- ✓ The New Right
- ✓ Populism in the twenty first century
- ✓ *Fahrenheit 11/9* by Michael Moore, 2017
- ✓ *Videocracy* by Erik Gandini, 2009

Unit 15 Conclusion

Final Project Presentations

