



The Neapolitan Woman in film and literature from Emma Hamilton to Elena Ferrante - HUM 399/WGS 321

3 credits, 45 hrs

Course Description:

This course will explore a series of texts and films that present and focus on female Neapolitan protagonists. We will see six films and read six novels, five of them written by Neapolitan women writers, and one by an American novelist about a British woman who, transplanted to Naples, caused one of Europe's biggest scandals during the Napoleonic wars. These texts and films will give us ample fodder to follow the history of the city and the role that women, as well as women writers and one filmmaker, have played in their own self-definition.

Course Objectives:

Our objectives will be three-fold: Primarily we will focus on the literary and cinematic presentation of Neapolitan women gaining a familiarity with its themes and the various textual strategies that it employs. Secondly, we will enrich our knowledge Neapolitan literature written by women over the course of the last one hundred and thirty years, as well as getting an artistic view of the history of this fascinating and complex city over the last three centuries. Lastly, beyond simply examining and interpreting this material in your written work, I would like to help students improve their rhetorical and essay-writing skills by inviting you to re-write your essays based on my comments. Combining these three-fold objectives, the measurable objective of this course will be to make its students capable of writing a coherent and knowledgeable critical literary essay on any aspect of the literature and films presented.

Course Requirements:

Beyond the completion of the requisite reading and participation in the class discussions, students will be asked to give an oral report to the class (see topics in the calendar below) and to complete two essays of 5-7 pages each. The written work will consist of two interpretive literary essays that closely examine one of the texts or films that we study, isolate and interpret motifs, themes, or commonalities that you may find in two or more texts or films, explore and interpret an applicable text outside of our reading list, or isolate and examine a current of literary or film criticism, a sub-genre, or a historical, social, or political topic related to the figure of the Neapolitan woman or Neapolitan writers, literature and films focused on or set in Naples, or literature or films dealing with Women and Southern Italy in general. These essays will, I hope, spring ideally directly from our class discussions and will be due one at midterm time (insert date here) and the other on the last day of class. For those who want to work on their essay writing skills, any paper handed in before the final due date will be duly marked up with editing suggestions and I will accept a rewrite (and consider altering the paper's grade) all the way up to the last day of class. All papers and re-writes are absolutely due no later than the last day of the course during our last class session.

Grades will be based on the written work with positive or negative considerations for attendance and participation in the class discussions: roughly that's 35% for each paper and 10% for your oral report, 10% for your having completed the reading assignments, and 10 % for general class participation and attendance. Note: A student who does not complete one of the written assignments or who is absent more than 4 times during the semester will not receive a passing grade

regardless of the percent values of the individual assignments on the grounds that they have not completed the course requirements.

Attendance Policy:

You are allowed two unexcused absences. Documentation for any other absence MUST be produced and APPROVED by the professor or the Academic Director. For absences due to illness, please provide the professor with a doctor's note upon returning to class as well as inform them and/or the school the first day of illness. Each unexcused absence after the second will reduce your grade by 3 percentage points.

Accommodation Policy:

In order to be eligible for accommodations (i.e. extended time on exams and tests) you are required to present an official letter from your home institution indicating that you may receive support. The letter which normally comes from one's home campus Center for Academic Support must be presented to the administration prior to the drop/add deadline. A note provided by a home physician or counselor will not suffice. Any information provided will be treated as private and confidential.

Late submissions:

Assignments not submitted by the due date will receive a penalty of 10% for the first 24 hours, 20% for a 48 hours delay. No submissions will be accepted more than 3 days after the deadline, unless arrangements have been made with the instructor (for extensions under exceptional circumstances, apply to the course instructor).

Personal Technology:

Please turn cell phones off during class. Laptops may be to take notes, however social networking, e-mailing, surfing the Internet, playing games, etc. are absolutely forbidden during class. Any student caught doing the aforementioned activities during class will be asked to turn off their cell phones and/or computers. Repeated violations of this rule after the first warning will result in the student being marked absent for the day and permanently losing their laptop privileges. Be respectful; the use of personal electronic devices during class is limited to academic purposes.

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.

Grading:

Both papers: 35% each

Oral Report: 10%

Reading: 10%

Participation and attendance: 10%

Detailed instructions/guidelines for writing a college level essay in the field of literary criticism will be distributed in class.

Grading Scale:

A	95%-100%
A-	90%-94%
B+	87%-89%
B	83%-86%
B-	80%-82%
C+	77%-79%
C	73%-76%
C-	70%-72%
D+	67%-69%
D	63%-66%
D-	60%-62%
F	under 60

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.

A Note on My Teaching Method:

I do not believe that I (or anyone else) can coerce or cajole anyone into "learning." Rather I believe that intellectual progress is made through the sharing and discussion of reactions and interpretations. Therefore this course will be conducted as a seminar and be totally dependent upon your individual contributions and courtesy. Obviously, then, it is absolutely necessary that each of you take control of your own education not only for your own sakes, but also in accordance with your responsibility to the rest of those participating in this course. You must both keep up with the reading and begin the process of digesting the material by coming to class with something either to say or ask about it. **I strongly recommend that you take notes while reading with both questions and observations and that you come to class prepared to challenge and/or benefit from the group's discussion.** You cannot depend on me to lecture on material that you have not read, nor will I accept the role of monitor for your reading or policeman for discourtesy to the class during the discussions. Concerns of this kind should be voiced and dealt with by the community during the class sessions. Remember that I am only one in a group of people here to explore and learn from this very interesting group of texts.

That said, I am extremely available both in class and out to offer my expertise and experience to help you digest and write about this material. (I also have a lot of experience living, studying, and now teaching here in Italy and I can offer a sympathetic ear to culture shock concerns as well!) Therefore I'm always available for private conferences and very open during the in-class discussions to address both our method and the material of our study if the group as a whole is in agreement as to the utility and feasibility of changing them. All of this is said and done to clarify from the start my particular approach—based on the assumption that we are each mutually dependent individuals demanding of respect and ultimately responsible for our own intellectual progress—and to allow the greatest flexibility in our proceeding so that the most appropriate and useful materials and methods are addressed in this course.

Required Texts:

Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover*
 Matilde Serao, *The Land of Cockayne*
 Fabrizia Ramondino, *Althenopis*
 Anna Maria Ortese, *Neapolitan Chronicles*
 Elena Ferrante, *Troubling Love*
 Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend*

Course Schedule and Reading:

Week one

Lesson 1 **Introduction: Topic, Materials, and Methods.**

Lesson 2 **Film:** *That Hamilton Woman* (1941), Alexander Korda

Week 2

Lesson 1 Film discussion

The Volcano Lover, Susan Sontag (1992) Part 1

Lesson 2 *The Volcano Lover*, Susan Sontag (1992) Part 2, chpts. 1-4

Oral report: Susan Sontag

Week 3

Lesson 1 *The Volcano Lover*, Susan Sontag (1992) Part 2, chpts. 5-7

Paper Writing Guidelines

Lesson 2 *The Volcano Lover*, Susan Sontag (1992) Parts 3 & 4

Oral report: The real Emma Hamilton

Week 4

Lesson 1 **Film:** *Assunta Spina (Scarred; 1948)*, Salvatore Di Giacomo (play) Mario Mattoli

Lesson 2 Film discussion

Week 5

Lesson 1 Matilde Serao, *The Land of Cockayne* (1891) Chpts. I-V

Oral report: Matilde Serao, novelist

Lesson 2 Matilde Serao, *The Land of Cockayne* (1891) Chpts. VI-X

Oral report: The Neapolitan lottery, dreams and superstitions

Week 6

Lesson 1 Matilde Serao, *The Land of Cockayne* (1891) Chpts. XI-XV

Oral report: Matilde Serao, journalist

Lesson 2 Matilde Serao, *The Land of Cockayne* (1891) Chpts. XVI-XX

Oral report: Italian Verismo and French Naturalism

Week 7

Lesson 1 **Film:** *Pasqualino Settebellezze* (1975, written and directed by Lina Wertmuller)

Lesson 2 Film discussion

First papers due.

Week 8

Lesson 1 Fabrizia Ramondino, *Althenopis* (1981)

Oral report: Fabrizia Ramondino

Lesson 2 Fabrizia Ramondino, *Althenopis* (1981)

Oral report: Naples and WWII

Week 9

Lesson 1 Fabrizia Ramondino, *Althenopis* (1981)

Oral report: Curzio Malaparte and *The Skin*.

Lesson 2 **Film:** *The Four Days of Naples* (1962), Nanny Loy

Week 10

Lesson 1 Anna Maria Ortese, *Neapolitan Chronicles* (1953) “A Pair of Glasses,” “Family Interior”

Oral report: Anna Maria Ortese

Lesson 2 Anna Maria Ortese, *Neapolitan Chronicles* (1953) “Gold in Forcella,” “The Involuntary City”

Oral report: Later Ortese and Italian magic realism

Week 11

Lesson 1 Anna Maria Ortese, *Neapolitan Chronicles* (1953) “The Silence of Reason”

Oral report: Domenico Rea and the review *Sud*

Lesson 2 Elena Ferrante, *Troubling Love* (1992) Chpts. I-XV

Oral report: Who is Elena Ferrante (and why don't we know for sure)?

Week 12

Lesson 1 Elena Ferrante, *Troubling Love* (1992) Chpts. XVI-XXVI

Oral report: Open Topic (surprise us!)

Lesson 2 **Film:** *Troubling Love* (1995), Mario Montone

Week 13

Lesson 1 Film discussion

Lesson 2 Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend* (2011)

Oral report: Open Topic

Week 14

Lesson 1 Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend* (2011)

Oral report: Open Topic

Lesson 2 Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend* (2011)

Oral report: Open Topic

Week 15

Lesson 1 Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend* (2011)

Oral report: Open Topic

Lesson 2 **Film:** *My Brilliant Friend*, S01E01 (2018), Saverio Costanzo

Last chance for all papers and re-writes! **ALL PAPERS DUE**