

**ITL 352 AUTORI ITALIANI CONTEMPORANEI
(TWENTIETH CENTURY ITALIAN AUTHORS)
THE BIRTH OF ITALIAN IDENTITY IN LITERATURE (1925-1990)**

Tues & Thurs: 8:30-9:50 a.m

Instructor: Prof. Beatrice Fabbri

Office Hours: before and after class by appointment.

e.mail: beafab@tiscalinet.it; cell : 366 – 40 93 793

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course intends to explore the works of some relevant Italian writers of the twentieth century. I will start with Italo Svevo, who lived at the beginning of the XXth century in a cosmopolitan town in northern Italy, Trieste and had friends such as James Joyce. He was the first to include psychoanalysis topics in his novels and revealed an extraordinary talent in focusing on the private, intimate dilemmas of men facing society's challenges. Then, I will concentrate on a group of writers that were linked to one another: P. Levi, N. Ginzburg, C. Pavese and I. Calvino. They lived and worked in Turin, one of the most interesting towns during the Second World War. Two of them, P. Levi and N. Ginzburg, were Jewish and lived the drama of the Holocaust. P. Levi dealt with the terror of the extermination camps in Auschwitz and all his works are full of details about his daily life and his meditations to survive that reality of death and sorrow. On the other hand, even if N. Ginzburg didn't suffer that condition, she was able to give an extraordinary outlook on Italian society and its attitude towards Jews. Besides, she used the tools of humor and female sensitivity to describe her own Jewish family from Fascism to the return of democracy. C. Pavese and I. Calvino took part to the intellectual movement that fought against Fascism, they took part actively in the *Resistenza* and their personal accounts have been translated into fascinating novels. C. Pavese, that was during his short life an extraordinary translator of some important masterpieces of American literature, such as W. Whitman and H. Melville, dealt with the same topics with an essential and lyrical prose. I would add also that I. Calvino developed in the last few decades of the XXth century some interesting meditations on the role of literature in contemporary society very well summarized in his last book, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. As N. Ginzburg approached reality with humor and understatement, another woman novelist, E. Morante, who lived in the middle of the twentieth century, displayed a very poetic and magic look at reality. With a simple and sophisticated language, she gave emphasis to her own intimate feelings and to the search of an harmony with the elements of nature. Her accounts on childhood exposed a fresh and incisive approach to daily life even when around tragic historical events occurred. A specific attention will be given also to Anna Banti and her historical novel, *Artemisia* based on Artemisia Gentileschi a Late-Renaissance woman painter. The writer explores two different genres, i.e autobiography and essay and the result is amazing both from the linguistic and the narrative points of view.

NOTE: The course will be taught in Italian but readings, home assignments, papers and exams will be in English. For those who are upper-intermediate or advanced in Italian papers could be written in Italian.

I usually make readings in Italian in class to let you enter the rhythm and the style of each single author. I think it's a fulfilling experience to improve your own fluency in Italian as well.

I am willing to offer explanations of texts in English if some of you have difficulties of any sort.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Two research or critical papers, 5-7 pages**, will be based either on texts, authors, genres, forms, themes or the period of the texts we read and discuss in class. In this sense, it is important to attend classes regularly and participate actively in class discussion. Nevertheless, if some of you wish to undertake research outside the topics discussed in class but regarding texts, authors, genres, themes of the course content that stimulated you in some way, I will be willing to offer you other reading suggestions.
- **Oral presentation on one novel**
- **Home assignments (brief research on characters; writers, topics dealt in class)**

The due dates of these papers are marked on the calendar syllabus with a →.

Grades will be based on the written work, with positive or negative considerations for attendance and participation in the class discussion. In the correction of papers, I will give also particular emphasis to underline whether you reveal your personal involvement and contribution to analysis and criticism of the texts. **NOTE:** I will be not able to give a passing grade to any student who does not complete both of the writing assignments regardless of the percentage value of that assignment or to any student with 3 or more unexcused absences.

General Attendance Policy 2010-2011:

Attendance to all CSU courses is mandatory. Two unexcused absences are allowed during the semester but more than two unexcused absences will lower your grade (excused absences will be accepted for serious medical reasons or emergencies) as follows: 3 unexcused absences, lowers one letter grade; 4 unexcused absences, lowers two letter grades; 5 unexcused absences, lowers 3 letter grades. More than **five unexcused absences will result in failure of the course**. In order not to disrupt the class, punctuality is required. Students are expected to be in class at the beginning of the class hour; any delay exceeding ten minutes will be considered an absence.

Dates of mid-term and final exams **can not** be changed for individual travel plans or personal needs. Students should take note of the dates and hours of the midterm and final exams and plan their trips after the last exam. It is important to inform friends and relatives about these exam dates so that no tickets are purchased for you that will interfere with these exam dates. Missing the midterm or the final exam will mean failure of the course.

During the academic year photocopies and other material may be distributed in class by the instructors. Students who were not in class are responsible for getting the material from their classmates and making their own photocopies.

Other class policies:

- ° Use of computer in class is restricted to oral presentations, unless previously approved by professor.
- ° Eating is NOT allowed in class.
- ° Cellular phones must be **turned off** or placed on *silent mode* during class.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

I.Svevo, *La Coscienza di Zeno/Confessions of Zeno*.

N.Ginzburg, *Lessico Familiare/Family Sayings*.

E.Morante, *L'isola di Arturo/Arturo's Island*.

I.Calvino, *Lezioni americane/Six memos*.

C.Pavese, *La casa in collina/the House on the Hills*.

P.Levi, *La Tregua/The Truce*

A.Banti, *Artemisia/Artemisia*

Procacci, *History of the Italian people*.

For the English translation any Paperback edition is good! For the original version in Italian, I suggest **Einaudi paperback**(to be found at **Feltrinelli International**, via Cavour or **Melbookstore**, via Cerretani).

FEES: Photocopy packet: around 25€, portable editions of required novels could be found at a price ranging from 7€ to maximum 10€ each.

*** A general bibliography of critical texts will be offered at the beginning of the course. Most of them are available at CSU library. Under request, I am willing to offer specific bibliographies on topics of your interest relating to contemporary Italian literature.**

CALENDAR:

02/22/2011 Introduction: historical and cultural perspective on Italian literary panorama: the role and the tasks of the writers from the beginning of the XXth century after the II World War.

02/24/2011 I.Svevo: La Coscienza di Zeno/Confessions of Zeno: the awareness of his own limits (the role of the *stream of consciousness*). Building a personal identity in front of the challenges of the society of the XXth century. The birth of Freudian psychoanalysis and its role and influence in the Italian Literature. **Chapters: 1 to 4.**

03/01/2011 I.Svevo: La Coscienza di Zeno/Confessions of Zeno: wives and lovers, dangerous women. A difficult approach to gender. Parallel and contrast with other **Chapters 5 to 7.**

03/03/2011 I.Svevo: La Coscienza di Zeno/Confessions of Zeno: the pessimistic approach to reality, the limits of Science. The rise of Totalitarianism, Italian Intellectuals against Fascism. The role of writers in Italian society and their relation with foreign literatures (references to English and French writers). **Chapter 8.**

03/08/2011 **N. Ginzburg:** *Lessico Familiare/Family Sayings*: Writing as woman between Fascism and the rise of Democracy: the private and the public spheres. A sketch on Italian social history.

03/10/2011 **N.Ginzburg** and a general overview on Italian women writers: themes, genres, style.

03/15/2011 **N.Ginzburg** *Lessico Familiare/Family Sayings* - Living as a Jewish woman during the twenties. Marriages, pregnancies: the sense of humour in women's daily lives. References to Italian Fascism and gender roles in Italian society through movies (Una giornata particolare di E.Scola with Sophia Loren and M.Mastroianni).

03/17: **No class – FIELD TRIP CAMPANIA**

03/22 **N.Ginzburg:** *Lessico Familiare/Family Sayings*. Exploring a childish, elementary language to discover her own childhood; how Ginzburg deals with autobiography's literary genre.

03/24/2011: **P.Levi: La Tregua/The Truce:** Witnessing the horror of Holocaust: Literature as a rescue from death. The Role of Dante and the Divine Comedy in his cultural background. **Readings: Cap.:Il disgelo; il campo grande; il Greco; Katowice.**

03/29/2011: **P.Levi: La Tregua/The Truce:** Coming back home: a long journey of pain and hope to Italy. The Narrator as a modern Odysseus. **Readings: Cap.: Victory day; I sognatori; verso sud; verso nord; una curizetta; vecchie strade; Il bosco e la via.**

03/31/2011: **P.Levi: La Tregua/The Truce:** The search of his own identity and the elaboration of mourning. The Shoah and Italian Contemporary Literature: sketching a panorama. **Readings: Cap: Vacanza; Teatro; Da Staryje Doronghi a Iasi; Da Iasi alla Linea; Il risveglio.**

04/05/2011: **A.Banti:** Artemisia: a woman between art and life in the Late Renaissance. The historical novel.

04/07: **MID-TERM EXAM → Mid-term papers due**

04/12: **A. Banti:** Writing as a form of emancipation: Anna Banti and her heroine. The Artemisia's files: the search of an historical truth and the elaboration of a fictional perspective.

04/14/2011 **E.Morante:** Magic Realism in Italian Literature during the II^d World War: a gender perspective. Elsa Morante's literary and philosophical background(translator of K.Mansfield; S.Weil). **Readings: Parte 1: Re e stella del cielo; Parte II: un pomeriggio d'inverno**

4/15/2011 (FRIDAY - 9:00-12:00): **Site visit to the Galleria Palatina to see Artemisia Gentileschi's paintings where Anna Banti got inspiration for her historical novel on the Renaissance woman painter**

04/19/2011 **E.Morante: L'isola di Arturo/Arthur's Island:** the discovery of adolescence and the birth of intimate identity. **Readings: parte III: Vita in famiglia; parte IV: Regina delle donne; part V: tragedie.**

04/21/2011: **E.Morante: L'isola di Arturo/Arthur's Island:** the search of his own past between reality and fiction. the definition of his own vocabulary, the ambiguity of gender. **Parte VI: il bacio fatale; parte VII: la terra murata; parte VIII:Addio**

04/22/2011-05/01/2011: **SPRING BREAK**

05/03/2011: C.Pavese: La casa in collina/the house on the Hills: the political involvement and the passion for literature of an intellectual and a writer. Pavese's writing technique and the influence of American literature in his novel (references to Melville, Hemingway, Morley's novels, Pavese translator of some majors american writers of the fourties)

05/05/2011: La casa in collina/the house on the Hills: Gender relations during the II World War: single women, old wise spinsters and the search for solidarity under the violence of the civil war.

05/10/2011: I.Calvino: Lezioni americane/Six memos: Reflections on literature at the end of the XXth century. Principles of Narratology. **Chapt: Exactitude**

05/12/2011: I.Calvino: Lezioni americane/Six memos: Reflections on literature at the end of the XXth century. Principles of Stylistics. **Chapt: Quickness**

05/17/2011: I.Calvino: Lezioni americane/Six memos: Reflections on literature at the end of the XXth century. Calvino's philosophy of writing. **Chapt: Lightness**

05/19/2011: Oral Presentation → Final paper due

5/23 - 5/26: final exam day and time to be announced.

*** Please, remind where there is no specific references to pages in readings, the novel has to be read entirely for class discussion. Specific references to chapters' analysis suppose a further analysis in class.**

Grade distribution:

Periodical quizzes: 20%

Midterm exam: 25%

Midterm Essay- Final Essay: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

Scale:

900- 1000:A

800-899: B

700-799: C

600-699:D

599 and below: F

Additional activities:

- **Site visit to the Galleria Palatina to see Artemisia Gentileschi's paintings where Anna Banti got inspiration for her historical novel on the Renaissance woman painter on Friday, April 15, 2011 9:00-12:00**
- **Movies based on Italian contemporary novels with discussion to follow (Tues. or Thurs. evenings or Fridays - to be announced).**