

Italian/African Studies 497: Italy & Africa: Narratives Across the Mediterranean

Penn State University Fall 2018

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Email: Please use Canvas email for all course-related emails (jir105 for other correspondence)

Office Hours: Monday 3-5pm, Wednesday 9-11am

The southernmost Italian island of Lampedusa is a mere seventy miles off the coast of Tunisia and just two hundred miles from Libya. Despite such proximity the Mediterranean has historically been perceived as a cultural and continental barrier between Europe and Africa. Yet as recent tragic events reveal, this is not the case. Migrations across the Mediterranean have permeated this boundary for centuries and shared histories have led to complex and storied relationships between Italy and Africa.

In IT/AFR 497 we explore these relationships through an investigation of literary and cinematic works from both Italian and African writers and filmmakers. Looking at narratives spanning three centuries we will consider the following: 19th century travel essays, Futurist fiction and imperial Fascist propaganda shorts in the early 20th century, post-war novels and films as imperfect modes of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, contemporary autobiography and fictions written by Somali, Nigerian, Tunisian and Ethiopian writers migrating to Italy in the 1990s-today, and finally contemporary films addressing the untenable refugee crisis in the Mediterranean basin. I invite you to broaden your perception of the term Mediterranean and to forge a deeper understanding of the historical and political influences that underpin contemporary migrations.

Course Objectives:

- Develop a strong socio-historical understanding of the various relationships between Italy and the territories and nations of the Maghreb and the Horn of Africa from the 19thC to today
- Trace the lasting consequences of colonial and postcolonial national relationships in the Mediterranean and hypothesize about how such relationships play out in the future of the area
- Identify the role of literature and film in the idea of nation, and discern central arguments from texts
- Strengthen critical writing and speaking skills in class discussions and written essays
- Discuss and discern how race, gender and religion shape discussions of inclusion/exclusion in recent scholarship about the Mediterranean basin

Required texts:

Flaiano, Ennio. *The Short Cut* (1992 English translation of 1947 Italian text)

Lakhous, Amara. *Divorce Islamic Style*. (2012 translation of 2010 Italian text)

Ghermandi, Gabriella. *The Queen of Flowers and Pearls*. (2015 translation of 2007 text)

Following provided on Canvas:

Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *Manifesto of Futurism*

Cialente, Fausta. *The Levantines*

Ribka Sibatu & Ubax Cristina Ali Farah poems

Igiaba Scego, *Salsicce*

Required Films:

Cabiria, Giovanni Pastrone, 1914 (Youtube)

Lion of the Desert, Moustapha Akkad, 1981 (Youtube, Library)

Battle of Algiers, Gillo Pontecorvo, 1962 (Amazon Rental, Library)

Dry Land, Emanuele Crialesi, 2011 (Swank free Streaming via ANGEL)

18 Ins Soli, Fred Kuwornu, 2013 (In class)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

20% Participation & Preparation: Your dedicated and continued participation is essential to this course. You are expected to have all materials thoroughly read. You are expected to take notes and come to class with questions, comments, points of interest and general thoughts about the material every class period. Fruitful discussion during class time is central to the success of this class, and, as such, you should be prepared to comment each period with thoughtful input. Excessive absence or tardiness (three or more), minimal class input, disruption of class with cellphones, etc., will all negatively affect your final participation grade. I have a *no tech* policy in this class and you will need the text each day. **Essentially, you should plan on adding to the class discussion each class period to do well in this requirement.**

20% Quizzes: Students will complete two quizzes based on the readings for the semester including identifications, analysis and contextualization. Take-home or in class due in Week 5, 10 and 13.

20% Presentation of Scholarly Article: In pairs students will open the discussion of the text in question by summarizing, analyzing and presenting the research from a scholarly article related to the topic. This should be an article that you can use in your critical essay. Details provided on Canvas.

20% Film or Literary Analysis Essay: Students will choose one text or one film to analyze in a five-page critical essay. The essay is due during **Week 7**. Details provided on Canvas.

20% Creative Project: Each student will work on a creative engagement with one of the works discussed during the semester or a work that directly relates to the course topic. Projects can include a creative or critical engagement with the material. Each student will make a short presentation during the last two weeks. **Project due 12/12.**

GRADING SCALE:

A 95-100 A- 90-94.9 B+ 87.7-89.9 B 83.3-87.6 B- 80-83.2 C+ 75-79.9 C 70-74.5
D 60-69.9 F below 60

Class Attendance: Academic Policies and Procedures for Undergraduate Students

<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health/welcome/illnessVerification/>

The faculty, staff and other resources of the University are furnished for the education of students who attend the University. A class schedule is provided for students and faculty so that a reasonably orderly arrangement for instruction is facilitated. The fact that classes are scheduled is evidence that the faculty believes class instruction is important. Therefore, class attendance is important for the benefit of students. A student should attend every class for which the student is scheduled and should be held responsible for all work covered in the courses taken. In each case, the instructor should decide when the class absence constitutes a danger to the student's scholastic attainment and should make this fact known to the student at once. A student whose irregular attendance causes him or her, in the judgment of the instructor, to become deficient scholastically, may run the risk of receiving a failing grade or receiving a lower grade that the student might have secured had the student been in regular attendance.

Instructors shall provide, within reason, opportunity to make up work for students who miss class for regularly scheduled, **University-approved** curricular and extracurricular activities. However, if such trips are considered by the instructor to be hurting the student's scholastic performance, the instructor should present such evidence for necessary action to the head of the department in which the course is offered and to the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled or to the Division of Undergraduate Studies if the student is enrolled in that division. Instructors should provide, within reason, opportunity to make up work for students who miss classes for other legitimate but unavoidable reasons.

Legitimate, unavoidable reasons are those such as illness, injury, family emergency. If an evaluative event will be missed due to an unavoidable absence, the student should contact the instructor as soon as the unavoidable absence is known to discuss ways to make up the work. An instructor might not consider an unavoidable absence legitimate if the student does not contact the instructor before the evaluative event. Students will be held responsible for using only legitimate, unavoidable reasons for requesting a make-up in the event of a missed class or evaluative event. Requests for missing class or an evaluative event due to reasons that are based on false claims may be considered violations of the policy on Academic Integrity (Policy 49-20).

Prolonged illnesses or injuries that result in absences from classes. SIP requires that University Health Services or an outside clinician provide verification of illness for significant prolonged illnesses or injuries resulting in absences from classes. Please include the statement below (in blue) in your syllabus.

You are required to provide verification from University Health Services or outside clinicians for significant prolonged illnesses or injuries resulting in absences from classes.

Cell Phones: Cell phones are to be turned off and stored before class begins. Professors reserve the right to penalize a student's final grade for continued cell phone interruptions (including sending and receiving text messages).

Laptops/Tablet Computers: Your instructor will provide information on the use of these tools specific to his/her classroom. Any use of laptops or tablet computers unrelated to coursework is prohibited and professors reserve the right to penalize a student's final grade for disregarding this policy.

University Policy on Disabilities – Following up on Senate legislation (April 2012) on including a statement about disabilities in course syllabi, please include the following statement in your course syllabus.

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at [814-863-1807](tel:814-863-1807)(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services website at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>.

In order to receive consideration for course accommodations, you must contact ODS and provide documentation (see the documentation guidelines at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/guidelines/documentation-guidelines>). If the documentation supports the need for academic adjustments, ODS will provide a letter identifying appropriate academic adjustments. Please share this letter and discuss the adjustments with your instructor as early in the course as possible. You must contact ODS and request academic adjustment letters at the beginning of each semester.

Counseling and Psychological services – Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation. For further information regarding CAPS please visit their web site at <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>.

Educational Equity/Report Bias – Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the [Report Bias webpage](#)

Provisional Calendar

Week #1: Introduction

Aug 20, 22, 27

Homework: Read Young, Scego

Week #2: Liberal Italy & Colonialism

Aug 27, 29, 31

Homework: View Pastrone's *Cabiria*

Week #3: Prelude to Fascism

Sept 5 & 7

Homework: Marinetti's *Manifesto of the Futurist*

Week #4: Fascism

Sept 10, 12, 14

Homework: Read Cialente's *The Levantines*

Week #5: Italo-Turkish War

Sept 17, 19, 21

Homework: View Akkad's *The Lion in the Desert*

Quiz #1

Week #6: Italian East Africa & WWII

Sept 24, 26, 28

Homework: Read 1st half of Flaiano's *The Shortcut*

Week #7: The Great Forgetting

Oct 1, 3, 5

Homework: Read 2nd half of *Shortcut*

***Critical Analysis Due**

Week #8: Independence

Oct 8, 10, 12

Homework: View Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*

Week #9: Italy as Destination Culture

Oct 15, 17, 19

Homework: Read Lakhous *Divorce Islamic Style*

Week #10: The Empire Writing Back

Oct 22, 24, 26

Homework: Read selection of poems (Sibatu,

Ibrahim), **Quiz #2**

Week #11: Gateway to Europe

Oct 29, 31 & Nov 2

Homework: View Crialesi's *Dry Land*

Week #12: Postcolonial female voices

Nov 5, 7, 9

Homework: Read 1st half of Ghermandi's *Queen of Flowers and Pearls*

Week #13: New Histories & Identities

Nov 12, 14, 16

Homework: Read 2nd half of Ghermandi's *Queen of Flowers and Pearls*, **Quiz #3**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week #14:

Nov 26, 28, 30 Creative Project Presentations

Week #15

Dec 3, 5, 7 Presentations

***Creative Project due 12/12 by 11:59p**