

IT497-001 (Special Topics) From Page to Screen: Rethinking Italian Adaptations

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Class Meetings:

Tuesday and Thursday, 12:05-1:20 p.m. via Zoom (for link see email or Canvas)

Office Hours by appointment via Zoom, weekdays, 24-hour notice required.

This course is remote synchronous, which means we will meet via Zoom during our scheduled class times. Class attendance is required.

Course Aims and Objectives

From Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup*, to Matteo Garrone's *A Tale of Tales*, to the film (and television show) *Gomorra*, adaptations of literary and non-fiction texts continue to spread throughout Italian media. If these adaptations are created in a culture characterized by a reverence toward tradition and an obsession with authenticity, what might be gained by reversing the hierarchy between the so-called source text and these visual reworkings? In other words, what might a film do better than a written text? How can adaptations spark fresh interpretations of the adapted materials? Should a film always be faithful to the book, or do the most effective adaptations depart from the text? In order to answer these questions, we will examine a wide range of film (and television) adaptations and their adapted texts in the light of contemporary adaptation theory. Through guided writings and class discussions, we will seek to challenge our preconceptions about adaptation (e.g. "Books are always better than films"), analyze how these visual reworkings can modify our understanding of the adapted texts, and explore the insights they provide about Italian media, culture, and society. This course will be taught in English; no previous knowledge of Italian culture is required.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- describe key theoretical concepts relating to adaptation.
- describe and analyze works of Italian literature and cinema.
- apply the aforementioned theoretical concepts to the analysis of adaptations (and adapted texts) in order to generate more sophisticated readings of these cinematic and literary products.
- create an adaptation of an Italian literary work and justify your adaptation strategy using key concepts in adaptation theory.

Required Course Materials:

- Hutcheon, Linda, and Siobhan O'Flynn. *A Theory of Adaptation*. 2nd ed., New York, Routledge, 2013.
- The instructor has arranged free access to most films through Penn State Libraries, but you will need to arrange to rent online (or purchase, if you choose) a limited number of films:
 - *Va Savior* (2001; dir. Rivette)
 - *Caesar Must Die* (2012; dirs. Paolo and Vittorio Taviani)
 - *Gomorra* (2008; dir. Garrone)
 - One additional film, title TBD. (I will consider both availability and cost.)
- Access to a laptop with a microphone in order to attend and participate in Zoom sessions, to take assessments, and to prepare and submit assignments.

Communication:

- The primary form of communication for this course will be through Penn State email. You are responsible for regularly checking your university (psu.edu) e-mail account for any class correspondence.
- Please contact me directly at mje13@psu.edu from your psu.edu email address. While some announcements may be made to the class using Canvas, please **do not** simply reply to those messages.

Course Requirements: Final grades for the course will be calculated according to the follow components:

25% - Intellectual Engagement

A commitment toward intellectual growth is essential for success in this class. Our course goals go beyond the mere memorization and regurgitation of dates or facts, since the development of analytical and evaluative skills are of value in academic, professional, and civic spheres alike. Thus, a portion of the final grade is based on your intellectual engagement with the course materials and our learning community. Intellectually engaged students will:

- prepare all readings and films before class, monitor their comprehension, and schedule an appointment to discuss challenging material with the instructor during office hours if needed.
- attend all class sessions, give full attention during lessons, arrive to class on time, and be prepared to remain on Zoom during the entire session.
- respectfully collaborate with colleagues and contribute to class discussion, in both full-class sessions as well as during Zoom breakout groups.

10% - In-Class Mini Presentations: In pairs, twice during the semester, students will introduce the materials prepared for that day and commence our class discussion. Mini presentations should last from 5-7 minutes (not counting discussion) and should conclude with 3 questions that will facilitate discussion. More details to be posted on Canvas.

15% - Critical Reflections Posts

Students will reflect and provide evidence on how their preparation and class participation has helped them in their process of meeting the course goals. These posts will be visible to colleagues, and each student will be required to respond to two of their peers' reflections. Prompts will be provided to help guide students to critically reflect upon their learning. There will be 5 reflections throughout the semester; provisional due dates (by 11:59 p.m.) are as follows: 2/7, 2/28, 3/14, 4/5, 4/25. More details to be posted on Canvas.

25% - Take-Home Quizzes

Quiz #1: Due Friday, 26 February by 11:59 p.m.

Quiz #2: Due Friday, 26 March by 11:59 p.m.

There will be no make-up quizzes. Please make note of the above dates. Quizzes will draw from preparation material (readings and films) as well as content presented and discussed in class. More details will be provided on Canvas prior to the distribution of the quiz guidelines.

25% - Critical Adaptation (5% Proposal + 20% Project)

Students will create an adaptation of an Italian literary work and justify their adaptation strategy using key concepts in adaptation theory covered in the course. More details to be posted on Canvas. Proposal deadline to be establish in consultation with students. **The completed project is due on Monday, 3 May.**

Departmental Grading Scale

A 100 – 95

B+ 89.9 – 87.7

C+ 79.9 – 75

D 69.9 – 60

A- 94.9 – 90

B 87.6 – 83.3

C 74.9 – 70

F below 60

B- 83.2 – 80

Please note there will be no curving or rounding of grades in this course.

Webcams and Microphones

Since much of our time together will be discussion based, webcam use during class meetings via Zoom meetings is strongly encouraged. Access to a functional microphone and webcam will allow you to fully engage in our Zoom sessions.

If you anticipate opting out of using a webcam this semester (whether it be for reasons of equity, personal safety or security, religious beliefs, etc.), please contact the instructor during the first week of class to discuss alternatives for meaningful engagement during our Zoom sessions.

Class Attendance

Attendance is required in this class and will be part of the Intellectual Engagement portion of the final grade.

(Faculty Senate Policy 42-27, abridged; for complete text see: <https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/42-00-acquisition-of-credit/#42-27>) Regular class attendance is one of the most important ways that students learn and understand course materials. It is a critical element of student success. Accordingly, it is the policy of the University that class attendance is expected and that students should follow the attendance policy of the instructor, as outlined in the syllabus. A student should attend every scheduled class and should be held responsible for all work covered in the courses taken.

Class attendance is expected regardless of the format of the course and this expectation applies equally to students in face-to-face, online, and hybrid courses. Attendance in online courses goes beyond course login and is based on documentable participation in class activities, such as interacting with the instructor, interacting with enrolled students, completing assignments with specific due dates, and/or participate in online discussions on a regular basis. It is the student's responsibility to complete work early, or make alternate arrangements with the course instructor, if due dates or required work will be missed because of a University-approved absence as described in this policy.

Instructors should provide, within reason, the opportunity to make up work for students who miss class for regularly scheduled, University-approved curricular and extracurricular activities (such as Martin Luther King Day of Service, field trips, debate trips, choir trips, and athletic contests). In addition, instructors should provide, within reason, the opportunity to make up work for students who miss class for post-graduate, career-related interviews when there is no opportunity for students to re-schedule these opportunities (such as employment and graduate school final interviews.) In both cases, students should inform instructors in advance and discuss the implications of any absence. Missing class, even for a legitimate purpose, may mean that there is work that cannot be made up, hurting the student's grade in the class. Likewise, students should be prepared to provide documentation for participation in University-approved activities, as well as for career-related interviews, when requested by the instructor. Instructors also should provide, within reason, the 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, military service, family emergency, or religious observance. Again, it should be recognized that not all work can be "made-up" and that absences can affect student performance in a class.[...] Instructors can determine when irregular attendance negatively affects a student's scholastic achievement, and thus grade, in the course, even to the point of failure. If class absence constitutes a danger to the student's scholastic attainment, the instructor should make this fact known to the student. The student may appeal this decision to the head of the department in which the course is offered.

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. (Conflicts with non-final examinations are covered the Policy 44-35.) 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).

Important: Cell phones must be on silent and put away during class. Phone calls and texting are not permitted. The use of computers for anything not related to the course activities is likewise prohibited. Distracting colleagues and thus impeding learning may result in you being asked to leave the class session. After an initial written warning, one percentage point will be deducted from your final average for each occurrence of *any* behavior that disrupts any aspect of the community's learning.

Late work is NOT accepted. No make-ups are given, except for:

- Participation in an officially documented, university related activity (official documentation must be presented to instructor as soon as the activity is known to the student and **no less than 14 days in advance**)
- A grave personal illness or emergency, officially documented and on record with the university. You are required to provide verification from University Health Services or outside clinicians for significant prolonged illnesses or injuries resulting in absences from classes.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Any idea which is not a student's own, whether paraphrased or quoted verbatim must give credit to the source from which it originated. Should you have any questions as to what is acceptable, please speak to the instructor as soon as possible.

Suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to the appropriate university authorities.

Disability Accommodations

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator>). For further information, please visit Student Disability Resources website (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/>).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: See documentation guidelines (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines>). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Required Covid-19 Safety Precautions: Mask Wearing and Social Distancing

We know from existing scientific data that wearing a mask in public can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community (Lyu and Wehby, 2020; CDC, 2020; Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2020). Just as you're expected to wear a shirt and shoes to class every day, everyone -- including the instructor and TAs -- are required to wear a face mask in University buildings, including classrooms and labs. While this course will meet synchronously during Zoom, you MUST wear a mask appropriately (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. Masks have been provided for students, faculty, and staff, and everyone is expected to wear one while on campus or out in the community. All students, faculty and staff are expected to maintain social distancing (i.e., maintain at least six feet of space between individuals) when possible. It is important to follow related guidance communicated by the University and via public postings/signage related to directional traffic flow and maximum occupancy of spaces. Cooperation from EVERYONE will help control the spread of the virus and help us get back to the previous version of campus life as quickly as possible.

Students experiencing any illness and especially COVID-19 related symptoms should not attend class in person. Those students are strongly encouraged to contact a health care provider and their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations. Refusal to comply with University policies is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Students who refuse to wear masks appropriately may face disciplinary action for Code of Conduct violations. See details here: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, April 3) Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

Johns Hopkins Medicine. (2020, June 17) Coronavirus Face Masks & Protection FAQs.

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know>

Lyu, W. and Wehby, G.L. (2020, June 16) Community Use Of Face Masks And COVID-19: Evidence From A Natural Experiment Of State Mandates In The US. Health Affairs.

https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00818?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub++0pubmed&

Educational Equity and Reporting Bias

Members of the Penn State work 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 (<http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>).

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.

-Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park (CAPS) – (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>): 814-863-0395

-Counseling and Psychological Services at Commonwealth Campuses – (<https://senate.psu.edu/faculty/counseling-services-at-commonwealth-campuses/>)

Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400

Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

Note on course content: It is likely that we will read about and discuss sensitive topics in this course. Literary and artistic works can often present us with beauty, and knowledge of history and exposure to new ideas can be illuminating. But the experience of widening our perspective can also be difficult, uncomfortable, and in some cases could potentially trigger a traumatic response. Please prepare yourselves for reading assignments/film screenings and class meetings accordingly (which might include skimming the preparation beforehand, or checking-in with the instructor). In order to fully meet the goals of this course, I do not typically provide content warnings for individual texts/assignments. Such warnings often condition our readings of texts, and I am not qualified to determine exactly which content might be triggering for a specific individual; I will do my best to use common sense and proceed with compassionate awareness. In all course interactions, I expect all students to maintain an environment of respect, especially in discussions on potentially sensitive topics. If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, please meet with me during the first week of the semester.

Provisional Course Schedule

| Week | Date | Preparation |
|---|------|--|
| Introducing Adaptation | | |
| 1 | 1/19 | First day of class |
| | 1/21 | Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , "Preface to the First Edition," pp. xiii-xviii. |
| Narrative Mosaics: Adapting Short Stories | | |
| 2 | 1/26 | Read: Boccaccio's <i>Decameron</i> (Selections – Part 1 on Canvas) |
| | 1/28 | Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 1-15 Watch: <i>Decameron</i> (1971; Canvas) |
| 3 | 2/2 | Read: Boccaccio's <i>Decameron</i> (Selections – Part 2 on Canvas) |
| | 2/4 | Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 15-32 Watch: <i>Wondrous Boccaccio</i> (2015; Canvas) |
| 4 | 2/9 | Wellness Day – No preparation and no class meeting. |
| | 2/11 | Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 33-63 |
| 5 | 2/16 | Read: Basile's <i>Pentamerone</i> (Selections on Canvas) |
| | 2/18 | Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 63-71. Watch: <i>Tale of Tales</i> (2015, Canvas) |
| Authors, Adaptors, and Audiences. Who's in charge? | | |
| 6 | 2/23 | Read: Pirandello's <i>Novelle per un anno</i> (Selections on Canvas) |
| | 2/25 | Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 79-95 Watch: <i>Kaos</i> (1984, Canvas) |
| 7 | 3/2 | Read: Pirandello's <i>The Late Mattia Pascal</i> (Part I) |
| | 3/4 | Read: Pirandello's <i>The Late Mattia Pascal</i> (Part II) |
| 8 | 3/9 | Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 113-128. Watch: <i>The Late Mathias Pascal</i> (1925, Canvas) |
| | 3/11 | Wellness Day – No preparation and no class meeting. |
| 9 | 3/16 | Read: Pirandello's <i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i> |
| | 3/18 | Read: Screenplays based on <i>Six Characters</i> (Canvas); Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 128-139 Pasolini: "The Screenplay as 'A Structure that Wants to be Another Structure'" (Canvas) |
| Crossing (Intermedial, Carceral, National) Borders | | |
| 10 | 3/23 | Read: TBD |
| | 3/25 | Watch: <i>Va Savior</i> (Who Knows?) (2001) Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 141-148 |
| 11 | 3/30 | Read: Shakespeare's <i>Julius Caesar</i> (Selections and synopsis on Canvas) |
| | 4/1 | Watch: <i>Caesar Must Die</i> (2012) Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 148-153 |

| Week | Date | Preparation |
|-----------------------------|------|--|
| 12 | 4/6 | Read: Pirandello's "La camera in attesa" (Canvas) |
| | 4/8 | Watch: <i>The Wait</i> (2015; Canvas) Read: TBD |
| Beyond Adaptation... | | |
| 13 | 4/13 | Read: Julio Cortázar's "Blow-Up" (Canvas); selections from Pirandello's <i>Shoot!</i> (Canvas) |
| | 4/15 | Read: Hutcheon's <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i> , pp. 169-177 Watch: <i>Blow-up</i> (1966; Canvas) |
| 14 | 4/20 | TBD (based on film/text availability) |
| | 4/22 | TBD (based on film/text availability) |
| 15 | 4/27 | Read: excerpts from Roberto Saviano's <i>Gomorrah</i> (Canvas) Watch: <i>Gomorrah</i> (2008) |
| | 4/29 | That's a wrap: concluding thoughts... |

Wellness Days:

Tuesday, 2/9 and Thursday, 3/11 have been designated as Wellness Days. No class meeting will happen, either in person or remotely, for those two days, and no assignments will be due on those days. Students are encouraged to use these days to focus on their physical and mental health. Please see wellnessdays.psu.edu for university sponsored events focusing on wellness that may be of interest to you. See Canvas and the course syllabus for any work that may be due before the next class meeting.

Schedule updated and posted to Canvas on 2/18.