

**Department:** ILCS

**Course No:** 160

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Culture of Fascist Italy

**Contact:** Roger Travis

**Content Area:** CA1 Arts and Humanities and CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

**Diversity:** CA4-International

**Catalog Copy:** Culture of Fascist Italy. First semester. Three credits. Lectures in English. The way Italian literary and cinematic culture justified, survived, and fought the terrors of the Fascist totalitarian regime.

**Course Information:** a. The objectives and goals of this course are to examine the responses of Italian culture to the horrors of the totalitarian Fascist regimes by surveying a number of verbal and visual texts that justified, survived, and fought the consolidation of Fascism.

b. Course requirements:

- \* Scattered quizzes throughout the semester
- \* Presentations on assigned topics
- \* Mid term and final exams in the form of short essay questions, definitions, and identifications. Exams will also include background, factual information, and interpretative material presented during the lectures and the class discussions.

c. Main topics covered:

1. Historical Background to Fascist "ventennio", Documentary with original footage
2. The Myth of the "Superman" and of "Fascist Virility"
3. Futurism and the Beauty of Technology and War
4. Empire building: Images of "Africa"
5. The Question of Cultural Consensus
6. The Culture of Dissent: Imprisonment
7. The Culture of Dissent: the Road to Exile
8. Italian Racial Laws
9. Italian Jews and Fascism
10. The Italian Resistance and the birth of Neorealism
11. Women and the Resistance

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed.:** This course is based upon a selection of a rich body of literary and cinematic works that exemplify the varied responses of Italian culture to Fascism. Hence, students will not only gain a good understanding of major political and social international developments-- thereby acquiring intellectual breadth and versatility--but will become sensitive

to the variety of human responses to totalitarian regimes encountered in their weekly readings and screening and ranging from consent (i.e., the glorification of war machines and empire-building, the endorsement of Fascist virilities and racial policies) to dissent (i.e, imprisonment and exile) and testimony (i.e, the first-person account of male and female holocaust survivors, the gender-inflected experience of male and female fighters of the Italian resistance). Moreover, by way of lectures, class-discussions, readings, and writing assignments, students will become more articulate while also developing the skills that are necessary for any critical, responsible, and serious assessment of the way literary and cinematic culture responds to the advent of totalitarian regimes. >

**CA1 Criteria:** This course brings together historical, critical and aesthetic modes of inquiry. All readings/screening selected are representative of emblematic responses on the part of Italian cinematic and literary culture to the many ramifications of the advent of Fascism from the teens to 1945. As such, these texts document the responses of poets, novelists, filmmakers, and witnesses to developments such as imperialism, the creation of the Italian war machine, the political and racial persecutions, the Resistance fight, and so on. Because of this selection, students become aware of the intricate relations between specific rhetorical and visual genres and fundamental historical, social, and cultural developments.

The variety of texts that are included in this course also provide students with a deeper comprehension of verbal (i.e, "manifesto" writing, narrative and lyric poetry, testimonial writing) and visual art (i.e., film genres, styles, and techniques of characterization, narrative, lighting, composition, editing, camera-work, sound track, depth-of-field, etc.)

**CA4 Criteria:** This course fulfills a number of categories listed under Group 4.

1. "Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and/or modes of creativity": This course examine the events associated with the rise and consolidation of the Fascist totalitarian regime from the perspective of groups separated by race, class, and gender. Hence, the perceptions of the various myths promoted by Fascism (i.e, virility, the African empire, the beauty of war, racial superiority, etc.) will vary greatly when refracted by a plurality of voices. Likewise, the experience of the Holocaust and of the Resistance struggle—both fundamental developments within Fascism—will generate different responses on the part of men and women.

2. "Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations": The many voices that justified, fought, and survived the horrors of the Fascist regime relativize perspectives and point of views on issues such as the state and the nation, racial superiority, militarism, colonization, and so on. Collectively considered, these voices reveal how interpretative systems, such as the ones promoted by the regime, are cultural constructs that can nevertheless impact millions of lives and therefore must be carefully examined and analyzed in all of their socio-political and cultural ramifications.

4. "Develop an understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration" Since this course examines the issue of exile, imprisonment and the Holocaust it develops an

understanding of the issues associated with the violation of human rights that has often been one of the corollaries of totalitarian regimes.

**Supplemental Information:** Through a variety of literary and cinematic texts, this course provides students with many examples of how modern Italian (and European) society is a place of multiple, diverse voices that brought Italian men and women to support Fascism, imperialism, and the Holocaust or, conversely, be forced into exile and/or imprisonment before joining the Resistance and the Allies.