

Department: Modern and Classical Languages (ILCS)

Course No: 258/W

Credits: 3

Title: Cinematic Representations of Italian Americans

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Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

WQ: Writing

Catalog Copy: 258W. Cinematic Representations of Italian Americans Either semester. Three credits. Three class periods and one 2-hour laboratory period. Cinematic representations of Italian Americans in the works of major directors from the silent era to the present. Construction of and attempts to dislodge negative stereotypes of Italian American male and female immigrants. Prerequisite: ENGL 105 or 110 or 111 or 250.

Course Information: 1a. Through the medium of film, this course focuses on the Italian diaspora to North America. Hence, ILCS 258W examines complex issues of community-life, gender roles, racial stereotyping, and inter-ethnic relations that have characterized the Italian American experience to the United States. 1b. Mid term and final exams. The exams are in the form of short essay questions, definitions and identifications on the films, the readings, and the interpretative material presented during the lectures and class-discussions. Students are also asked to write 4 3-page essays on the main topics around which this course is structured as well as a larger essay which is an expansion/revision of one of the shorter ones. 1c. The course is organized around the following topics: * The impact of Unification on the peasantry (1861-1870) * Migratory patterns: East, West, and Southern Settlements * Mutual Societies, Trade Unionism, Quota Acts * The depression era and the rise of the gangster * Italian American domestic life: gender issues * inter-ethnic relations.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: This course is based upon a rich body of films spanning from the silent era to the present and directed by American, Italian American, women, queer, and Afro American directors. One the one end, then, the diachronic coverage provided by these films introduces students to the major socio-political and cultural contexts of Italian American communities in the United States and therefore allows students to acquire awareness of their era and society, especially as regards the era of mass migration, the urban settlements and the rise of syndacalism, the politics of the quota acts, the depression era and the rise of criminal activity, the ethnic revivalism of post WWII, the gender and racial struggles of the 1960s, and the twilight of ethnicity in the present era of globalization. Moreover, since several of these films are produced by Italian American directors of first and second generation whose works aim at recovering the experience of destitute and emarginated ethnic subjects, this course also allows students to

acquire moral sensitivity towards the phenomenon of mass migration and the violation of basic human rights that often accompanies it. Finally, since this course is based on the work of American, Italian American, Afro American, women, and queer directors who visualize Italian American communities and their cultures according to different perspectives of class, race, and gender, this course also allows students to acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience.

CA1 Criteria: This course brings together historical, critical and aesthetic modes of inquiry. Students are introduced to the historical and social contexts of the Italian diaspora: the impact of Unification, the arrival in the U.S., the rise of syndacalism, the interwar period and the Quota Acts, World War II, the post-war era, the ethnic revivalism and the gender struggles of the 60ies, and so on. Students are also given the critical tools necessary to analyze and appreciate the modes of symbolic representation that record this experience in cinematic texts. Since film is a specific art form, endowed with its own conventions and languages, students are led to a deeper comprehension of film genres, styles, and techniques (i.e., characterization, narrative, lighting, composition, editing, camera-work, sound track, depth-of-field, etc.). Because of the primacy of the visual in contemporary culture, these are skills that will be of great use to students' critical engagement with the world around them.

CA4 Criteria: As a course based upon a body of films focused on one of the largest migratory flows in our history and directed by American, Italian American, Afro-American, women and queer directors, this course exposes students to a great variety of experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and values. Hence, for example, the history of the ethnic subject during the depression era and the rise of criminal activity will give rise to striking different accounts in the work of directors such as Reginald Barker, Mervyn Leroy, or Coppola. Italian American family life and gender politics will also vary greatly when examined from the lenses provided by the films of Nancy Savoca, Maria Rosy Calleri, Tony Vitale, and Tom de Cerchio as opposed to those provided by Reginald Barker, Francis Coppola and Martin Scorsese. Likewise, the topic of inter-ethnic relations between Italian Americans and Afro-Americans will produce contrasting accounts when examined from the perspectives given to us by the films of Scorsese, Spike Lee, or Madonna, as will the issue of cultural maintenance and/or assimilation when viewed from the films of Quentin Tarantino or Stanley Tucci. The relativization of perspectives, thoughts, and values that are produced by these differing accounts provides students with a good understanding that systems of interpretation are cultural constructs and, as such, inherently provisional and subject to further redefinitions. As per your request, I am attaching a syllabus.

W Criteria: 1. Students cannot pass the course without passing the "W" component. Students are required to write 4 3-page essays on selected films. These assignments enable and enhance learning the content of the course since students are asked to discuss issues of characterization, film techniques, audience response, themes, and so on addressed in the course. Each short essays is worth 5% of the grade, for a total of 20%. A final 6-page essay, which is an expansion of one of the shorter paper, is worth an additional 20% 2. The primary modes of writing instruction in the course are the following: * several sessions of formal instructions to the class describing the main principles of formal writing (i.e., selection of a topic, data gathering, inductive/deductive approaches to argumentation, outline, introduction, body, conclusion, MLA style sheet, process writing, etc.) * Extensive commentary on the short papers * Individual conferences during office

hours of by arrangements * Outline sharing, peer-editing 3. Besides the final paper, which is a revision/expansion of one of the shorter assignments, students are encouraged to submit a first and a final draft. The first draft includes extensive comments to promote more effective writing techniques. The final draft allows students the opportunity to revise following the suggestions of the instructor. The final grade is an average of the grade received for the first and final draft.

Role of Grad Students: Role of Grad Students: All graduate students teaching this course are provided with syllabi, class material, and class lectures. Students are native speaker of English who are already in the doctoral program. As is customary in MCL, all students attend a mandatory Orientation and are closely monitored by a TA Coordinator who visits the classroom and provides guidance. Availability at Regional Campuses: -Because of the small size of the ILCS faculty, this course is not available at the regional campuses