



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
“In search of Italianness through Novellas”



Course Code: ITST 333-201 (3)

Course Name: “Masterpieces of the Novella in Italian Literature”

Semester and Year: Winter 2021 (Term II)

Days and time: Tuesday & Thursday – 2:00 pm-3:30 pm

Instructor: Arianna Dagnino

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Office hours: on Zoom, by appointment

Course description

Like a feature film, the “novella” (longer than a short story but shorter than a novel) can be enjoyed in just one sitting. Hence, the never-ending interest for a literary genre that dates back to Boccaccio and the Italian Renaissance. Thanks to its brevity, concrete symbolism and focus on character exploration, the novella is ideal for examining the cultural traits underpinning the notion of Italianness.

Taught in English, the course is intended as a journey into the hearts and minds of Italians through the reading of seven masterpieces of the novella. Taken and studied together, these works show how, when and where Italians are at their best, worst, and most authentic. As such, at the end of the course students will be better equipped to interpret contemporary Italy and the multifarious, highly fragmented, and viscerally regional character of its citizens.

Students will analyze Italian novellas through in-class discussions and take-home assignments. In order to stimulate classroom discussion and provide useful insight into the wide variety of Italy’s socio-cultural specificities, the texts will be supplemented with selected background information including scholarly criticism, visual media, and media reception. The course is highly interactive and, at times, adopts the mode of a creative writing workshop. Students will thus be asked to comment their and other colleagues’ work by discussing points of strength and weakness. This process will facilitate the preparation for and successful drafting of the final paper. It will also encourage students to learn how to analyze and self-assess their own essays.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will gain knowledge of:

- The selected novellas and their authors’ cultural environment.
- Italian mentality and “ways” of being in the world (living, loving, hating, and all that stands in between)
- Italy’s socio-cultural and political context within the scope of this course.
- Critical analysis of literary texts, with a particular focus on narrative structure and cultural exploration.
- Assessment of one’s own and other students’ critical work.

Grading Criteria

Attendance, Preparation and In-Class Participation: **10%**

Reflection Tasks: **30%**

Oral Presentation: **8%**

Outline (5%) and Peer Review (5%) of Midterm Paper: **10%**

Outline (5%), First Draft and Peer Review (5%) of first draft of Final Paper: **15%**

Final Paper/Project: **27%**

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Attendance is expected from all students.

Participation is important, and quite simple; basically, it means: 1) do the assigned readings regularly and be willing to ask questions and/or answer them; 2) foster discussion and/or actively participate in it during group discussions, particularly when we review the material covered; 3) willingness to engage in teamwork when required.

Reflection tasks: 30%

Before each class, you are expected to upload on Canvas a comment (reflection task, min. 250 words, max 400 words, excluding quotes), possibly including a related question, regarding that day's assigned reading. The file should be uploaded in Word format. Each comment/question should also cite the specific passage to which it relates (if that is the case). This is for use as reference during class discussions. Your comments & their related questions will be discussed in class and/or in small groups. Use this comment/question to deal with the textual moments that you find interesting, curious, confusing, or otherwise relevant in a socio-cultural analysis of the text under scrutiny. For instance, is there something you didn't understand about the text that you would like us to discuss? Do you have any thematic/formal/theoretical/cultural or other concerns you would like us to explore in our class/in-group discussion while analyzing the text through a socio-cultural lens?

Students will be asked to present and defend one of their comments/reflection tasks at least once during the course.

Oral presentation to the class: 8%

You will have the opportunity to briefly present one of your weekly reflections to the class (date TBA).

Outline (5%) and Peer Review (5%) of Midterm Paper: 10%

A **brief outline** of a mock-up midterm paper on Sciascia's novella is due for peer review (the outline should include **a thesis statement and at least 4 supporting points** with evidence from the text).

Outline (5%), First Draft (5%) and Peer Review (5%) of first draft of Final Paper: 15%

Final paper: 27%

There will be a **final paper** of 1900-2000 words. A **brief outline and an initial draft** of the paper is due before the final submission (the outline and first draft should include **a thesis statement and at least 4 supporting points** with evidence from the text). The paper must be formatted to MLA standards: 12 size font, Times New Roman, double-spaced (without extra

spacing between paragraphs). You must use the appropriate MLA parenthetical citation format, and your paper must argue a position and cite textual evidence to support your claims. The **first draft** will be **peer-reviewed** by one of your class mates.

Attention! Please note that papers not presented by their due date will lose 10 points per class meeting until handed in.

Grading Policy and Criteria

Assessment Guidelines for assigning main letter grades: A, B, C, D, and F.

A: Work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

B: This is a highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

C: This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

D: This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material.

Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

F: This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

Guidelines of FHIS Department for content-based (i.e., non-language) courses			
The grading criteria are: <i>Mastery of content; Organization; Clarity and precision of discourse; Originality of ideas; Ability to a) analyze, b) synthesize, c) evaluate.</i>			
A bracket — 80% to 100%			
90-99	A+		outstanding
85-89	A		excellent
80-84	A-		very good
<i>For FofA — Exceptional performance. Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluation; evidence of extensive knowledge base.</i>			
B bracket — 68% to 79%			
76-79	B+		good
72-75	B		competent
68-71	B-		satisfactory
<i>For FofA — Competent performance. Evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.</i>			
C bracket — 55% to 67%			
64-67	C+		adequate
60-63	C		barely adequate
55-59	C-		poor
<i>For FofA — Adequate intellectual performance. Understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigor.</i>			
D bracket — 50% to 54%			
50-54	D		very poor
<i>For FofA — Same as C above.</i>			
F bracket — 00% to 49%			
00-49	F		fail
<i>For FofA — Inadequate performance. Little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.</i>			
<i>Results in an average class of reasonable size will normally fall within the following broad limits:</i>			
Grade A			<i>between 5% and 35% of the class</i>
Grades A+B combined			<i>not over 75% of the class</i>
Grade F			<i>not over 20% of the class</i>

Academic honesty

We – me, the teaching assistants, the FHIS Department, UBC and the scholarly community at large – share an understanding of the ethical ways that we use to produce knowledge. A core practice of this shared value of academic integrity is that we acknowledge the contributions of others to our own work, but it also means we produce our own contributions that add to the scholarly conversation: we don't buy or copy papers or exams, or have someone else edit them. We also don't falsify data or sources, or hand in the same work in more than one course.

Because it is so important that research be done ethically, I expect ITST 333-201 students to meet these expectations. Any instance of cheating or taking credit for someone else's work, whether intentionally or unintentionally, can and often will result in at minimum a grade of zero for the assignment, and these cases will be reported to the Department Head, and the Faculty of Arts Associate Dean. Be sure you understand UBC's expectations: see the UBC Calendar entries on "[Academic Honesty](#)," "[Academic Misconduct](#)," and "[Disciplinary Measures](#)," and check out the [Student Declaration and Responsibility](#). Use resources to help you meet those expectations: See "[Understand Academic Integrity](#)" from the Chapman Learning Commons and their page of [Resource Guides](#) (how to cite sources, media, data, etc.), plus bookmark the [OWL](#) website for how to use MLA citation style.

Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of

the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

Statement regarding online learning for international students

The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges with respect to online and remote learning, particularly for international students who will not be residing in Canada this fall. There exists potential restriction and/or censorship of online course content by the governments of some foreign countries where international students reside. The Provost's office has developed the following statement pertaining to the potential restrictions to international students' online learning experiences as a result of remote learning:

During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0> for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit: <http://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/freedom-expression>

Reading list

The following is intended to be indicative of the amount of time we will spend analyzing each novella. I reserve the right to make changes. I will add excerpts from book chapters, critical essays and articles as we go by. You will find all the due weekly readings and assignments uploaded **on Canvas (Modules/Weekly Readings with due dates).**

1) Natalia Ginzburg (1962), "Winter in the Abruzzi," in *The Little Virtues*, Arcade Publishing, New York, 1989.

2) Giuseppe Tomasi de Lampedusa (1961), *The Professor and the Siren*, New York Review Books, 2014.

3) Vasco Pratolini (1954), "A Long Christmas Journey," In *Stories of Modern Italy*, Ed. Ben Johnson, Random House, New York, 1960 (pp. 234-271).

4A & 4B) Italo Calvino (1958), "The adventure of a bather" and "The adventure of a poet," in *Difficult Loves*, San Diego and New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1984.

5) Leonardo Sciascia (1973), "The Wine-Dark Sea," in *The Wine-Dark Sea*, New York Review of Books, New York, 2000, pp. 27-65.

6A) Corrado Alvaro, “The Small Hours,” and **6B) Elisabetta Rasy**, “Two Days at Christmas,” in *Rome Tales*, ed. Hugh Shankland, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2011, pp. 133-144 and pp. 259-267.

7) Aldo Palazzeschi, (1975), “Servite Domino in Laetitia,” in *A Tournament of Misfits*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2005, pp. 15-22.

8A, 8B & 8C) Enzo Siciliano, “The Wedding Night,” “Friends,” and “Envy,” in *Caravaggio’s Death and Other Stories*, Legas, New York, 1997.

9) Erri De Luca, *Three Horses*, Other Press, New York, 2005.

Alternatively: Giovanni Boccaccio, Abraham the Jew, in *Rome Tales*.

Alternatively: Camilla Baresani, “Everyone is a pain in the ass,” in *New Italian Women. A Collection of Short Fiction* – generational divide (young and old).

Alternatively: Valeria Parrella, “The Prize” (North-South divide, gender roles).

Alternatively: Sciascia, “A Simple Story” – mafia, organized crime, corruption, N-S divide.

We shall also read excerpts and/or short chapters from these books for critical reflection/in-class discussion:

1) **Luigi Barzini**, “The Peaceful Invasion”, “The Power of the Family” and “Conclusion.” in *Italians. A Full-Length Portrait Featuring Their Manners and Morals*, Touchstone Editions, New York, 1996, ISBN 0-684-82500-7.

2) **John Hooper**, “Questions of Identity” and “Of Mafias and Mafiosi,” In *The Italians*, Viking, New York, 2015.

3) **Tim Parks**, “Prey-deek-torr,” in *An Italian Education*, Vintage Books, London, 2000, ISBN 9780099286967.

4) **Silvana Patriarca**, *Italian Vices, Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010.

5) **Beppe Severgnini**, “The train, where many talk, few listen, and everyone understands” (pp. 65-69); “The beach,” “The Church,” and “The garden, seclusion in bloom” (pp. 165-171), in *La bella figura. A field guide to the Italian mind*. Broadway Books, New York, 2006.

LESSON PLAN with Weekly Readings and Assignments

Week 1: January 12 and 14

LESSON 1 - Tue: Introduction to the course. Reading novellas through a socio-cultural lens. Why we read and how we read the selected works.

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: John Hooper’s *The Italians*, “Questions of Identity.”

LESSON 2 - Th: What are novellas? (Definition and History, Part I) Boccaccio’s tales (*Decameron*). Introducing Novella No. 1.

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Ginzburg

Week 2: January 19 and 21

LESSON 3 - Tue: What are novellas? (Definition and History, Part II) Discussion on Novella No. 1 (**Ginzburg**). Introducing Novella No. 2 (**Tomasi di Lampedusa**).

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Tomasi di Lampedusa-Part I, pp. 1-20

LESSON 4 - Th: Introducing Italy from a geographical and socio-historical perspective. Initial discussion: **Novella No. 2 (Tomasi di Lampedusa-Part I, pp. 1-20)**. Exploring emerging themes.

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Tomasi di Lampedusa-Part II, pp. 20-38

Week 3: January 26 and 28

LESSON 5 - Tue: Italianness: self-reflection task. Critical/Media Response and Wrapping Up: **Novella No. 2 (Tomasi di Lampedusa-Part II, pp. 20-38)**. Introducing and contextualizing **Novella No. 3 (Pratolini)**.

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Pratolini.

LESSON 6 - Th: Initial discussion: **Novella No. 3-Part I, pp. (Pratolini-Part I, pp. 235-255)**. Exploring emerging themes + introducing **Severgnini's** essay "The Train".

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Severgnini, "The Train".

Registrations for oral presentations open (1st-come, 1st-served basis)

Week 4: February 2 and 4

Oral presentations open (1st-come, 1st-served basis)

LESSON 7 - Tue: Critical/Media Response and Wrapping Up: **Novella No. 3 (Pratolini-Part II)**, + comments on **Severgnini's** essay "The Train". Introducing and contextualizing **Novellas No. 4A & 4B (Calvino)**.

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Calvino - Novellas No. 4A & 4B.

LESSON 8 - Th: Initial discussion: **Novellas No. 4A & 4B (Calvino)** + introducing **Severgnini's** essay "The Beach".

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Severgnini, "The Beach".

Week 5: February 9 and 11

LESSON 9 - Tue: Critical/Media Response and Wrapping Up **Novellas No. 4A & 4B (Calvino)** + comments on **Severgnini's** "The Beach". Introducing and contextualizing **Novella No. 5 (Sciascia)**. Introducing the **Guest Lecturer (Lesson 11)** and **the at-home reading (+ comment/question)**, due for the Guest lecture (Lesson 11).

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Sciascia- Part I, pp. 27-45.

LESSON 10 - Th: Initial discussion: **Novella No. 5 (Sciascia-Part I, pp. 27-45)**. Exploring emerging themes. Introducing **Outline for Midterm Paper** (due before **Lesson 12**) + introducing optional reading (Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*) for the guest lecture.

Week 6: Feb 15-19: FAMILY DAY and MIDTERM BREAK (no classes)

At-home readings: Sciascia-Part II, pp. 45-65 + Thomas Mann's Death in Venice (optional)

Week 7: February 23 and 25

LESSON 11 - Tue: Group discussion and workshop on outline for Midterm Paper. Critical/Media Response, Discussion and Wrapping Up, Novella No. 5 (**Sciascia-Part II, pp. 45-65**).

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Thomas Mann's Death in Venice (optional).

LESSON 12 - Th: Guest Lecture: "Italianness and Italian Novellas in the European/German Context. A Comparative Outlook." Discussing the home reading on "Italianness". Explanation on how to review your buddy's outline for midterm paper. **Outline for midterm paper (on novella No. 5 - Sciascia). due by Sunday, Febr 28, 5.00 pm!!!**

At-home reading: peer review of outline for midterm paper.

Week 8: March 2 and 4

LESSON 13 - Tue: Peer review of outline of Midterm Paper on Sciascia's novella due on **Tue, March 2, 8.00 am!!** In-class Workshop on Peer Review of outline in Midterm Paper. Introducing and contextualizing Novellas No. 6A & 6B (**Alvaro & Rasy**)

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Alvaro & Rasy - Novellas No. 6A & 6B.

LESSON 14 - Th: Initial discussion: Novellas No. 6A & 6B (**Alvaro & Rasy**). Exploring emerging themes. Introducing critical readings on "Italianness" and Severgnini's "The Church").

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Severgnini, "The Church".

Week 9: March 9 and 11

LESSON 15 - Tue: Critical/Media Response and Wrapping Up: Novellas No. 6A & 6B (**Alvaro & Rasy**). **Italianness: Is there such a thing? (Part I)** Group discussion on Severgnini's "The Church" & on "Italianness" drawing upon critical readings. Contextualizing author and Novella No. 7 (**Palazzeschi**).

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Palazzeschi.

LESSON 16 - Th: Initial discussion: Novella No. 7 (**Palazzeschi**). Exploring emerging themes + introducing **Enzo Siciliano's "Envy" (8A)**.

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Enzo Siciliano's "Envy" (Novella 8A).

Week 10: March 16 and 18

LESSON 17 - Tue: Discussion on **Enzo Siciliano's "Envy" (Novella 8A; Siciliano Part I)** Introducing and contextualizing Novellas No. 8B, 8C ("The Wedding Night" and "Friends").

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Siciliano, Novellas No. 8B, 8C.

LESSON 18 - Th: Initial discussion: Novellas No. 8B, 8C (**Siciliano, Part II**). Exploring emerging themes. Introducing critical reading (**Shugaar's** essay, "Italy in the Years of Lead-Wanna be like everyone").

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Shugaar.

Week 11: March 23 and 25

LESSON 19 - Tue: In-class discussion on critical reading (**Shugaar's** essay, "Italy in the Years of Lead-Wanna be like everyone). Wrapping Up: Novellas No. 8A, 8B, 8C (**Siciliano, Part III**). Contextualizing author and Novella No. 9 (**Erri de Luca**).

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Erri de Luca/Part 1, pp. 1-40.

LESSON 20 - Th: Initial discussion: Novella No. 9 (**Erri de Luca/Part 1, pp. 1-40**).

Exploring emerging themes. Working on the final essay: ideas, suggestions and collective brain storming (**Part I**).

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Erri de Luca/Part 2, pp. 40-80.

Week 12: March 30 and April 1st

LESSON 21 - Tue: further discussion: Novella No. 9 (**Erri de Luca/Part 2, pp. 40-80**).

Further exploring emerging themes + comments on critical essay.

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Erri de Luca/Part 3, pp. 80-130.

LESSON 22 - Th: further discussion: Novella No. 9 (**Erri de Luca/Part 3, pp. 80-130**).

Media response and wrapping up. Working on the final essay: ideas, suggestions and collective brain storming (**Part II**).

At-home assignments: Outline for Final Paper Due by Tue, April 8 at 8.00 am.

Week 13: April 6 and 8

LESSON 23 - Tue: **Outline for Final Paper Due. Workshop on Outline for Final Paper.** Introducing critical reading on "Italianness" (excerpts from Silvana Patriarca, "Italian Vices", 2010).

At home reading + reflection on Canvas/Assignments: Patriarca, "Italian Vices".

LESSON 24 - Th: + Italianness: Is there such a thing? (Part II). Discussion on home & in-class readings on "Italianness". Further discussion on issues related to the final essay.

At-home assignment: Initial draft of the Final Paper due on Sunday afternoon, Apr 11, at 5.00 pm.

Week 14: April 13

LESSON 25 - Tue: **Peer review feedback on the first draft of Final Paper due on Tuesday, Apr 13, at 7.00 am. Workshop on initial draft of the Final Paper** + Closing remarks: Italianness: Is there such a thing?

Final Paper: Due April 21.

