

Italian Literature in Translation  
 Course abbreviation: Ital Lit in Trans

### Instructor's Information

**Instructor:** TBD  
**Homepage:** TBD  
**Email:** TBD  
**Tel.** TBD  
**Office:** TBD  
**Office Hours:** TBD  
**Preferred communication:** TBD  
**Class Schedule:** 3 hours per week

### Course goals and objectives

**Catalog Course Description** This introduction to Italian literature begins with a discussion of Dante's Hell as a medieval outcry against political corruption. The course concludes with Italo Calvino's twentieth century portrait of a man who takes to the trees as a form of social commentary. The class will explore literary themes in social and political context through diverse media. The course will be conducted in English, and students will read the literary works in English translation.

**Prerequisites:** ENG099

**Pre/Corequisites:** CSE095, ENG099 and ESL098

### Flexible Core Objectives: World Cultures and Global Issues

This course provides the benefit of exploring topics in Italian culture through the perspectives expressed in selected literary works that span the tradition, from Dante Alighieri's medieval outcry against political corruption, to Italo Calvino's surreal modern reflection on Enlightenment principles. The texts are purveyors of distinct voices in European culture from the thirteenth through the twentieth century, and they serve as landmarks in discussions of western intellectual traditions, literary periods and movements, as well as the use of literature as a form of social and political activism. The course is taught in English, and the students read the texts in English.

1. Analyze Italian literature, as well as its relation to the culture of Italy in the life and times of the authors and their audiences.
2. Identify social and political themes in the assigned literary works through active, prepared participation in class discussions.
3. Read, interpret critically and debate indicators of the central themes of the literary works assigned within the context of literary periods and movements..
4. Write short weekly writing assignments and a final critical research paper; and develop more specific, expressive, precise and synthetic writing skills.

### Textbook, grading, and other class logistics

**Textbooks:** The following textbooks will support this course.

Gaspara Stampa [Laura A. Stortoni, Ed., and Mary P. Lillie, Trans.] *Gaspara Stampa: Selected Poems*. Italica Press, 1994..

Cesare Pavese [R.W. Flint, Trans. *The Moon and the Bonfires*. NYRB Classics, 2002

Calvino, Italo *The Baron in the Trees*. Harcourt Brace 1957.

Carlo Goldoni. *The Beneficent Bear* [Note: this play is available via Google Books on the web.] French [via Google Books], 1915

Additional books to support this course.

Elsa Morante [Isabel Quigley, Trans.] *Arturo's Island*. Zoland, 1998.

Dante Alighieri [Robert Pinsky, Trans.] *The Inferno*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994.

Giovanni Boccaccio [G.H. McWilliam, Trans.] *The Decameron*, Penguin Classics, 2003

Eric Bentley, Ed. *The Servant of two masters and other Italian Classics*. Applause Theatre Book Publishers. [1986], c1958.

Verdi: *La Traviata* (2001). Opera Journeys Pub

We will also discuss the following films and audio recordings.

*The Decameron*, A Film by Pier Paolo Pasolini. MGM Home Entertainment

*The Mandrake Root*, *La Mandragola*, The Comely Hit of 1518. European Drama network

Roberto Rossellini's War Trilogy *Rome Open City/Paisan/Germany Year Zero*. Criterion

Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. Koch Lorber Films

**Grades:** Your final grade will be determined based on the following evaluation points.

- Claas participation 15%
- Final exam 20%
- Written assignments (5 x3 ) 20%
- Final paper (2 drafts x 15) 30%
- Presentations 15%

- **Grade distributions:** A: 95-100%, A-: 90-94%, B+: 86-89%, B: 83-85%, B-: 80-82%, C+: 76-79%, C: 73-75%, C-: 70-72%, D+: 66-69%, D: 63-65%, D-: 60-62%, F: -59%, WU: Unofficial withdraw (≈F), W: Withdraw

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

#### Week 1

Course introduction: Dante Alighieri (1265-1321),

The Inferno; the Divine Comedy as foundation of Italian literature; Dante's political exile; Dante's description of the afterlife as an outcry to conform human society to God's justice.

#### Week 2

Reading: Dante's Inferno.

Discussion: the role of women in medieval society; poetry attributed to a medieval woman poet, called La Compiuta Donzella (The Accomplished Young Woman); medieval manuscript illuminations of the Inferno; musical settings of poetry in Dante's milieu.

Short weekly writing assignment.

#### Week 3

Reading: Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), The Decameron.

Discussion: life in the time of plague in fourteenth-century Florence; social satire in

Boccaccio's novelle; Boccaccio's professed advocacy on behalf of women, subjected to the will of menfolk; Boccaccio's concern for good government.

Short weekly writing assignment.

#### Week 4

Reading: Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), The Decameron, continued.

Film: Pier Paolo Pasolini's The Decameron (1971), selection.

Discussion: the role of reading Boccaccio in

Pasolini's modern social critique.

Short weekly writing assignment.

#### Week 5

Reading: Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), The Mandrake Root.

Film: The Mandrake Root (2008).

Discussion: marriage in the Renaissance; the social and political role of Machiavelli as provider of courtly theatrical entertainment.

Short weekly writing assignment.

#### Week 6

Reading: Gaspara Stampa (1523-1554), selected poems.

Discussion: comparison to selected poems of Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374); women's social choices in sixteenth-century Venice.

Class presentations on selected poems.

#### Week 7

Reading: Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina.

Discussion: selected letters between Galileo and his daughter; the relationship between faith and science in Galileo's social milieu.

Short weekly writing assignment.

#### Week 8

Reading: Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793), The Beneficent Bear, and selections of the author's diaries.

Discussion: selections of Goldoni's diaries on the debut of the play for the wedding of Marie

Antoinette (1755-1793); Goldoni's incorporation of Enlightenment principles in gentle parodies of bourgeois aspirations to nobility.

First draft of final research paper due.

#### Week 9

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), La Traviata and Nabucco.

Discussion: comparison of Nabucco to the Biblical

Book of Daniel; comparison of La Traviata to Alexandre Dumas's play, La dame aux camélias

(1848); the role of Verdi as a rallying cry in the social and political unification of Italy.

#### Week 10

Reading: Cesare Pavese (1908-1950), The Moon and the Bonfires, selection.

Film: Roberto Rossellini's Paisà (1946), selection.

Discussion: Italian mass immigration to the United States and images of America before and after World War II; the role of the Italian partisans at the end of World War II.

#### Week 11

Reading: Elsa Morante (1912-1985), Arturo's

Island, selection.

Film: Federico Fellini's La dolce vita (1960).

Discussion: social critique of the family as a social institution.

Week 12

Reading: Italo Calvino (1923-1985), *The Baron in the Trees*.

Discussion: a surreal modern review of Enlightenment social principles.

Final draft of research paper due.

Week 13

Final exam.

### Policies

**Classroom policies:** The following policies have been instituted to ensure an optimal learning experience for all students:

- Please arrive on time. Three lateness equal 1 absence.
- Please prepare for each class meeting by completing all writing/reading assignments beforehand.
- Please turn your cell phone to silence during class.
- Please turn off your cell phone during the exam and the quiz.

**Valuing LaGuardia's Diversity:** As a college community we represent a world of perspectives on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and nationality, to name a few. I concur with **the College's Declaration of Pluralism**, if you have any suggestions in helping me to create a welcoming classroom environment, please tell me.

**Rules for Personal Conduct:** You are expected to obey the rules and regulations of the College about conduct. Disorderly or indecent behavior is not appropriate in a college setting. It is a violation of college rules and is not acceptable.

**The student attendance policy:** As stated in the college catalog: "Attendance in class is a requirement and will be considered in the evaluation of student performance. Instructors are required to keep an official record of student attendance. The maximum number of unexcused absences is limited to 15% of the number of class hours. Note: Absences are counted from the first day of class even if they are a result of late registration or change of program" (117).

**The academic dishonesty policy:** As stated in the catalog: "Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in the City University of New York and is punishable by penalties ranging from a grade of 'F' on a given test, research paper or assignment, to an 'F' in the course or suspension or expulsion from the College. Academic Dishonesty includes:

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Internet Plagiarism
- Obtaining Unfair Advantages
- Falsification of Records and Official Documents
- Misconduct in Internships (117)

**Policy on assigning the grade of Incomplete:** As stated in the college catalogue: "The Incomplete grade may be awarded to students who have not completed all of the required course work but for whom there is a reasonable expectation of satisfactory completion. A student who is otherwise in good standing in a course defined as complying with the college attendance policy and maintaining a passing average but who has not completed at most two major assignments or examinations by the end of the course may request an incomplete grade. To be eligible, such a student must provide, before the instructor submits grades for the course, a documented reason, satisfactory to the instructor, for not having completed the assignment on time. Instructors giving IN grades must inform students in writing of the conditions under which they may receive passing grades. Departments may designate certain courses in which no incomplete grades may be awarded." (120).

**Declaration of pluralism:** The Education and Language Acquisition Department embraces diversity. We must respect each other regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability and social class. For detailed information regarding the policy, please refer to Student Handbook 2011-2012 (p.89).

### Final Remarks on Course Policies

\*Office hours and emails are solely for the purpose of clarification, for further explanation, for further requests for illustrations, for sharing ideas, for talking about difficulties or even to talk more about a topic that you feel you understand. I love ideas and I will always be glad to talk or write about any ideas that come up in class! This, however, is *reserved for people who come to class*. **If you are absent, you will need to find notes and be responsible for what you missed.** We can meet after you have tried to make up for a class. **Emails with the following content will not be answered and will be frowned upon: "I'm sorry I missed class today. Did I miss something important?"**

### \*A further note on writing emails:

Please be mindful when you write emails. Whenever you come to class and whenever you communicate with others in the College, be aware that *you are* in a professional environment. Similarly, whenever you write an email to your professor, you are writing a professional document. Make sure you always include a greeting (Hello Professor X, Hi Professor X, Good morning Professor X), followed by a well-written text (as grammatically correct as possible and formal). Lastly—depending on the nature of your message—be sure to say "Thank you," or "Hope to hear from you soon," or "Thank you for your time," followed by your name.

\* Please no cell phones in class and absolutely no texting. Also, laptops and tablets in class prove to be distracting. Please see me if you must bring one to class.

\*Your decision to remain enrolled in this class implies that you agree with Course Requirements and Policies.