

ENG 290: Human Values in Literature
John Felice Rome Center
Spring 2024
Thursdays | 10 am-12:30 pm
Dr. Barbara Castaldo, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: By Appointment, Wed./Th.

Course Description

This course aims to explore the idea of national identity and how literary works, as well as language, can contribute to the birth of this identity in various ways. Specifically, we will examine the long process that led to the formation of a united Italian nation, touching on the political and sociological unity and divide of a country that - after the fall of the Roman Empire - remained fragmented and subdued for centuries. Key authors of Italian literature will guide us through the complex process of nation configuration through different ages.

We will discuss how Medieval writers, such as Dante Alighieri, Petrarca, and Machiavelli, helped shape the idea of a motherland. We will learn about the creation of a common Italian language through the collective efforts of writers and scholars. We will examine how literature narrated the historical moment of Italian political unification (Risorgimento), fueled nationalist feelings during the two World Wars, and in recent times challenged the very idea of homeland.

We will analyze works of prose and poetry, literary as well as cultural texts, related to the main themes of Italian identity and culture. Readings of critical theory will add a comparative and more philosophical approach: by discussing how society creates feelings of common identity and cohesion, we will try to reach a broader understanding of the human values attached to national identity – while also reflecting on the minoritized identities that have been marginalized by the dominant model of nationhood.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Know major literary works and key authors of Italian literature.
- Understand the relation of those literary works to Italian society and culture.
- Know core themes and ideas in history and culture.
- Understand and describe literary works as modes of social inquiry representing specific historical and cultural contexts.
- Develop skills in reading, thinking, and writing critically through the composition of an academic essay and other homework assignments.
- Develop analytical skills and argue interpretations through class discussions.
- Identify different issues, authors, and works of art from a comparative perspective.

Required Texts

Assigned readings and films posted in Sakai/Panopto.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation, and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one absence.

This course meets once a week, thus a total of one absence will be permitted. **Absences beyond this will result in a 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”. Consistent tardiness or long breaks out of class will also affect negatively your participation grade.**

The collective health of the JFRC is everyone’s responsibility. **DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.**

Required Work

The course will fulfill its learning outcomes if you comply with the following requirements:

Reader Responses: To enhance both your reading and class discussion, for each class you will find a handout in Sakai with a list of topics/questions that we will discuss. Choose one or two questions that interest you and address them through some written notes, including a quotation or two as evidence in support of your claims. These meditations are a chance for you to consider the readings *before* coming to class. As the semester progresses, your responses should become more analytical and offer connections between the works, the authors, and the literary theories. Your Responses will also be useful when writing your final paper. **Please, note that I will ask you to discuss your Responses in class and that I might collect them. I will evaluate your Reader Responses in your final Participation grade.** Failure to complete the Reader Responses accurately will impact negatively your final Participation grade.

Participation: This course relies largely on class discussion, and the success of discussions depends upon your *active* presence, thus your presence and contributions are crucial - both to me and to your classmates. To help stimulate class discussions, you should come to class prepared for the assigned readings, and you should participate actively through your Reader Responses. **I would like everyone to speak at least once every class. I recommend you take notes of lectures and discussions: you will find your notes invaluable when you need to prepare for the quizzes or if you write a paper on one of the textbooks.**

The kind of reading we will practice requires marking up a text and reading passages during all class discussions. **If it is a PDF file posted to Sakai, you can download it and save it on your device and thus highlight the important quotes in yellow and/or take notes of the page numbers and of your comments.**

Quizzes: There will be four in-class quizzes (multiple-choice questions) on all material covered (readings, lectures, discussions). **To succeed in the quizzes, completing the assigned readings and taking accurate notes in class are essential. The professor’s PowerPoint slides can be used for a quick review of the main points and are not meant to replace your own note-taking and readings of the material.**

Team Presentation: Each team will prepare one 15-20 minute presentation (about 5 minutes for each student), presenting one artistic work on the theme of national identity (preferably literature, but also art, or cinema). See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on the presentations.

Meeting for Paper Proposal: About one week before the final essay is due, we will meet individually to discuss the topic, summary, and bibliography of your final paper. See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on the paper proposal. **See me during office hours if you would like to discuss your paper proposal earlier in the semester, or more at length than the official meeting schedule allows.**

Final Paper (5-6 pages, double-spaced): The final paper will be the analysis of a literary text of your choice. It will show your ability to choose a focused question and thesis to guide your discussion and to follow the conventions for writing about literature. See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on the final paper.

Sakai: This course will be using Sakai. You are required to check the course site regularly for announcements, messages, readings, and assignments posted there.

Electronic Devices: Cell phones are not allowed for use in class. Personal laptops are allowed only for note-taking and during a class discussion of the textbook. If you use your laptop when it is clearly not needed (such as during a student’s presentation, or while we are watching a video), this will lower your participation grade.

Assessment Components

• Participation/Reader Responses	10%
• Quizzes (4)	40% (or each quiz 10%)
• Team Presentation	10%
• Meeting for Paper Proposal	10%
• Final Paper	20%
• Attendance	10%

Grading

94-100: A	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+
90-93: A-	84-86: B	74-76: C	60-66: D
	80-83: B-	70-73: C-	59 or lower: F

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

I expect that all work you produce for this course will be your own and that you will not submit work you have already completed for other courses. **Submitting the same Reader Responses of another student (if collected) will be considered plagiarism. Paraphrasing or otherwise copying the work of another person without citing the source of the words and ideas will be considered plagiarism.**

Using AI for writing the final paper or for any of the assignments will result in an F in the assignment or even an F in the course and might jeopardize the rest of your studies at Loyola.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. *As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.*

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, during the first week of classes.

And finally... Welcome to this class! I find the study of literature both intellectually and emotionally fascinating (as well as a lot of fun), and I look forward to exploring it together. Please do not hesitate to converse with me about the course or the readings throughout the semester. As far as possible, I want to make sure the class meets your own academic goals as well as those I have outlined in this syllabus.

Week 1 Introduction to the course. What is a nation? The notion of Italy.
Th 1/18

Week 2 Our Motherland: Dante's *Divine Comedy*.
Th 1/25



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- Week 3**
Th 2/1 Our Motherland: Francesco Petrarca and Giacomo Leopardi, *To Italy*. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*.
- Week 4**
Th 2/8 Our Motherland: Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Antonio Gramsci's *The Modern Prince*.
- Week 5**
Th 2/ 15 **Quiz 1.** The language question in the Middle Ages: Dante Alighieri, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.
- Week 6**
Th 2/22 The language question during the Risorgimento: Alessandro Manzoni.
- Week 7**
Th 2/29 **Topic for team presentation due.** Discussion of presentation topics. The language question in our times: Pasolini, Calvino, Sabatini.
- Week 8**
Spring Break (March 1-10): no class on Thursday, March 7
- Week 9**
Th 3/14 **Quiz 2.** The Risorgimento. Giuseppe Verdi: *Nabucco* and *The Battle of Legnano*. Antonio Gramsci's interpretation of the Risorgimento (from *The Prison Notebooks*).
- Week 10**
Th 3/21 The Risorgimento in literature and film. Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*. Luchino Visconti, *The Leopard*.
- Week 11**
Th 3/28 **Quiz 3.** A united nation and its nationalism. *Futurist Political Manifestos*.
- Week 12**
Th 4/4 **Team presentations.** Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Ode to the Latin Resurrection*.
- Week 13**
Th 4/11 **Meetings for Paper Proposals.** Discussion of final paper topics. A united Italy and its dissident voices. Annie Vivanti, *Ego*. Pasolini, *To My Country*. Gaber, *I Don't Feel Italian*.
- Week 14**
Th 4/18 **Quiz 4.** "Imagine there's no countries." Green, *Global Citizenship*. Davis, *My Country Is the World*. Lennon, *Imagine*. Conclusions.
- Week 15**
Final exam week.
The final paper is due.