**From novel to film: USA**

Prof. Francesco Rognoni

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to analyse a selection of works that illustrate key elements in the history of literature and culture in the United States. In addition, it will explore the concepts of literary and intersemiotic translation (i.e. the transformation of a literary work into a cinematographic one). At the end of the course, students will know important aspects of twentieth-century North American culture (novels and movies), including its debts and credits towards Europe.

***COURSE PROGRAM***

The course is divided into two modules, both taught in the first semester.

Module 1: *F.S. Fitzgerald in Hollywood.*

The lessons will focus both on Fitzgerald’s working days in Hollywood and his short stories and novels about the movie industry, and on later films based on *The Great Gatsby*, *The Last Tycoon* and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. Ian Hamilton’s 1990 essay *Writers in Hollywood 1915-1951* will provide basic background information.

Module 2: *From novel to film: four case studies.*

The lessons will focus on the analysis of four novels and their successful (or not so successful) film adaptations: H. McCoy’s *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?*, N. West’s *The Day of the Locust*, R. Chandler’s *The Long Goodbye* and L. McMurtry’s *The Last Picture* Show. Polanski’s masterpiece *Chinatown* will also be studied as a revival and reworking of the narrative styles typical of the 30s and 40s ‘noir’ novels and films.

***BIBLIOGRAPHY[[1]](#footnote-1)***

F.S. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (any edition) [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/fitzgerald/the-great-gatsby-9780141182636-674677.html)

*-----------------*-, *The Last Tycoon* (any edition) [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/fitzgerald-f-scott/last-tycoon-9780141185637-709963.html)

------------------, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (pdf posted on Blackboard)

I. Hamilton, *Writers in Hollywood 1915-1951* (out of print but easily available on online second-hand bookstores, e.g. Abebooks)

H. McCoy, *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?* (any edition) [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/mccoy-horace/they-shoot-horses-dont-they-9781788165907-709964.html)

N. West, *The Day of the Locust* (any edition) [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/west-nathanael/day-of-the-locust-9780241341674-699076.html)

R. Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (any edition) [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/chandler-raymond/long-goodbye-9780241954362-674676.html)

L. McMurtry, *The Last Picture Show* (Liveright or any other available edition) [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/mcmurtry-l/the-last-picture-show-9780141194448-710009.html)

S. Wasson, *The Big Goodbye. Chinatown and the Last Years of Hollywood* (Flatiron Books) [*Acquista da VP*](https://librerie.unicatt.it/scheda-libro/wasson-sam/big-goodbye-chinatwon-and-the-last-years-of-hollywood-9780571347636-690031.html)

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures in English.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral interview in English, in which the student answers open questions. The interview is divided into two parts. In the first part, students will have to demonstrate to be familiar with the life and works of F.S. Fitzgerald, know how to place them in their historical-literary context and be able to analyze and interpret them. They will also have to show awareness of the narrative techniques employed in their film adaptations. In the second part of the exam, students will have to do the same for the authors studied in the second module (McCoy, West, Chandler, and McMurtry). The candidate will also have to demonstrate they understand the historical-anthropological and cinematographic issues discussed in I. Hamilton’s *Writers in Hollywood 1915-1951* and S. Wasson’s *The Big Goodbye. Chinatown and the Last Years of Hollywood*. The final mark will result from the average between the first (50%) and second (50%) part of the interview: in order to pass the exam, students must score at least 18/30 in each part. Assessment criteria include the use of appropriate terminology and the ability to argument answers in a clear and coherent way. Students who have made presentations in class will have the opportunity either to reduce the number of questions or to improve their mark during the final exam.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course syllabus is the same for everyone (regardless of class attendance).

There are no prerequisites for attending the course. However, students are expected to have good English reading and speaking skills and basic knowledge of American history and literature. In addition, students should show interest in literature and cinema.

*Consultation hours*

Prof. Rognoni’s consultation hours can be found on his personal webpage.

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)