**History of Medieval and Renaissance Theatre**

## Prof. Paola Ventrone

1. ***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of the course is to provide an overview of forms of entertainment in late mediaeval times and related historical and historiographic issues. The course will mainly focus on the various forms of entertainment devised in Florence between the 14th and the beginning of 16th centuries compared to other means of communication in that period (particularly, preaching and the educational use of images), working on a largely interdisciplinary basis and making constant reference to sources and studies on socio-political history, religious history, figurative art, literature, and philosophy.

At the end of the course, students will be able: 1- to identify, classify and critically analyse the wide typology of sources (dramatic, literary, historiographical, religious, homiletic, philosophical, legislative, accounting, epistolary and iconographical texts) used to reconstruct the history of theatre and performance in the pre-Modern age; 2- to evaluate with greater awareness the various systems of communication used in the Middle Ages and, in particular, the revolution introduced by the printing industry at the end of the 15th century, including in terms of its role in disseminating theatrical genres; 3- to consider the historical and artistic heritage of the Renaissance in terms not only aesthetic but also informed of its communicative and relational function in the society of the time. Owing to its cross-curricular nature, the skillset acquired also serves as useful preparation for other exams, as well as for the degree thesis and for the choices of direction in the world of work.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The historical and historiographical context of the European theatrical forms in the 14th-16th centuries, seen as tools of political and religious communication.

Introductory outline of the birth and rise of religious theatre in relation to both the social and catechetic needs underscoring it.

Further study into the significant example of Florentine sacred plays (*sacre rappresentazioni*) and the context in which they were created and received, in close connection with the city’s historical-political affairs, in order to demonstrate the indissoluble link between theatre, politics and society in a model Renaissance city-state.

The course will focus especially on the following theatrical forms: chivalric feasts, civic rituals, the diplomatic feast of the Magi, Filippo Brunelleschi’s cutting-edge stage machinery, and the dramaturgical and communicative novelty of the sacred plays. There will be a particular focus on the professional definition and social role of actors.

***READING LIST***

*For attending students*

– Course notes

– P. Ventrone, *Teatro civile e sacra rappresentazione a Firenze nel Rinascimento*, Florence, Le Lettere, 2016.

– P. Ventrone, *I teatri delle confraternite in Italia fra XIV e XVI secolo*, in *Studi confraternali: orientamenti, problemi, testimonianze*, edited by M. Gazzini, Florence, FUP, 2009, pp. 293-316, available to download from the “MATERIALI” section on the Blackboard platform.

A selection of sacred plays will be available to download from the “MATERIALI” section on the Blackboard platform.

*For non-attending students*

In addition to the reading list provided, non-attending students are advised to arrange at least one meeting with the professor during tutoring to receive guidance on the reading-list material and key points covered on the course, in order to study for the examination in a more profitable and effective way.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will be taught in lectures with audio-visual aids like PowerPoint presentations and video clips of theatrical shows.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Traditional oral exam. Students will be assessed in particular on their knowledge and assimilation of content of the reading list, their ability to analyse and provide commentary on the various sources examined in lectures, logical and coherent structure of discourse, appropriate use of specialist vocabulary and ability to make connections between the various disciplines touched on by the course.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

At the end of the course the professor will organise an educational trip to Florence with curricular value. The aim is to acquire direct knowledge of the urban spaces and environments in which the performances in question were staged, as well as to draw together the topics covered on the course in preparation for the exam.

Prof. Paola Ventrone may be contacted using the following email address: *paola.ventrone@unicatt.it*.

*Prerequisites*

There are no particular prerequisites for this course.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG, or on the Faculty notice board.