# Theory and History of Literary Modernity

## Prof. Giuseppe Lupo

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

The aim of the course is to analyse Italian literature of the 20th century in its various forms, both in terms of the texts themselves and in light of the great ideological and cultural phenomena that contextualise works and authors. Within this dialogue between historical context and cultural events, products such as novels, essays, poems and magazines serve as platforms for debate; they serve as witnesses to their own time; they have a civil function and constitute the horizon within which the fundamental questions on the meaning of modernity are placed.

By the end of the course, students will be able to approach the themes of contemporary literature critically and with methodological awareness, making links between them and the specific fields of study on their degree programmes. The course is divided into two semesters.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Semester 1:

*The questions of modernity*

The time between the 19th and 20th century presents a series of issues that highlight a disconnection between culture and tradition of the old and of the new century. This has nearly always taken the form of conflicting phenomena created by the generations that shaped the 20th century, both in terms of literary forms and the theoretical value of the ideas that guided them. During semester 1, the aim is to review and analyse the crucial phases of this transition, observing them from the perspective of industrial modernity, the problematic confrontation with the facts of history and the role of intellectuals in societal transformations.

Semester 2:

*Modernity misunderstood*

Demonized or sanctified, blamed or acquitted, the twentieth century marked a turning point in economics and politics, it affected the cultural and social fabric of our country, skewing centuries-old balances, shattering continuity between the past and the future. It ultimately bore witness to a decisive shift: the decline of rural, farming-based culture and the dawn of industrialization. Semester 2 will cover the most representative figures of the twentieth century, from Vittorini to Testori, Fortinito, Mastronardi, Calvino and Pasolini, examining the controversial relationship between humanism and science in “factory fiction” and the post-war corporate periodicals.

***READING LIST***

Semester 1:

1. C. De Michelis, *Moderno Antimoderno. Studi novecenteschi*, Marsilio, Venice 2020.

One of the following readings:

F. Camon, *Un altare per la madre*, any complete edition.

P. Levi, *Il sistema periodico*, any complete edition.

O. Ottieri, *La linea gotica*, any complete edition.

E. Vittorini, *Le città del mondo*, any complete edition.

E. Rea, *La dismissione*, qualsiasi edizione integrale.

P. Volponi, *Memoriale*, any complete edition.

Semester 2:

G. Lupo, *La modernità malintesa. Una controstoria dell’industria italiana*, Marislio, Venezia 2023.

Any two of the folllowing:

I. Calvino, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio*, qualsiasi edizione integrale.

U. Eco, *Apocalittici e integrati. Comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa*, any complete edition.

F. Fortini, *Verifica dei poteri. Scritti di critica e di istituzioni letterarie*, any complete edition.

P.P. Pasolini, *Scritti corsari*, any complete edition.

Details of any further reading will be provided in lectures and published on the lecturer's online noticeboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Classroom lectures with PowerPoint presentations, texts and images selected in advance as well as talks from experts.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

By the end of two semesters of lectures, students will be assessed by means of an oral exam. The question will focus on the texts on the reading list and on the teaching material discussed in lectures and made available to students on “Blackboard”. This course does not offer early examinations (*preappelli*).

Non-attending students are requested to contact the lecturer before attending the exam to receive further information on the course materials and syllabus.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students are expected to have good knowledge of the history, literature and culture of the 20th century. In case of knowledge gaps, students are invited to consult a high school textbook.

If, during the undergraduate programme, students have never taken a Modern or Contemporary Italian literature exam, they will have to study the following textbook, in addition to the reading list for semester 1: G. Langella, *La modernità letteraria. Manuale di letteratura italiana moderna e contemporanea*, Pearson, Milan-Turin 2021. For the part of the exam based on semester 1, the study of the textbook will replace *Moderno Antimoderno* by Cesare De Michelis. However, also in this case, students will have to study also a textbook of their choice and the teaching material read and analysed during the lectures. The reading list for semester 2 remains unchanged.

Any changes to the syllabus or office hours will be shared weekly by means of notices on the virtual noticeboard on the Blackboard platform. Here students will also find documents and useful information for the course. Students who have good reason for not attending lectures regularly are kindly requested to contact the lecturer.

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.