# Forms of Visual and Literary Expression in the Contemporary World

## Prof. Elena Rondena; Prof. Kevin Mcmanus

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

The course covers methodology and content related to various aspects of the literary and artistic languages developed over the course of the twentieth century, with a focus on interdisciplinary aspects. The type of approach and topics covered will help promote a cultural perspective that is enriched by cross-pollination from other areas and nourishes the dialogue between the languages of literary and visual expression.

By the end of the course, students will be able to appreciate the relevance of the arguments in this area, which will enable them to navigate the themes and figures of contemporary art and literature with critical and methodological awareness and link them to the specific topics studied on the degree course.

## Semester 1: *Prof. Elena Rondena*

***COURSE CONTENT***

*“To enclose in an image all the evil of our time.”*

First semester: *Prof. Elena Rondena*

Evil, since the creation of the world and man, has been opposed to good; think of the figures of Cain and Abel, or of Job. It is contrary to justice, morality and honesty. It can be physical and mental, caused by a disease but equally caused by man. In the face of this latter aspect, we seek to shed light on those authors of Italian literature who lived through the grand ideologies of the twentieth century and who, with their experience, ascertained the banality of evil, i.e. its lack of roots, according to Hannah Arendt's famous definition.

***READING LIST***

\*  *Two works to be chosen from the following, any edition:*

Arslan, *La masseria delle allodole*

De Roberto, *La paura e altri racconti*

Lussu, *Un anno sull’altipiano*

Ungaretti, *Il porto sepolto*

\*  *Two works to be chosen from the following, any edition:*

Corti, *I più non ritornano*

Corti, *Il cavallo rosso* (one of the three tomes)

Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*

Mori, *Nata in Istria*

Lecture notes are an integral part of the exam. Details of further reading material will be provided at the beginning of the course.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures in class with PowerPoint presentations.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

By the end of the semester, students will be examined by means of an oral exam on the texts on the reading list and on the lecture contents. As a rule, the exam will be based on a text commentated in class and is designed to assess knowledge of the texts and the topics covered on the course. Clarity of the presentation and the consistency and soundness of arguments will also contribute to the mark. A particularly important assessment criterion is the ability to establish links and interpret content in a personal way.

N.B.: The examination consists of two separate tests on literature and art respectively. Students may take the exams in any order. The final mark is based on the combination of the two specific assessments.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course requires good knowledge of the history, literature and culture of the twentieth century. Any gaps in students’ knowledge can be filled by consulting a secondary-school textbook on Italian literature, e.g. (recommended) Giuseppe Langella, *La modernità letteraria. Manuale di letteratura italiana moderna e contemporanea*, Pearson, 2021.

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.

## Semester 2: *Prof. Kevin Mcmanus*

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course, which complements that carried out by Professor Elena Rondena, will examine the topic of evil's representation within the context of contemporary visual and artistic culture. Through a series of case studies, the phenomenon will be analysed both from an iconographic perspective (the themes and methods of the visual narration of evil's manifestations), and from an iconological perspective (the functions of the image, and of the work of art in particular, especially in reference to the user), with particular attention to crucial moments in the twentieth century, such as the wars (the two World Wars, Vietnam, the Gulf Wars and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), totalitarianism and terrorism. The two semesters are therefore closely entwined; students will be able to take the relevant exam parts in the order they prefer.

***READING LIST***

- Lecture notes.

- Two readings to be chosen from:

A. Azoulay, *Civil Imagination. Ontologia politica della fotografia*, Postmedia Books, Milano, 2018.

J. Clair, *La responsabilità dell’artista. Le avanguardie tra terrore e ragione*, Abscondita, Milano, 2011.

G. Didi-Hubermann, *Immagini malgrado tutto*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano, 2005.

H. Foster, *Bad New Days. Arte, critica, emergenza*, Postmedia Books, Milano, 2019.

D. Levi Strauss, *Politica della fotografia*, Postmedia Books, Milano, 2007.

W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror. La guerra delle immagini: dall’11 settembre a oggi*, La Casa Usher, Firenze-Lucca, 2012.

The reading list does not replace the attendance of lectures, the contents of which will in any case constitute the fundamental starting point during the exam.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures will include the projection and commentary of images and analyse the works and situations considered, all within the indispensable theoretical, critical and documentary framework. Iconographic materials will be uploaded to the Blackboard platform.

There will also be visits to museums and temporary exhibitions.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed by means of an oral examination, which will take place according to the official exam timetable. During the exam, based on images of the works viewed in lectures and the relative content, students will be assessed on their knowledge of specific information on the topics covered, but also their ability to critically approach the material and to reflect on the basic and contextual themes developed.

N.B.: The examination consists of two separate tests on literature and art respectively. Students may take the exams in any order. The final mark is based on the combination of the two specific assessments.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*Prerequisites*

The course provides knowledge of contemporary art and promotes dialogue between visual language and symbolic communication. Students taking the course will benefit from textbook-level knowledge of the history of art, especially for the period considered. Any gaps in students’ knowledge can be overcome with the use of a secondary-school history of art textbook.

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.