**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: *From classic ‘noir’ to ‘neo-noir’*

The lessons will focus both on Raymond Chandler’s classic ‘noir’ novels *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye*, and on films based on these books (by Howard Hawks and Robert Altman). James Crumley’s *The Last Good Kiss* will be analyzed as a ‘neo-noir’ rewriting of Chandler’s *The Long Goodbye*. Roman 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.

Module 2: *America’s Heart of Darkness*

Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Mario Puzo’s *The Godfather* will be studied as the basis of two exemplary cases of adaptation realized by Francis Ford Coppola in the 70s (*The Godfather*, 1972; *Apocalypse Now*, 1979). Attention will also be paid on the making of the two movies through Mark Seal’s essay *Leave the Gun, Take the Cannoli*, through the tv series *The Offer*, and through the documentary *Heart of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse*.

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

R. Chandler, *The Big Sleep* (any edition) (required reading)

R. Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (any edition) (required reading)

J. Crumley, *The Last Good Kiss* (any edition) (required reading)

S. Wasson, *The Big Goodbye. Chinatown and the Last Years of Hollywood* (Flatiron Books) (recommended reading)

J. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Oxford World’s Classic) (required reading)

M. Puzo, *The Godfather* (any edition) (required reading)

M. Seal, *Leave the Gun, Take the Cannoli. The Epic Story of the Making of ‘The Godfather’* (Gallery Books) (recommended reading)

***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 Raymond Chandler and James Crumley, 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 the film adaptations. In the second part of the exam, students will have to do the same for the authors studied in the second module (Joseph Conrad and Mario Puzo). The candidate will also have to demonstrate they understand the historical-anthropological and cinematographic issues discussed in S. Wasson’s *The Big Goodbye. Chinatown and the Last Years of Hollywood*, in M. Seal’s *Leave the Gun, Take the Cannoli. The Epic Story of the Making of ‘The Godfather’*, and in the documentary *Heart of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse*. 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)