**Contemporary Italian Literature**

Prof. Paola Ponti

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

**General aims of the course:**

Reflect on the specific characteristics of literary words and their educational implications; provide practical examples of textual analysis in order to promote the student's attitudes towards reading literary works of their choice; highlight the educational usefulness of the classics even in non-school or university contexts.

Specific course aims: promote mastery of the techniques of reading and interpreting the literary text; allow a conscious approach to its complexity and polysemy; deepen the relationship between literature and human sciences, in order to apply the reading skills acquired also in the professional field.

**Intended learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

illustrate the content and formal specificities of each text (structure, themes, style, methods of diffusion and reception); analyse and comment on the main thematic, stylistic, and rhetorical characteristics of a passage or poem, also highlighting the intertextual references to other authors and works; enhance interdisciplinary links and the educational value of literary texts; consciously reflect on the relationship between word care and pedagogical needs, being able to grasp the educational potential of the classics.

***COURSE CONTENT***

**The silence of the victims and literary narration between the 1960s and the pandemic months**

**Narrative texts:** In the part dedicated to prose texts, the course examines three narrative works that have in common the choice to tell emblematic stories of common characters, who are in various ways protagonists and victims of crime events, war events or epidemics. The textbooks on the programme are: the detective novel *The Day of the Owl* (1961) by Leonardo Sciascia, the historical novel *History. A Novel* (1974) by Elsa Morante and the testimonial story linked to the recent pandemic *Reality* (2020) by Giuseppe Genna. These textbooks cover the time span of the last sixty years and belong to non-elitist genres, chosen for their ability to involve a large number of readers without however limiting themselves to purely entertainment purposes. In addition to their irrefutable representativeness, the proposed works allow readers to develop a reflection on types of stories that are also very widespread in the media - detective stories about the mafia, historical war narratives, dystopian stories about epidemics - which, however, in the three authors examined, go beyond pure evasion and lead the readers to question themselves on the different aspects of the victim-oppressor relationship, on the theme of silence and conspiracy of silence, and on the educational consequences and the specific responsibility of literary testimony. The course also includes the screening of scenes taken from the film adaptations of the classics analysed, in particular: *The Day of the Owl* by Damiano Damiani (1968), *History* by Luigi Comencini (1986).

**Poetic texts**: As regards the analysis of poetic theses, in the first semester the course will focus on the work of some living authors who were inspired by the pandemic emergency (Mariangela Gualtieri, Giancarlo Sissa, Giuseppe Langella); in the second semester on the figure and some lyrics by Giorgio Caproni.

Note. The course is divided into two parts, each of which includes 30 hours of lessons each semester.

***READING LIST***

**Part A**

**Narrative textbooks**

Leonardo Sciascia, *Il giorno della civetta*, Einaudi, 1961 (the full reading of the Adelphi edition is recommended).

Leonardo Sciascia, *Appunti sul giallo,* 1954, pp. 19-40 (text on Blackboard).

Giuseppe Genna, *Cosa è successo*. *Reality,* Rizzoli, 2020, pp. 3-23; pp. 151-156; pp. 73-85; 157-169; pp. 211-219.

**Poetic texts**

Mariangela Gualtieri, *Novemarzoduemilaventi* (poetic text on Blackboard);

Giacarlo Sissa, *Senza titolo alcuno*, in *Sospeso respiro. Poesia di pandemia*, edited by Gabrio Vitali, Moretti&Vitali, 2020, pp. 131-179 (available for consultation in the University library).

Giuseppe Langella, *Pandemie*, in Idem, *Pandemie e altre poesie civili*, Mursia, 2022 (text on Blackboard).

**Reading list**

For the life and works of L. Sciascia and E. Morante, students can use a good high school textbook.

P. Squillacioti, *Il giorno della civetta*, in *Letteratura italiana*, edited by A. A. Rosa, vol. 16. *Il secondo Novecento*. *Le opere 1938-1961*, Einaudi, 2007, pp. 655-89 (link to text online on Blackboard).

Massimo Onofri, *Sciascia*, Einaudi, 2002, pp. 46-57 (available for consultation in the University library).

Stefano Salis, *La mafia in letteratura. Leonardo Sciascia e «Il giorno della civetta»,* in *Nero su giallo. Leonardo Sciascia eretico del genere poliziesco*, edited by M. D’Alessandra and S. Salis, «Quaderni Leonardo Sciascia» - La Vita felice, 2006, pp. 79-94 (available for consultation in the University library).

Velania La Mendola, *Mafia e potere nell’opera di Leonardo Sciascia*, in *Giustizia e letteratura* II, edited by G. Forti, C. Mazzucato, A. Visconti, V&P, pp. 198-215 (available for consultation in the University library).

Paola Ponti, *«Godere dalla riva dell’altrui naufragio». Sulla narrativa italiana del primo confinamento*, in AA.VV. *Le pandemie in Italia tra cronaca, letteratura e storia*, edited by M. Cutrì, Marcianum Press, 2023, pp. 299-350 (available for consultation in the University library).

**Part B**

**Textbooks**

Elsa Morante, *La storia*, Einaudi, 1974 (we recommend the Einaudi edition currently on the market; excerpts specified on Blackboard).

Elsa Morante, *Sul romanzo* (1959)*,* in Eadem, *Opere*, edited by C. Garboli, Mondadori, pp. 1497-1520 (available for consultation in the University library).

Giorgio Caproni, *Il muro della terra* (1964-1975), introduction and commentary by A. Dei, Garzanti, 2022 (introduction, pp. 5-16; section *Acciaio,* pp.74-92; section *Tema con variazioni*, pp. 134-152; lyric poem A *mio figlio Attilio Mauro che ha il nome di mio padre*).

**Reading list**

**Su Elsa Morante**: Giovanna Rosa, *Elsa Morante,* il Mulino, Bologna, ch. V (available for consultation in the University library).

Mario Barenghi, *I nomi di Useppe. Saggio sui personaggi della* Storia *di Elsa Morante,* «Studi novecenteschi», 62, 2001, pp. 363-389 (link to essay on Blackboard).

Monica Zanardo, *Strategie narrative e comunicative* *nella* Storia *di Elsa Morante*, «Studium», novembre-dicembre 2018, pp. 858-876 (link to essay on Blackboard).

Gabriella Contini, *Useppe,* «Studi novecenteschi», 47-48, 1994, pp.185-213 (link to essay on Blackboard).

**Su Giorgio Caproni:** see the chapter dedicated to the author, in Giuseppe Langella et alii, *Letteratura.it,* Pearson, 2012, pp. 070-098 (available for consultation in the University library).

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lessons in the classroom. The course will include participatory teaching to encourage students to intervene in the analysis and commentary of the texts. Possible participation of external experts to provide an in-depth analysis of the activities of the Piccolo Museo della Poesia of Piacenza.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The exam interview is oral and focuses in particular on the analysis of the texts covered in class.

Student are expected to demonstrate: ability to contextualise the authors and works in the programme from a historical-literary point of view; ability to analyse an excerpt or lyric chosen by the lecturer, contextualising them in the work as a whole and highlighting their contents, formal characteristics and any links or references to other works; ability to make comparisons and references among the various authorial texts addressed, underlining affinities and differences.

The assessment will take into account the student's ability to understand the authors and their work; their knowledge of the texts and ability to examine them in depth with the help of the critical essays in the programme; practice in textual analysis (commentary on passages and their interpretation, metric and stylistic commentary on the lyrics in the programme, ability to make comparison with other texts, attention to relevant lemmas, expressions, idiomatic phrases) and, finally, command of presentation skills and ability to make comparison among multiple authors.

If students want to limit the interview to part A only, they must notify the lecturer by email (paola.ponti@unicatt.it) at least three days before the official exam date.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no content-related prerequisites for taking the exam. On the exam day, students are expected to bring with them the authors’ textbooks indicated in the programme. Students are invited to check the uploading of any materials on Blackboard.

Information on office hours available on the teacher's personal page at <http://docenti.unicatt.it/>.

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