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Creative Italian Storytelling: from literature to Cinema to other Forms of Fiction

PROF. MARA PERBELLINI

OVERVIEW

Area: Cultural Studies
Dates: 3 – 27 July (4 weeks)
Campus: Milan
Course Number: LT/AR 320
Term: Summer School 2018
Credits: 6 ECTS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Adaptations have long been a mainstay of Hollywood, Cinecittà and the television networks. Many of the most successful international films are indeed adaptations of novels, plays or true-life stories.

We will analyze important adaptations for the seventh art, understanding the changes from the source material to the new text and identifying the resistance of literature and true life story.

This course includes a creative experience: the screenwriter's lab. Each student will be given tools to write a short film screenplay.

This course provides the student with a new knowledge of Italian humanities, from literature to cinema to biography. It is a great opportunity to discover the Italian culture through the arts of time: literature and screenwriting. And also a great opportunity to learn creative techniques in writing.

PREREQUISITES

None

METHOD OF TEACHING

Lecture and Lab.

Readings of stories and excerpts of novels. Screening and analysis of clips of important films adapted from literature and true-life stories. The source material will be compared to the adaptation, revealing the essence of each medium.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The reading of the book *Pinocchio* (Carlo Collodi) is recommended prior to the beginning of the course. Ideally students should read the novel (which can be found in the course readings below) from beginning to end, before it is analyzed in class.



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LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will learn narrative techniques and how Literature and Biography can be manipulated to create an original piece of art: the screenplay. Students will discover great examples of Italian novels and films and, through them, they'll acquire a deeper knowledge of the Italian Culture.

GRADING

Class participation	30%
Final exam	40%
Creative work: Short film script	30%

RULES OF CONDUCT

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Unexcused absences will prevent students from being admitted to the final exam. In case of health issues, students will need to inform both UCSC International Office (at international.advisor@unicatt.it) and the professor and provide a medical certificate.

Exam Date: The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, the student must submit a medical certificate and communicate his/her absence to the Professor and UCSC International Office via email prior to the exam. If the student does not justify his/her absence through sufficient documentation and with adequate notice before the final test, the student will receive an automatic Failed.

COURSE READING AND MATERIALS

All the required readings will be available in a course pack and the lecturer's slides will be available on Blackboard.

Required readings (excerpts):

- Linda Seger, *The art of adaptation: turning fact and fiction into film*, Owl Book, NYC 1992.
- Robert Mc Kee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting*, Harper Collins Publishers, NYC
- Luigi Pirandello, *The wheelbarrow* (short story)

Some excerpts from the following Italian novel (in English, to be read prior to course):

- Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio*.

Required films:

- *Pinocchio* (2002) by Roberto Benigni.
- *Il divo* (2008) by Paolo Sorrentino (some clips in class).

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Lesson 1: 3 July [3 h: 4 pm – 6.45 pm]



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Introduction to narrative techniques: clear vision.

Why we need stories and the beginning of the writing process: concept and premise.

* Exercise on location.

Lesson 2: 4 July [3 h: 9 am – 11.50 am]

Guidelines to short film: The dramatic moment.

Screening of short film.

Script format.

Lesson 3: 5 July [2 h: 9 am – 10.55 am]

Text and subtext.

Location script.

- Complete **location script**

Lesson 4: 6 July [2 h: 9 am – 10.55 am]

Feedback on location script.

Structure.

- Think about **story ideas** for individual final project

WEEK 2

Lesson 5: 9 July [2 h: 9 am – 10.55 am]

Discussion on your **story ideas** for individual final project.

Lesson 6: 10 July [2 h: 9 am – 10.55 am]

The structure of a story: the Hero's journey as a pattern for epic tales and fairy tales. The example of Pinocchio.
Exercise on fairytales/epic tales

Lesson 7: 11 July [2 h: 9 am – 10.55 am]

The story triangle.

Character. Exercise on character.

- Deadline for submitting the **outline** of your **short film** (by 3 pm)
- Read "The wheelbarrow" by Pirandello from tomorrow.

Lesson 8: 12 July [3 h: 9 am – 11.50 am]

Feedback on outline.

More exercise on character. The example of "The wheelbarrow" by Pirandello.

WEEK 3

Lesson 9: 16 July [2 h: 9.30 am – 11.25 am]

Guest lecture by Luisa Cotta Ramosino, creative producer of the TV-series "The Medici – Masters of Florence".

Lesson 10: 17 July [2 h: 9.30 am – 11.25 am]



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Scene analysis.

Exercise on conflict: story and screenplay.

- Watch “Pinocchio” by Benigni by July 19.
- Complete conflict script.

Lesson 11: 18 July [2 h: 9.30 am – 11.25 am]

Feedback on exercise on conflict in class.

The art of adaptation.

Lesson 12: 19 July [2 h: 9.30 am – 11.25 am]

Adaptation: literature & cinema.

The case of “Pinocchio” by Benigni

- Deadline for **first draft of screenplay**: July 19 before midnight.

WEEK 4

Lesson 13: 23 July [2 h: 9.30 am – 11.25 am]

Feedback on your screenplays.

Rewriting your script.

Lesson 14: 24 July [2 h: 9.30 am – 11.25 am]

Creating and shading style, mood and tone.

More feedback on your screenplays.

Lesson 15: 25 July [2 h: 9.30 am – 11.25 am]

Adaptation from true life stories: the case of Andreotti.

Analysis of “Il Divo” by Sorrentino as an example of adaptation from a true life story.

Lesson 16: 26 July [2 h: 9.30 am – 11.25 am]

FINAL EXAM in class.

27 July: Last draft of screenplay by midnight.

BIO OF INSTRUCTOR

Mara Perbellini is a scriptwriter and story analyst for major film and TV production Companies. After her B.A. in Italian Literature and her Master’s Degree in Screenwriting at the Università Cattolica of Milan, she began to write screenplays and work as a story analyst for Rai Fiction and Eagle Pictures. She also worked as assistant director on the TV-movie “Una famiglia per caso” for RAI 1.

She also attended the Film School at the New York Film Academy, both in NYC and in L.A. (at Universal Studios) and the London Academy of Radio, Film & TV: while there, she directed, wrote and edited 4 short films.

She has had over twelve feature film stories and screenplays commissioned, purchased or optioned. In 2009 she got an Award for best screenplay at the Fiuggi International Family Film Festival with the film “Il sirenetto”. After that she wrote many episodes for the animated series “Uffa che Pazienza!” (Rai 2, season 1 and 2, which earned the Pulcinella



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Award at Cartoons on the Bay 2008 as best TV series for children) and several prime-time mini-series and series, such as "Distretto di polizia 8" (Canale 5), "Ci vediamo a Portofino" (Rai 1), "La vita che corre" (Rai 1), "Eleonora Duse" (Publispei), "Ombre sulla neve" (Casanova Multimedia), "Front Row" (TaoDue Film), "Penny on Mars" (3zero2 TV, Disney Italia and Disney U.K.).

Mara is also a playwright. In 2012-3 she wrote 5 plays for "Decalogo parte prima" that premiered at the Spoleto "Festival dei due mondi" in 2013.

She's currently writing a historical epic film and she's head-writer of the second season of the TV-series "Penny on Mars".

In 2006, Mara joined the Faculty of IES Abroad Milan where she teaches History of Italian Cinema and Visual Storytelling. She also collaborates with MISP (Master in International Screenwriting and Production) at UCSC; tutors Italian film students in the film-making summer course at the School of Visual Arts in NYC (since 2009); teaches "Federico Fellini and contemporary Italian cinema" and "Creative storytelling" at UCSC (since 2012).

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