UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Contemporary Italian Literature - A-L

2425-1-E1901R014-AL

Course title

Dragons, Horses and Gorillas: inside Giuliano Scabia's "Wandering Theater"

A visionary, realistic and imaginative explorer, Giuliano Scabia was a true performer: playwright, actor, writer, storyteller, designer, great builder of papier-mâché objects and theatrical machines, as well as poetic-narrative devices, brought out of institutional places and taken to wander in asylums and prisons, in the woods, streets and squares; also, first great gardener of word flowers. A multifaceted personality but with a recognizable and yet eccentric voice in the Italian theater scene, which he revolutionized by conceiving an idea of "dilated," "participatory" theater. Eccentric even in the Bologna of the 1970s, that of the thrusts, of the avant-garde ruptures, of the student protest and counterculture, which one will cross a little with him to try to pursue, under the naïve figure, the bandole of his sabotages to authority, even that of the author, his solicitations to doubt to question, to go "outside the law and without law" to better listen to the voices of the "stage of the earth."
Giuliano Scabia in his poetic-literary writing, in his theatrical actions and in his workshops in school and university settings, in the suburbs of large cities such as Turin and Milan as well as in small rural towns, has always been moved by a "pedagogical concern" as well as a linguistic and anthropological interest in the environments and socio-cultural dynamics of the territory in which he has worked.
The course will focus on three fundamental moments of the "ladder and path to Paradise" traced by Scabia with his "Teatro Vagante" in the 1970s, a decisive decade in the history of our country: the workshops with the children of some schools and communities in Abruzzo with a project of re-founding cities (1972); the workshop with the madmen of the psychiatric hospital directed by Franco Basaglia in Trieste (1973) from which emerged the big blue horse that became the symbol of asylum liberation, and the traveling adventure of Gorilla Quadrumàno with the students of the DAMS course of Dramaturgy II in Bologna (1974-75).
Each of these three "actions" with a strong formative imprint was documented by Scabia epasso passo, in a valuable chronicle for the fine-tuning of methods, reflections, rereadings and balances of a work in progress, between planning, study and improvisation. Reading these chronicles, published at the time by important publishers and recently reprinted, allows one to enter the backroom of this author who is difficult to imprison in a single creative sphere, and to know a phenomenon typical of that decade, that of collective writing, which sees renewed interest today in literary and pedagogical practice.

Topics and course structure

The course will consist of an institutional and propaedeutic part in which, through different materials and tools (non-fiction readings, images, videos), an attempt will be made to motivate the meaning and function of teaching within the Degree Course. The lectures will then focus on Giuliano Scabia's scheduled works, soliciting active participation in students.

A critical approach to literary communication. In particular, the program deals with the main features of literariness and of narrative; the monographic section will focus on one or more patterns of narratives.
The object of the course is an approach to texts that highlights the educational dimension of literature. This takes pace through three main ways.

1) On the thematic level, the significance given to the literary representation of educational processes, for example the traditions of the Bildungsroman, stories of formation, images of childhood, adolescence, school, the family, disability and educational contexts in general.

2. On the aesthetic level, the development of the idea of literature as simulation and artistic projection of experiences, and therefore as an exceptionally rich and varied repertoire of human models, or of psychological constellations, paradigms of behaviour, social and cultural contexts.

3) On the linguistic level, attention to the ways in which the subjects (narrators, characters, poetic voices) speak of themselves and of others, of interior and exterior events, of private and public issues, of facts and ideas; the recognition of the different communicative contexts represented, of the adequacy and effectiveness of the expressive choices made, of the existential and social meaning of the various verbal interactions.

The course approaches subjects of a theoretical-methodological and historic-cultural nature, necessary for monographic in-depth study, chosen each year and dedicated to reading and the interpretation of works by one or more authors, including foreign.

Objectives

Knowledge and comprehension

The objective of the course is in the first place to promote and consolidate the ability to read texts. Through the exercise of interpretation, the student will learn to understand the formal and thematic aspects of the works, the characters of the experiences represented, their organization; and also to question themselves on the relative motivations and implications, including in relation to their personal experience. In addition, the student will have an opportunity to study in depth questions of great significance, the object of the literary works approached each time: historical events, psychological problems, moral problems, relation and communicative situations.

Ability to apply learning and comprehension

Through the exercise of interpreting the texts, students will learn to measure the depth and the complexity of the universe of the discourse and therefore to appreciate the potential of a conscious use of the word. This way they can corroborate both their communication skills and their autonomy of judgement. A conscious and trained reading skill allows transforming the aesthetic experience into a way of extending one’s own existential experience, improving and refining the comprehension of speech, of choices, of the point of view of those similar to oneself. In the final analysis, literature is an instrument which aims at increasing of responses (emotional, intellectual pragmatic) to new situations and, consequently, to intensity the skills of social interaction.

Methodologies

Prerequisites:

A good high-school level in humanities.

Italian and European history of the 20th century.

Good expressive ability.

Methodologies:

The course includes equally a part of frontal lectures, so-called didactic delivery, and a part of participatory lectures (exercises with the support of artistic-literary materials: texts, videos, images, music, etc.) so-called interactive teaching.
During classroom work ample space will be devoted to dialogue, collective discussion, textual reading and commentary exercises (themes, linguistic and rhetorical aspects, narrative modes, cultural paradigms), individual, or small group exercises to promote the ability to pay attention, observe, read and acquire expressive techniques.
Therefore, each lesson includes deliverable and interactive moments: part of the lesson will be frontal didactics, to introduce content on which to then conduct discussions and/or exercises.
The teaching activities will take place in presence, subject to the organizational reasons of the degree course and/or the University especially in relation to the availability of classrooms in the University.

Online and offline teaching materials

Text, images, video materials.
Materials, resources and tools used in class are available on the course e-learning platform.
Attendees and nonattendees are advised to register, in order to access in-depth materials as well.

**In order to take the exam, foreign students must provide proof of Italian language skills at B2 level.
**

Programme and references

Institutional part:

Mario Barenghi, *Cosa possiamo fare con il fuoco? Letteratura e altri ambienti*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2013; only the chapters: *Cosa possiamo fare con il fuoco? Un'ipotesi sulle origini della letteratura*, pp. 11-24; *Perché si legge? Pretesto calviniano sulla funzione educativa della letteratura*, pp. 35-44; *Silenzi in aula. Breve riflessione sul mestiere dell'insegnante*, pp. 53-58.

**Monographic part:

G. Scabia, *Il Gorilla Quadrumàno*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1974; now Quodlibet, Macerata 2024, pp. 5-232.

a book of your choice:

G. Scabia, *Marco Cavallo*, Einaudi, Torino 1976; Emma Edizioni, Milano 1972; now Meltemi, Milano 2024
G. Scabia, *Forse un drago nascerà. Un'avventura pedagogica con i ragazzi*, Emme Edizioni, Milano 1972; now Babalibri, Milano 2022

Critical bibliography:

Massimo Marino, *Il poeta d'oro. Il gran teatro immaginario di Giuliano Scabia*, La casa Usher, Firenze 2022

A.Borghesi, *I draghi di Giuliano Scabia, tra antropologia e pedagogia*, in *Giuliano Scabia*, a cura di A. Borghesi, M. Marino, L. Vallortigara, Riga 47, Quodlibet, Macerata 2023, pp. 340-346 (the essay will be made available on the course e-learning page)

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Assessment methods

Type of examination: oral

The interview consists of checking the level of knowledge, understanding and reworking of the topics covered during the lectures, of all the items (volumes and essays) in the bibliography, and of the in-depth materials used in class (for frequent attendees only), as well as the ability to apply the concepts and tools used during the classroom activities and/or learned from the texts in the bibliography.
Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to answer questions in a relevant, clear, correct and argued manner, using critical terminology with ownership. Part of the colloquium consists of a commentary on a passage, theme or aspect of the works in the program, and/or the presentation of exercises or in-depth studies carried out during the course (for frequent attendees only)
Since understanding the letter of the text is an inescapable condition for literary interpretation, the use of a good vocabulary (including online, of course) is recommended when preparing for the colloquium.

For Erasmus students: a good knowledge of Italian is required since the texts in the programme must be read in the original language and the oral test is taken in Italian.

NB:The oral examinations will follow the order of enrolment. On average in one day, there will be about 16 orals. The Lecturer does not interfere in the order of enrolment. In the event of requirements of time or calendar for problems of work please notify this in good time by email to: angela.borghesi@unimib.it

Office hours

Student reception by appointment: contact the professor by email
angela.borghesi@unimib.it

Programme validity

The programs are valid for two academic years. Upon request, the lecturer may allow an extension of the terms (contact her at the institutional address angela.borghesi@unimib.it)

Course tutors and assistants

Dr. ssa Alessandra Farina

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS