UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Letteratura Italiana Contemporanea - 2

2425-2-G8501R044-G8501R069M-T2

Course title

Resistance to unjust violence: the choice of war in twentieth-century Italian fiction

"Situations such as always having to be in a situation, not being able to live without struggle and suffering, of having to inevitably assume one's guilt, of having to die, I call them limit situations. They do not change in themselves, but only in their appearance; with respect to our being, they have a character of finality. They elude our understanding; in our being, we can no longer see anything behind them. They are like a wall against which we bump and shipwreck. We cannot effect any change in them, but must limit ourselves to considering them with extreme clarity, without being able to explain or justify them on the basis of anything. They subsist with being itself." These are the words of the philosopher Karl Jaspers who, in the 1930s, reflected on human existence as an inescapable and unstoppable process of continuous choice, taking a position, profound assumption of responsibility. The existentialist thinker's reflections provide a valuable starting point for reasoning about two crucial texts in twentieth-century fiction: *Un anno sull'Altipiano* (1938), by Emilio Lussu (1890-1975), and *Una questione privata* (1963), by Beppe Fenoglio (1922-1963), indeed testify, with narrative wisdom and extraordinary power of portrayal, to the inevitable necessity, constantly experienced by each of us, to make a decision, to act in the world, to take full responsibility for the words, gestures, actions performed and the consequences triggered, though often unforeseen, by what we have said and what we have done.
In the two largely autobiographical novels, the war, which has dramatically returned to urgency in our most recent contemporaneity, constitutes at the same time the subject and context of the narrative, as well as of the words and gestures of the characters; the course thus retraces events, situations, decisions and actions of two "men against," according to Francesco Rosi's film (1970) dedicated to *Un anno sull'Altipiano*: vigorously anti-fascist, the authors and their characters show themselves willing to risk their own and others' lives by choosing to take up arms to defend what they, with deep conviction, believed in. Indeed, as the protagonist of the first novel asks himself, "What would become of the civilization of the world if unjust violence could always be imposed without resistance?". More than a century later, profoundly changed historical-social and economic-cultural conditions of existence , the question shows, even today, all its dramatic relevance.

Topics and course structure

Course topics and articulation

The course will be divided into 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 program. The lectures will then focus on the two novels on the program, soliciting active participation in students.
Literature has always been a privileged field of inquiry for the observation of sociocultural phenomena. In literary works, the deep tendencies of every civilization formation find expression: values, aspirations, contradictions, conflicts. Moreover, literature plays a major role in individual and collective aesthetic experience: and its nature as an art of speech makes it a particularly fertile ground for the analysis of communicative mechanisms and artistic processes.The object of the course is an approach to texts that highlights the formative dimension of literature. This is done through three main avenues:

1. Thematically, the prominence given to the literary representation of educational processes and personal formation, such as the Bildungsroman tradition, formation stories, images of childhood, adolescence, school, family, disability, and educational contexts in general.
2. On the aesthetic level, the enhancement of the idea of literature as a simulation and artistic projection of experiences, and thus as an exceptionally copious and varied repertoire of human models, i.e., of psychological constellations, paradigms of behavior, social and cultural contexts.
3. On the linguistic level, attention to the ways in which subjects (narrators, characters, poetic voices) speak about themselves and others, inner and outer events, private and public affairs, facts and ideas; the recognition of the different communicative contexts represented, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the choices expression made by interlocutors, of the existential and social meaning of different verbal interactions.
   The course covers theoretical-methodological and cultural-historical topics necessary for in-depth monographs, chosen from year to year, and devoted to the reading and interpretation of works by one or more authors.

Objectives

Knowledge and Understanding
The teaching and Laboratory meetings connected with the course are primarily intended to promote and consolidate the ability to read literary texts. Through the exercise of direct interpretation of the texts, the student will learn to grasp the formal and thematic aspects of the works, the characters of the experiences represented, and their organization, and will learn, contextually, to question the related motivations and implications, also in relation to his own personal experience and experience. In addition, he/she will have the opportunity to delve into major issues that are the subject of the literary works addressed from time to time, be they historical events, psychological knots, moral problems, relational and communicative situations.

Ability to apply knowledge and understanding - Autonomy of Judgment - Communication skills - Learning skills.
Through the exercise of text interpretation, students will learn to measure the thickness and complexity of the universe of discourse, and thus appreciate the potential of conscious use of speech. By this route they will be able to corroborate both their communication skills and their autonomy of judgment. Conscious and trained reading skills enable students to transform aesthetic experience into a practice of expanding their existential experience, enhancing and refining their understanding of discourses, choices, and the point of view of their peers, inside and outside the professional sphere. Ultimately, literature is proposed as a tool aimed at increasing flexibility and pliability of responses (emotional, intellectual, pragmatic) to new situations and, consequently, intensifying social interaction skills. Through confrontation with the proposed literary texts, it is intended to promote awareness of the usefulness of literary reading as a device for dislocation of the self, as an openness to simulations of realities and

experiences other than one's own, with a view to a more articulate pliability in the face of different educational situations.
Teaching also aims to promote the following transversal skills:

- critical thinking and independent judgment
- ability to analyze and synthesize
- effective communication skills
- ability to reprocess and organize knowledge**

Methodologies

Methodologies used

Prerequisites
A good high school background in the humanities. Outlines of literary history and Italian and European history of the 20th century. Good expressive skills.

Methodologies:
The course involves dispensational teaching activities (frontal lecture: about 70%) and interactive teaching with moments of participatory lectures (about 30%). During the 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 attention, observation, reading skills and acquisition of expressive techniques.
Therefore, each lesson will include deliverable and interactive moments: part of the lesson will be frontal didactics, to introduce content on which to then lead discussions and/or exercises.
The teaching activities will take place in presence, subject to the organizational reasons of the degree course and/or University especially in relation to the availability of classrooms in the University.

It is planned, at the end of each of the individual lecture blocks, corresponding to the three parts of the course, to have a recap and study direction meeting (what to remember? What approach to take when reading the essays provided in the institutional part-how? How to use the critical bibliography? How often to read the novels in preparation for the exam?), which will also be made available asynchronously.

Online and offline teaching materials

Instructional materials (online, offline).
Texts, images, video materials.
Materials, resources and tools used in class are available on the course e-learning platform.
the lecturer also makes available materials to support non-traditional students in studying and preparing for the exam: short recordings (presentation of the syllabus, exam bibliography, mode of organizing the roll call; directions on the oral interview; recapitulations of aspects, salient concepts covered in class; examples of textual analysis); points out video materials found on the web (interviews with writers, lectures, documentaries...) and sites. At the end of the course, the lecturer communicates and organizes a late afternoon or Saturday distance meeting to recap the topics covered, reiterates some directions for exam preparation, and is available to answer questions or doubts from students.

It is recommended that everyone register for the course in order to access in-depth material and receive communications and notices.

Programme and references

General part

Reading and Literature

Mario Barenghi, *Che cosa possiamo fare con il fuoco? Letteratura e altri ambienti*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2013 (only *Che cosa possiamo fare con il fuoco? Un'ipotesi sulle origini della letteratura*, pp. 11-24; *Come una rete da pesca. Preliminari su letteratura e comunicazione*, pp. 26-34; *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).

Mario Barenghi, *Perché insegnare letteratura (e non solo agli studenti di lettere)*, «Doppiozero», 13 marzo 2018, http://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/perche-insegnare-letteratura-e-non-solo-agli-studenti-di-lettere.

Recommended reading is Vittorio Spinazzola, *La fatica di leggere*, in *L'esperienza della lettura*, Unicopli, Milano, 2010, pp. 99-136, especially pp. 99-125.

Thematic part: texts

Emilio Lussu, *Un anno sull'Altipiano*, 1938. The volume is currently available in paperback from Einaudi, Turin. Any edition is accepted as long as it is unabridged. The Einaudi edition with Introduction by Mario Rigoni Stern, 2014 will be used during the lecture.

Beppe Fenoglio, Una questione privata, 1963. The volume is currently available in paperback from Einaudi, Turin. Any edition is accepted as long as it is unabridged. The Einaudi edition with Introduction by Gabriele Pedullà, 2014 will be used during the lecture.

*Thematic part: critical bibliography

About Un anno sull'Altipiano

- Giovanni Falaschi, *Un anno sull'Altipiano *di Emilio Lussu*, in *Letteratura italiana*, *Le opere*, IV, *Il ’900*, *La ricerca letteraria*, Einaudi, Torino 1996, pp. 603-650:
- Francesca Caputo, Per una guerra senza retorica: discorsi e dialoghi in Un anno sull'Altipiano, in Buffaria P.C. e Mileschi C. (a cura di), *Gli scrittori e la Grande Guerra*, Parigi, Istituto italiano di Cultura, 2009, pp. 43-53;

About *Una questione privata*

- Gabriele Pedullà, *La strada più lunga. Sulle tracce di Beppe Fenoglio*, Roma, Donzelli, 2001, chapters VII *Morti* e VIII *Muri* (pp. 117-150;
- Elena Porciani, *Io sono bella e allegra. Lo ero*. *Le ragioni di Fulvia in «Una questione privata» di Beppe Fenoglio*, in *I cantieri dell’italianistica. Ricerca, didattica e organizzazione agli inizi del XXI secolo. Atti del XVIII congresso dell’ADI* – Associazione degli Italianisti (Padova, 10-13 settembre 2014), a cura di Guido Baldassarri, Valeria Di Iasio, Giovanni Ferroni, Ester Pietrobon, Roma, Adi editore, 2016 https://www.italianisti.it/pubblicazioni/atti-di-congresso/i-cantieri-dellitalianistica-ricerca-didattica-e-organizzazione-agli-inizi-del-xxi-secolo-2016/PORCIANI.pdf

Any other critical readings will be provided during the course: the readings description will explain if mandatory or in-depth bibliographic materials. Hard-to-find materials will be provided in pdf scan on e-learning.

The Contemporary Italian Literature course (Shift 2 / M-Z) will have its online extension on the e-learning teaching platform (elearning.unimib. it). To access the service, students must register for the course.

Assessment methods

Assesment Methods

Test type: oral interview on topics covered in class and exam texts.
Evaluation criteria:
The interview consists of verifying the level of knowledge, understanding and reworking of the topics covered during the lectures, all the items (volumes and essays) in the bibliography, 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 should demonstrate the ability to answer questions in a relevant, clear, correct and argued manner, using critical terminology with ownership. Part of the interview consists of commenting on a passage, theme or aspect of the works on the syllabus.
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 during the preparation of the interview.

The Dublin descriptors will be used for assessment: below are the level bands
Low level (0-17/30): Not sufficient
Knowledge and Comprehension: The student demonstrates limited and fragmentary knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the proposed texts.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: is unable to verify on the texts the general considerations on poetics, style, reading effects of the authors examined; is able very partially to synthesize the contents of the texts presented, is unable to contextualize and compare them.
Autonomy of Judgment: lacks critical ability and autonomy of evaluation; depends solely on information provided by the teacher or the critical bibliography.
Communicative Skills: has stunted, approximate, stereotyped oral expression; shows poor command of discipline-specific language.
Learning Ability: has a limited ability to reframe knowledge and connect it to her own experience as a reader; manifests little awareness of the usefulness of literary reading as a device for dislocation of the self, as an openness to simulations of realities and experiences other than one's own, with a view to a more articulate pliability in the face of different educational situations.

2. Medium Level (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
Knowledge and Comprehension: The student demonstrates a general knowledge of the texts and topics covered, although with some gaps, imprecision on specific but not essential aspects, or some misunderstanding in the analysis of texts.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: is able, albeit with some difficulty, to verify on the texts the general considerations on poetics, style, reading effects of the authors examined, upon prompting by teachers; is able to summarize the texts presented in a discrete way, to interpret, contextualize and compare them correctly. Can recognize different expressive registers in literary texts
Autonomy of Judgment: shows partial autonomy in making critical evaluations, often limited to the reiteration of others' judgments.
Communication skills: has clear and sufficiently precise expression, a fair command of the specific language of the discipline. Is aware of the need to use different linguistic registers depending on communicative situations.
Learning Skills: has a fair ability to rework knowledge and connect it to her own experience as a reader/reader; has a partial awareness of the usefulness of literary reading as a device for dislocation of the self, as an openness to simulations of realities and experiences other than her own, with a view to a more articulate pliability in the face of different educational situations.

High Level (25-30/30): Distinguished - Excellent
Knowledge and Comprehension: The student demonstrates thorough and solid knowledge of the texts and topics covered; understands and analyzes proposed texts without uncertainty.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: He/she can find in the texts, with confidence and effective personal observations, the

general considerations on poetics, style, reading effects of the authors examined; with argumentative effectiveness he/she can analyze, synthesize, interpret, contextualize and compare the texts presented, also making use of interdisciplinary connections. Knows how to recognize in literary texts the different expressive registers, associating them with the situations from time to time that are the subject of the literary representation.
Autonomy of Judgment: demonstrates excellent critical ability, autonomy of judgment, originality in the analysis and interpretation of texts.
Communicative Skills: has clear, rigorous, fluent and appropriate expression. Is fully aware of the need to use different language registers depending on communicative situations.
Learning Skills: shows excellent/excellent autonomous learning skills, can effectively rework knowledge and connect it to her own experience as a reader/reader; has full awareness of the usefulness of literary reading as a device for dislocation of the self, as an openness to simulations of realities and experiences other than her own, with a view to a more articulate pliability in the face of different educational situations.

Students are reminded that:

all texts on the syllabus must be read and studied in their entirety.
at the oral interview one must present oneself with a copy (hard copy or e-book) of the texts:
by law, works by living authors, and up to the 70th year after death, may be photocopied in full only to the extent of 15 percent of the volume or essay.
N.B. Examination interviews will follow the order of registration. In one day, on average and barring other institutional commitments of the lecturer, 15 to 20 interviews will be held. Once registration is completed, roll call practice will be conducted, including remotely. A calendar with possible continuation days will be communicated to enrollees. Female students/students will be able to exchange date and time with each other. It is recommended, in order to have a reliable calendar, if a student/students decides not to take the interview, to cancel on time or, when registrations are closed, still notify the lecturer of the absence.

Office hours

By appointment, also remotely, by writing to alessandro.terreni@unimib.it.
The lecturer is also available after class.

Programme validity

Two academic years

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals