UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Contemporary Italian Literature

2526-3-E2001R001

Course title

Saying and not saying, keeping silent, alluding. Synthesis, ellipsis, reticence in narratives

Topics and course structure

Literature has always been a privileged field of inquiry for the observation of socio-cultural 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 institutional part of the course covers the general principles of literariness and narrativity, with emphasis on the connotations of literary reading and reading as experience, the factors of narrative, the main categories of narrative analysis, and the typology of narrative texts.
The monographic part of this year's course is devoted to three novels by different authors, also different in setting and subject matter, which are united by the fact that they include large areas of the unspoken: which is tantamount to focusing heavily on the reader's interpretive cooperation.
A Straightforward Tale (*Una storia semplice*, 1989), Leonardo Sciascia's last short detective novel, inspired by a real event (the 1969 theft of Caravaggio's Nativity with Saints Lawrence and Francis of Assisi from the Oratory of San Lorenzo in Palermo), condenses a complicated plot, calling into question a series of characters representative of Sicilian and Italian society, into fifteen short chapters, with a dry, fast-paced style that leaves all judgment on actions, intentions, facts and characters to the reader. *Vite di uomini non illustri* ,1993 (*Lives of not famous men*) by Giuseppe Pontiggia is a collection of eighteen biographies of fictional characters, which turns the classic formula of “lives of illustrious men” upside down, summarizing in a cursive and ironic tone the fates of ordinary people, seemingly trivial and event-poor. Antonio Tabucchi's *Pereira Maintains* (*Sostiene Pereira*, 1994), set in 1930s Portugal during Salazar's dictatorship, has a more traditionally fictional development: what remains in the shadows is the context in which the protagonist relates the events that led him to change his life. Each of these works clearly exemplifies the principle that--according to a famous expression by Umberto Eco--the writer does only half the

work: the other half is up to the reader.

Objectives

The main goal is to assure that the students become familiar with the close reading of texts, that includes the ability to understand semantic values, ambiguities, implicit assumptions, and therefore to appreciate both communicative principles and cultural significance. At the same time the teaching programme aims to develop and corroborate reading skills and textual comprehension skills, and expressive proficiency.

In particular, this teaching is intended to develop the following learning in terms of knowledge and skills:

- To acquire mastery of the complexity of language, the semantic depth of terms, the variety of possible meanings also depending on the context of utterance, the variety of linguistic uses;
- Gain awareness of the nature and characters of literature, and the functions it can play within a cultural context;
- Learn the main factors of literary communication, with special attention to the narrative text, and the main categories of analysis, including the basic principles of rhetoric
- Appreciate the importance of the formal structuring of texts with regard to the effectiveness of representing experiences.

terms of the application of knowledge and understanding, the following learning is intended to be developed:

- Enriching one's expressive and communicative skills, increasing the ownership and precision of language;
- To develop awareness of the communicative and expressive properties of language, with particular attention to the semantic depth of words and the orchestration of said and unsaid;
- Develop the ability to interpret the speech of others, appreciating the difference between contexts and circumstances;

In terms of independent judgment, the following learnings are intended to be developed:

- Develop reading skills, cultivating and exercising one's linguistic and textual sensitivity;
- Acquire sufficient familiarity with critical language to compare the interpretation of texts proposed by the secondary bibliography with one's own reading experience.

In terms of communication skills, the following learnings are intended to be developed:

- Acquire synthesis skills in the exposition of events, particularly of novelistic plots;
- Learning to articulate coherent critical considerations based on the texts.

In terms of learning skills, the objectives are as follows:

- Acquire the ability to read concrete experience including through the virtual experiences (or simulations of experience) offered by literary reading practice, increasing one's critical and self-critical skills;
- Develop the ability to focus on the meaning of personal experiences in relation to social and historical circumstances.

Methodologies

The course consists of 28 lectures of 2 hours each, which will usually be conducted in presence in the delivery

mode. The delivered mode, however, will often leave room for interaction with students, who will be involved both in defining concepts and categories (starting with that of “literature”) and in interpreting texts. More decidedly interactive will be a group of lectures between the first and second week of the course, devoted to the topic of interpretive cooperation (6 hours).

In addition, summarization exercises will be offered during the course, providing an opportunity to reason about the hierarchy of information, ownership of vocabulary, and functionality of syntactic constructs.

The lectures will focus on textual analysis, aimed at highlighting the distinctive features of the works: linguistic and rhetorical aspects, narrative modes, cultural paradigms.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)

Online and offline teaching materials

Additional texts, supplementary materials and resources for further study of the topics covered will be provided on the course elearning platform, to which all students (attending and nonattending) are required to register.

Programme and references

Institutional module:
• Andrea Bernardelli-Remo Ceserani, *Il testo narrativo *(Il Mulino)

Parte monografica:
• Leonardo Sciascia, *A Straightforward Tale* (*Una storia semplice* , 1989)
• Giuseppe Pontiggia, *Lives of not Famous Men* (*Vite di uomini non illustri*, 1993)
• Antonio Tabucchi, *Pereira Maintains* (*Sostiene Pereira. Una testimonianza*, 1994)

Strumenti critici:
The programme includes also some additional texts which will be uploaded on the didactic platform.

Assessment methods

Type of test: oral interview in Italian language. No intermediate tests are scheduled.
This mode was chosen because it is consistent with the formative objectives of the teaching and suitable for assessing comprehension of the text and the ability to critically rework the topics addressed in the course, mastery of expressive registers, and dialogue skills. In general, it is believed that the chosen mode also benefits in countering a now well attested sociolinguistic phenomenon, namely the loss of competence in oral elocution among the younger generation, also fomented, during the schooling process, by the indiscriminate dissemination of written tests.
Evaluation Criteria: The interview consists of checking the level of knowledge, understanding and reworking of the topics covered during the lectures, the texts read, the critical and bibliographical tools indicated in the program, in the materials uploaded on the e-learning platform, 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 properly.

The Dublin Descriptors will be used for assessment: below are the level bands.
Low Level (0-17/30): Not Sufficient
Knowledge and Understanding: Student demonstrates limited and fragmentary knowledge of texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of proposed texts.
Ability to apply Knowledge: is unable to verify on the texts the general considerations on textual structures, style, reading effects of the authors examined; is very partially able 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 lecturer or critical bibliography.
Communication skills: has stunted, approximate, stereotyped oral expression; shows poor command of discipline-specific language.
Average level (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
Knowledge and understanding: 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 the texts.
Ability to apply knowledge: he/she is able, although with some difficulty, to verify on the texts the general considerations on style, textual structures, reading effects of the authors examined, at the teacher's prompting; he/she is able to summarize the texts presented in a discrete way, to interpret, contextualize and compare them correctly. Can recognize the different expressive registers of literary texts.
Autonomy of judgment: shows partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often limited to restating others' judgments.
Communication skills: expresses himself clearly and sufficiently precisely, has 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 reframe knowledge and connect it to her own experience as a 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 cultural situations.
High Level (25-30/30): Distinguished - Excellent
Knowledge and Understanding: The student has thorough and solid knowledge of the texts and topics covered; understands and analyzes the proposed texts without uncertainty.
Ability to apply knowledge: can find in the texts, with confidence and effective personal observations, the general considerations on style, textual structures, reading effects of the authors examined; with adequate argumentative property 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.

Examination talks will follow the order of registration. In one day, on average and subject to other institutional commitments of the lecturer, about 16 interviews will be held. In the case of a large number of candidates, a schedule of interviews will be announced the day after registration closes, with the distribution of those enrolled on the following days, with a breakdown between mornings and afternoons. Students who, after registering, decide for any reason not to attend the interview, are required to remove themselves from the list in time. Should the impediment arise after registration closes, they must still notify the lecturer by e-mail.

Office hours

The reception is by appointment, by prior message sent to mario.barenghi@unimib.it, in the lecturer's office, room 4096, floor 4, Agora building (formerly U6). It is possible to request remote reception that takes place in the lecturer's virtual room:
https://unimib.webex.com/webappng/sites/unimib/dashboard/pmr/mario.barenghi

Programme validity

Two academic years (until February 2028)

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | CLIMATE ACTION