

ITALIAN CINEMA: AUTHORS, PLACES, CONCEPTS

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Italian cinema has a long, rich and diverse history and – similarly to American cinema – has played a pivotal role in defining national character by shaping a well recognizable imagery. As a matter of fact, it was the first artistic expression to represent Italy right after the end of WWII thanks to Neorealism, a cinematic movement which would have had great influence all around the world; Italian cinema was also the first to fully record the great transformation taking place in Italy in the 1950s (the so-called “economic miracle”), staging the shift from a poor and peasant country to a modern, industrialized society; lastly, cinema managed to foresee dysfunction caused by a too rapid economic development, by showing the shatter of social bounds due to the advent of the society of the spectacle at the end of the 1960s. After a crisis period, today Italian cinema has found new forms and means to reflect on present-time country, gaining back a renowned position within the global cinematic scenario.

This course aims at going over this history by focusing on some keywords, such as Love, Identity, Memory, History, Power, Religion, and so on, and the ways they were elaborated by some major authors, such as Rossellini, De Sica, Fellini, Visconti, Antonioni, Pasolini, Sorrentino, Garrone. The goal is to introduce students with the main threads having defined the relationship between Italian cinema and culture, by showing the close connection between cinematic images and the development of specific “ideas of Italy”. Besides this historic and cultural dimension, a critical-aesthetic perspective will be also addressed, directed to deepen the analysis of the peculiar features of Italian cinema, in order to highlight why formal and thematic aspects can never be considered separately.

Starting from these keywords, the course aims at outlining a conceptual history of Italian cinema that allows to develop a parallel history of Italy through cinematic images. The different classes will thus address the major Italian postwar directors to show Italian cinema’s specificity in giving shape to national imagery, also introducing basic key concepts in film theory and the main methodologies of film analysis, such as semiotics and aesthetics. The class will begin with lectures in English, slowly evolving into Italian after the mid-term exam.