Modernist Cinema in Italy & France, 1945-1968
FLM178 (Winter 2017)
M 7-8:50PM
Instructor: Inga Pierson, Ph.D.

As an idea and ideal—envisioned at the dawn of the 20th century—“modernity,” had promised radical progress in art, politics, economics, philosophy, and society. In Western Europe in 1945, in the wake of one of the most violent and destructive conflicts in history, the ideals associated with modernity suddenly seemed every bit as ruined as the bombed-out buildings and barren fields.

In response to this postwar crisis, Italian and French filmmakers—who enjoyed a particularly fruitful exchange during the mid-20th century—explored the wreckage and tried to reconstruct their world through moving images. They took their cameras up and down the Mediterranean coast and into the alleys, nightclubs, and housing developments of their cities in order to contemplate economic growth and disparity, existentialism, consumerism, national identity, and an emotional climate that oscillated wildly between hope and despair, nostalgia and futurity. Films include Roberto Rossellini’s *Paisà*, Federico Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita*, Michelangelo Antonioni’s *L’avventura*, François Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows*, and Jean-Luc Godard’s *Breathless*. Additionally, we will screen a few rare short films from this period in class. We’ll study these works in context, together with the places, ideas, problems, and paintings that inspired them. Most sessions will be conducted seminar style with film clips.

*Most readings listed on the syllabus will be provided via photocopy or scan.*

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305
continuingstudies@stanford.edu
650-725-2650
Whenever possible, we will use the Criterion Collection edition of the films. Criterion Collection DVDs can be purchased via Amazon.com. They are also available for streaming through http://www.filmstruck.com.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

**Grade Options and Requirements:**
- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Students must attend at least 80% of class sessions.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Students must attend at least 80% of class sessions, and complete a piece of written work (either one research paper 8-10 pgs or two multi-media sequences analyses).

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*

**Tentative Weekly Outline**

**January 9**

**Introduction: Italian Neorealism**

Films:
*Roma città aperta; Paisà; Germania anno zero [“Rome Open City;” “Paisan”; “Germany Year Zero”, Roberto Rossellini, 1946; 1947]*

* Readings and films subject to change in response to student interest. For many sessions, there are several films listed. This means that I plan to show clips from a few films that are either by the same director or thematically related. You should plan to watch one of these on your own per week. You’re welcome to see more films of course, but I do not expect this.
Critical Readings:

**January 23**

**Neorealism and the Nouvelle Vague**

Films:
François Truffaut, *Les 400 coups*; Vittorio de Sica, *Shoeshine*; Eric Rohmer, short film selection

Critical Readings:
André Bazin, “Towards and Aesthetic of Neorealism”

Gilles Deleuze, “The Crisis in the Action Image” in *Cinema I* (pp. 203-215); “Beyond the Movement Image” *Cinema II*, pp. 1-24
Selections from *Cahiers du Cinéma*

**Optional Visit to the Cantor**
On the tensions between realism and modernism in Italian art: photographs by Mario Giacomelli and sculpture by Arnoldo Pomodoro (Stanford Collections)

**January 30**

**Italy in the 50s and 60s: “Vital Crisis” and the “Economic Miracle”**

Films:
*La terra vista dalla luna* [“The Earth Seen from the Moon” Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1966] ;
*Il posto* (Ermanno Olmi, 1960)

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Critical Readings:

February 6

Love, Alienation, and the Feminine

Films:
Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960); Viaggio in Italia [“Voyage to Italy”, Roberto Rossellini, 1954]

Critical Readings:

Suggested:
Le amiche [“Le Amiche,” Michelangelo Antonioni, 1955]

February 13

Federico Fellini, Marcello Mastroianni & Masculinity

Films:
La dolce vita (1959); Le tentazioni del dottor Antonio (dir. Fellini, in Boccaccio 70, 1962); La grande bellezza (dir. Paolo Sorrentino, 2013)

Critical Readings:

February 27

Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Paul Belmondo, and Technicolor

Films:
Pierrot le fou; Guy de Bord, “Society of Spectacle,” 1973 (documentary)

Critical Readings:
TBD

March 6

Welcome to the Desert of the Modern: Antonioni, Existentialism, and Eschatology

L’avventura (1961); Red Desert (1964)

Critical Readings:
TBD

March 13
Proposal 1: Gansenrs and Vendetta
Le Samourai (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1967); Divorce Italian Style (Pietro Germi, 1961)

Proposal 2: New Wave Legacies (Recent French Cinema)
Amour (Michael Haneke, 2012); Les Combattants (Thomas Cailley, 2014); Two days, One Night (Dardenne bros., 2014)