Italy in Film and Literature

Why do writers and filmmakers so often select Italy as the set/setting for their works? Is it the Roman ruins—visible proof of the complex civilization that stamped its indelible images on world culture? Is it the art that draws international crowds to gaze at treasures, like Michaelangelo’s “David” and Botticelli’s “The Birth of Venus”? Is it the mythology of that separate state, the Vatican, the seat of Catholic faith and power? Is it Italian opera, like La Bohème, that moves us to tears? Is it the lure of the distinct, fantastic cities, like Florence and Venice? Is it the pull of rustic hill towns, virtually unchanged for centuries? Is it the Italian people and their lifestyle? Is it the food? Is it the fashion? Is it the sun?

To try to answer these questions, we will read American, British, and Italian (in translation) film and literary texts set in Italy; learn and practice literary and cinematic critical methods; identify and research landmarks and locations; and maybe even learn a bit of the language. And always, always, we will examine the inextricable link between landscape and character.
Film/Literary Texts Keyed to Locations

**Liguria**
*The Baron in the Trees* by Italo Calvino

**Venice**
*The Merchant of Venice*, play by William Shakespeare

**Florence**
*A Room with a View*, film (1985) by James Ivory starring Daniel Day Lewis, Julian Sands, and Helena Bonham Carter
Selections from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*

**Hill Towns/Tuscany**
*Under the Tuscan Sun*, film (2003) by Audrey Wells, starring Diane Lane and Sandra Oh (Cortona, Arezzo, and Amalfi Coast)

**Rome**
*Angels and Demons*, novel by Dan Brown (author of *The Da Vinci Code*)
Short story set in Rome (TBA)
*The Bicycle Thief*, film directed by Vittorio De Sica
Selected poems of Keats, Byron, and Shelley

**Sicily**
Andrea Camilleri’s *Montalbano*, television episode

**Assignments**
20%  Quizzes & Class Participation
20%  Presentation of city/history/landmarks
20%  Reflection Paper #1
20%  Reflection Paper #2
20%  Final Presentation

Class Schedule: Please be flexible as some assignments/discussions may take longer than others.

**Jan 17/19**
Introduction to the course
Introduction to Italo Calvino
Assignment: Presentation on the Ligurian Coast for Friday
Assignment: Read Calvino’s *The Baron in the Trees* for Monday
Italian lesson
Page 3

**Jan 22/24/26**  
*The Baron in the Trees*  
Discussion  
Lecture on the adaptation (plays to film)  
Introduction to Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*  
Italian lesson  
Assignment: Read Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* for Monday  
Assignment: Presentation on Venice for Monday

**Jan 29/31/Feb 2**  
Presentation on Venice/Venetian landmarks  
Discussion of *The Merchant of Venice*  
Italian lesson  
Assignment: Presentation on Florence and Tuscany for Monday  
Assignment: Presentation on E. M. Forster for Monday

**Feb 5/7/9**  
Presentation on Florence and Tuscan landmarks  
Lecture on adaptation of novels to film  
Begin watching *A Room with a View*

**Feb 12/14/16**  
*A Room with a View*  
Discussion  
Lecture: Dante Alighieri  
Assignment: Read selections from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*

**Feb 26/28/Mar 2**  
Dante’s *Divine Comedy*  
Discussion  
Italian lesson  
Assignment: Continue reading Dan Brown’s *Angels and Demons*  
Reflection Paper #1 Due Friday, Mar 2

**Mar 3 – 11**  
*Spring Break*  
Assignment: Read Dan Brown’s *Angels & Demons* over break  
Assignment: Presentation on Cortona for Monday, Mar 12

**Mar 12/14/16**  
Introduction to Frances Mayes and *Under the Tuscan Sun*  
Presentation on Cortona  
Watch *Under the Tuscan Sun*  
Assignment: Keep reading *Angels and Demons*

**Mar 19/21/23**  
Finish watching *Under the Tuscan Sun*  
Discussion of *Under the Tuscan Sun*  
Italian lesson  
Assignment: Presentation on Rome and major landmarks for Monday  
Assignment: Finish reading *Angels and Demons* by Monday
Mar 26/28
Presentation on Rome and major landmarks
Discussion of Dan Brown’s Angels and Demons

Mar 29 – Apr 2
Easter Break

Apr 3/4/6
Tuesday Apr 3rd Monday Classes Meet
Lecture: The Italian Neorealisists
Watch The Bicycle Thief
Discussion

Apr 9/11/13
Short Story and Discussion
Selected poems of Keats/Shelley/Byron
Begin watching Gladiator

Apr 16/20
Finish watching Gladiator
Discussion
Reflection Paper #2 due Friday, Apr 20

Apr 18
Undergraduate Research Day—No Classes

Apr 23/25/27
Finish discussion of Gladiator
Assignment: Presentation on Sicily for Wednesday
Italian lesson
Introduction to Andrea Camilleri and Montalbano series

Apr 30/May 2/4
Watch an episode of Montalbano
Discussion
Prep for Final Presentations

May 7/8/9/10
Final Period

General Guidelines and Policies:
• Come to class prepared and ready to participate. Stay on top of your reading assignments. Your contributions are vital to the success of this class.
• I take attendance. You will lose one letter grade for each class you miss after your third. I do not accept “sick in room” excuses.
• You are expected to meet all due dates; therefore, late work, if I accept it, will receive a lower grade.
• If your paper is filled with grammatical errors—no matter how brilliant you think it is—it will not receive above a C.
• Please follow the MLA handbook for format, in-text citations, and works cited.
• Turning in someone else’s work—whether it is from a published text or a roommate’s homework—as your own constitutes plagiarism. Rules regarding this offense are laid out in the Student Handbook. All cases of plagiarism and cheating will be reported in writing to the Dean of the College.

• Turn off all cell phones and put them away before you come into class. If you are using them, I will count you absent because you’re not really engaged in the class. You also don’t need laptops or I-Pads in class, unless I request that you bring them.

• I count you absent if you fall asleep in class because you’re not really here, are you?

• Purge the word “like” from your vocabulary. Unless you are using it correctly, the repeated use of this word makes you sound illiterate, not something you want to aim for in college.

• Bottom line? Do your own work and come to class awake, cell-phone and “like” free prepared for discussion, having read and/or completed all assignments.