

California State University, Sacramento  
Department of Foreign Languages

Course Title:  
Italian 104 A-01 (34299)  
**INTRODUCTION TO ITALIAN CINEMA I**  
SPRING 2015

Course Hours: Tuesdays 4:30-7:20

Location: Mariposa 2030

Course Instructor: Professor Barbara Carle  
Office: Mariposa Hall 2057  
Office Hours: TWR 2:30-3:30  
and by appointment (every other Wednesday)

This on line syllabus will contain assignments and modifications as we progress.

Texts and Materials: **History of Italian Cinema 1905-2003**, Author: Brunetta, Publisher: Princeton University Press, 2011, Price: 28.75 USD  
(ISBN 978069119892)

Strongly recommended alternate text: **Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present** by Peter Bondanella (ISBN 0-8264-1247-5)

\*\*\*For Italian Minors: **Italian Through Film The Classics**, Antonello Borra and Cristina Pausini, (Yale University Press) ISBN 0-300-10952-0

Professor Barbara Carle's Web Page:  
<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/c/carleb/>

Assignments, Web Resources and Links

**COURSE GOALS and METHODS:** To develop a critical understanding of Italian film, a knowledge of Italian film history and film techniques and an aesthetic appreciation for cinema. To learn about Italian civilization (politics, art, theatre and customs) through cinema. Guiding questionnaires will also be distributed on a regular basis to help students achieve these goals. All questionnaires will be graded. Weekly discussions will help students appreciate connections between cinema and art and literary movements, between Italian cinema and American film, as well as to deal with questionnaires. You are required to view the films in the best possible conditions, i.e. on a large screen in class. Viewing may be enjoyable but is not meant to be exclusively entertaining. You are trying to learn how to view

cinema critically and aesthetically. The films will also be stimulating, challenging, thought provoking, etc. Some may even be considered “events .”

**Extra Credit Option:** View ONE of the following films: *\*Sacco e Vanzetti* by Giuliano Montaldo, *Una giornata particolare* by Ettore Scola, *Malena* by Giuseppe Tornatore, *L'isola* by Costanza Quatriglio, *\*Respiro* by Emanuele Crialesi. Some of these films are available in the university media library and may be viewed in the Media Center. Watch these films and answer guiding questions B. 100 extra credit points possible.

**\*\*\*Attendance Policy: Regular attendance is essential to succeed in this class. No absences allowed without a valid written medical excuse. More than one unexcused absence WILL lower your final grade. You will be responsible for viewing the film missed on your own.**

If you are late more than three times this will count as one absence.\*\* If you fall asleep in class or are texting you will be asked to leave. This will count as an absence. Critically viewing the film on a large screen with the guiding questions in hand is essential to succeed in this course.

Drinks are allowed but no eating in class.

**\*REQUIREMENTS:**

1) Your grades will be based on your attendance, participation, readings, and questionnaires.

2) Please be punctual and remain in class during the entire class period. Critical viewing of each film on the large screen of the classroom is an essential component of the course. You are expected to take notes during each film and concentrate on seeing as much as possible. You are not supposed to view passively.

3) No Cell phones allowed in class. No food or drink. Please turn off cell phones for entire class period.

4) Allow 24 up to 48 hours for replies for e-mail queries. Expect written work to be corrected within one week, or sooner. Keep a portfolio of all written work. This will be shown to me at the end of the semester.

5) No late work will be accepted after May 15, 2015 unless proper medical documentation is offered.

6) ITALIAN MINORS must complete written work in Italian from *Italian Through Film*. Please see me for guidance. You are expected to meet with me once every week to discuss

films in Italian and for help with writing film reviews *in italiano*.

#### CSUS POLICY REGARDING ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Students are responsible for:

1. Understanding the rules that preserve academic honesty and abiding by them at all times. This includes learning and following particular rules associated by specific classes, exams, and course assignments. Ignorance of these rules is not a defense to a charge of academic dishonesty.
2. Understanding what cheating and plagiarism are and taking steps to avoid them. Students are expected to do this whether working individually or as part of a group.
3. Not taking credit for academic work not their own.
4. Not knowingly encouraging or making possible cheating or plagiarism by

others. GRADING:

30% Regular attendance

20% Participation in class and group discussions, readings

50 % Written work (questionnaires)

#### Course Schedule

*(subject to modification depending on the pace and needs of the class)*

For each film a questionnaire will be available online. You are expected to download and print each questionnaire. You should bring it to the film viewing. *It is due the following Tuesday after you have seen the film.* These questionnaires will be graded and must be typed! Missing questionnaires will be added as the course progresses.

-Week 1

January 27

#### Introduction to Neorealism

Historical Theme **World War II in Rome** September 1943-May 1944 German Occupation

Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, Introduction, pp 1-14

Alternate Reading: Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*: 1-31/31- 73 (Neo-realism)

*Rome Open City (Roma città aperta)*

by Roberto Rossellini

1945 105 minutes

Reading: Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, Chapter 3, From Neorealism to *La dolce vita*, 108-166

Reading: Bondanella: 37-43

-Week 2

February 3

**A Classic of Neorealism or a Poetry of Despair?***Bicycle Thief (Ladri di biciclette)*

by Vittorio De Sica 1948

89 minutes

Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, Chapter 3, and page 135 in particular  
Alternate Reading: Bondanella 56-62

-Week 3

February 10

**A Neorealist fairy tale**Vittorio De Sica, *Miracolo a Milano*, 1950

100 minutes

-Week 4

February 17

**Beyond the confines of Neorealism, mixed genres**

American Influences, Criticism of Hollywood

Leftist Perspectives

*Bitter Rice*

(Riso amaro) by Giuseppe De Santis 1949

108 minutes

Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, pp 139-140

-Week 5

February 24

**The break with Neorealism or Magical neo-realism**

*La strada*

by Federico Fellini 1954

107 minutes

Reading: Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, pp 152-156

Alternate Reading: Bondanella: 130-135

-Week 6

March 3

**Commedia all'italiana, Comedy Italian style***Big Deal on Madonna Street (I soliti ignoti)*

by Mario Monicelli 1958

105 minutes (Parody of the French film *Rififi*, 1955 by Jules Dassin)Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, 179-193

Alternate Reading: Bondanella: 143-146

-Week 7

March 10

**Magical Realism, Autobiography, Social Satire, Pure Fellini?***Amarcord*

Federico Fellini, 1973, 123 minutes

Bondanella, 248-251

-Week 8

March 17

**The Epic Grandeur of Visconti and the Italian Unification**

Luchino Visconti

*Il gattopardo*, 1963 161 minutesGian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, Chapter 4, in particular, pp 212-215

-Week 9

March 23- 29 SPRING BREAK

-Week 10

March 31

**Poetry of Images****The Cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni, *La notte*, 1961**

122 minutes

Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, Chapter 4, in particular, 233-234

-Week 11

April 7

**Between Neorealism, Magical Realism and the New Wave  
Another Masterpiece of World Cinema**

*La dolce vita*, Federico Fellini,

1960 174 minutes

Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, Chapter 4

-Week 12

April 14

**Comedy, Satire, Grotesque Farce: The political cinema of Lina Wertmüller**

*The Seduction of Mimi (Mimì metallurgico ferito nell'onore)*,

1972 89 minutes

-Week 13

April 21

**Comedy, Satire, Farce, and Poetry: The Political Allegories of Pier Paolo Pasolini**

*Hawks and Sparrows (Uccellacci ed uccellini)*

by Pier Paolo Pasolini

1964 88 minutes

Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, pp 238-240

Alternate Reading: Bondanella: 184-188

-Week 14

April 28

**The Heritage of Neorealism,  
an Epic Immigration:**

Luchino Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*,

1960 177 minutes

Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema*, Chapter 4

-Week 15

May 5

**The Heritage of Neorealism and of Federico Fellini in Recent and Current Italian Cinema**

*Nuovomondo*, Emanuele Crialese, 2006

118 minutes

*The History of Italian Cinema*, pp 282-283

-Week 16

May 12

*La grande bellezza, The Great Beauty*, Paolo Sorrentino, 2013

142 minutes

Reading: From: *The New York Review of Books, Dancing to Nowhere* by Alexander Stille:

<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2014/jan/09/great-beauty-dance-nowhere/>

## Questionnaires

### A. General Knowledge Questionnaire on Italian Cinema

1. Do you know any Italian film directors? If so name them. (Please do NOT include Italian- American directors)
2. Name any Italian actors you have seen perform, name any Italian actresses. (Please do NOT include Italian-American actors)
3. Do you know any European film festivals? The Cannes film festival, the Leone d'oro prize at the Venetian film festival? The Donatello prize?
4. List the Italian directors who have won the Oscar.
5. List the Italian actors/actresses who have won an Oscar.
6. Which Italian directors have been honored at the Oscars?
7. Which Italian director had a deliberately anti-Hollywood film aesthetic?
8. What was the first golden age of Italian cinema?
9. What was the second golden age?
10. Which Italian film movement had the greatest impact on world cinema in an innovative sense? What distinguishes it from American cinema?



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## **B. General Guiding Questions with Film Vocabulary (to be used as a guide for all film viewing and for the last three films, 13-15)**

While watching a film, judging and criticizing we must keep in mind that we are viewing a work of FICTION whose language is VISUAL, a VISUAL ART.

In a written narrative we rely on the written word, in a film narrative we rely on images and the connections between them are not always immediately evident.

1. What sort of camera movements seemed to recur in this film?

- a pan, when the camera films its subject horizontally from a fixed position simply by turning on its axis (*Roma città aperta*: panning of Rome and the Vatican as the young boys are walking downhill toward the city)
- tilt, a vertical version of the pan, that is, up or down movement of the camera from a pivotal point
- quite often the camera itself moves, a tracking shot, moving forward, backward or diagonally in relation to the subject.
- Neorealist films often use an objective camera style, a technique which aims at reproducing the appearance of reality, as in *Ladri di biciclette* by De Sica.
- Other films could prefer subjective camera style, which attempts to underline the emotional connections between film character and the audience as in Bertolucci's *Il conformista*.

2. What sort of camera shots occur in this film? Did any shots strike you more?

Why? The camera sets itself in a relation of distance vis-à-vis its subject.

Consider how the camera moves, and at what distance from subject to subject. Zoom in and zoom out shots, did you notice any?

Close ups, medium shots and full shots, these all affect how we view the character. How was the protagonist filmed?

3. Assembling the Shots, Editing or MONTAGGIO/MONTAGE.

Consider the manner in which single shots are assembled, the way they are connected, mounted in a frame. The film editor must assemble selected shots into coherent sequences, which when run through the projector, will form the SCENES and EPISODES of the film narrative.

In a cut, two different shots are joined together, so that the second replaces the first.

A transition provides what cannot be found in the cut, that is a way to smooth over the differences between individual shots.

-Did you notice the following transition devices? Fade-in, fade-out, dissolve, superimposition.

4. Perhaps one of the most important elements of any visual art is the question of LIGHTING. Lighting is crucial in black and white films, essential in any film. The proportion of light to dark in any scene is called tonality, thus the lighting will help set the tone and create the ATMOSPHERE of the film.

- What did you notice about the lighting in this film?

5. Did the soundtrack interfere with the visual images or reinforce them?

Consider the use of music and dialogue after considering the above elements.

6. Consider the actors, facial gestures, poise, articulation. Were they convincing?

7. Consider the cultural elements in this film, use of non professional actors, lighting, etc. How is this film different from the American films you have seen? Finally whether or not you liked or disliked the characters, thought they were good or bad, this should have NO relevance in your manner of judging the film.

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1. Guiding Questions to Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, open city*

(*Roma, città aperta*, 1945)

1. This film was a landmark in Italian cinema for many reasons. Among them the fact that it so completely reflected the moral and psychological atmosphere of a precise historical moment.
2. What are some of the means it uses to achieve this atmosphere?
3. What sorts of different styles are combined in this film?
4. What are the main historical themes?
5. What divisions does it portray in the Italian resistance?
6. Are the main characters complicated or can you easily categorize them?
7. What contrasts did you notice in terms of mood? From comic to tragic?  
What effect do these contrasts have on the viewer?
8. Give examples of different types of shots: a pan, a tilt and a tracking shot.
9. Comment on the use of close ups in the film.
10. Comment on the film's lighting.
11. Which actors were more convincing? Which characters did you prefer?
12. Are there many instances of irony in the film?
14. What is your opinion of this film?

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## 2. Guiding Questions on *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thief*)

1. Does De Sica use many panning shots?
2. Do you notice many scenes of crowds, markets, streets, piazze, churches, etc.? Where is the protagonist in these scenes?
3. How is the protagonist placed in most shots? In closed or open spaces? Against anonymous geometric lines, walls, windows, balconies, or against open spaces, rivers, fields, etc.?
4. What is the relationship between the city of Rome and the protagonist?
5. Can we say that the city itself is a protagonist?
6. Do you see a contrast between what the reporter says at the police station regarding the day's worthy stories, the bicycle theft "would not deserve two lines in a stray dog column", "nothing today, only a stolen bicycle," and the importance of the bicycle for the protagonist, Antonio Ricci?
7. How are the following places filmed? The slums, flea markets, brothels, the sports stadium?
8. Are there any elegant places filmed?
9. Is Bruno, the child filmed differently than the adult characters?
10. Does De Sica use any zooms?
11. Comment on the final fade-out of the film.
12. How would you summarize the plot?
13. Do you perceive any contrast between bright spaces, bright lighting and dark, cramped spaces with dimmer lighting?
14. What does the music do for the story?
15. What is the social element in this film? Is the historical context important?
16. Are there any "stars" in this film? Does De Sica use non-professional actors only?

17. Is the question of different social classes highlighted in the story? How?

18. What sequence did you find most striking and why?

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### 3. Guiding Questions to Vittorio De Sica's *Miracolo a Milano*, 1950

1. This film reflected the moral and psychological atmosphere of a precise historical moment. What are some of the means it uses to achieve this atmosphere?
2. What sorts of different styles are combined in this film?
3. Are any famous actors in this film? Who are the main characters?
4. What divisions does it portray in Italian society?
5. What means do the characters invent to go beyond the confines of their own poverty?
6. What contrasts did you notice in terms of mood? From comic to tragic?
7. What effect do these contrasts have on the viewer?
8. Give examples of different types of shots: a pan, a tilt and a tracking shot.
9. Comment on the use of close ups in the film.
10. Comment on the film's lighting.
11. Which actors were more convincing? Which characters did you prefer?
12. Are there many instances of irony in the film?
13. What is your opinion of this film?

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4. Guiding Questions for Giuseppe De Santis  
*Riso amaro (Bitter Rice)*

1. Comment on the film's establishing shot and narrative frame.
2. Give examples of:
  - a. shots filmed from a crane
  - b. tracking shots
  - c. full shots
  - d. close ups
  - e. zoom ins
  - f. vertical pan or tilt
3. How are American influences clearly shown in the behaviour of the characters?
4. How are they shown in the events of the film?
5. What neorealist traits did you find in this film?
6. The forceful dramatic effect is achieved through various means, among them the strong contrasts between different characters.  
 Comment on these contrasts.
7. How do the main characters change during the course of the film?
8. Does Walter (Vittorio Gassman) change?
9. Can you pick out two scenes which are carefully composed, so as to create a striking aesthetic quality? In the scene with Silvana's blouse against a background, which highlights it, who is she with?  
 Consider also the scene between Francesca and Walter in the storehouse where the rice is kept.
10. How is Silvana filmed in comparison to Francesca?
11. There are close ups of people but also of natural elements, which ones?
12. How do the women help each other?
13. How do they react to Silvana's death?
14. Comment on the film's tonality and soundtrack.

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## 5. Guiding Questions for Federico Fellini's *La strada*

A. Consider the film's "episodic structure in which each event constitutes a self-sufficient unit, joining the others in sequences to create a cumulative, rather than linear sense of meaning." (Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*) Give examples of scenes which could stand alone and have meaning in and of themselves. Keep in mind that this type of structure is typical of Fellini's style.

1. Consider the film's title *La strada*, *The road*. Is there more than one meaning to this title? (*La strada*= a life of itinerant entertainers). Does it also suggest a journey? Which characters undertake a personal spiritual journey? (internal journey as well as external).

2. Consider Zampanò and Gelsomina's journey together and as individuals.

3. Does the film give precise geographic references? How does it make the characters seem marginalized? How do their surroundings appear anonymous?

4. Describe the character of "il matto". Compare him to Zampanò? What is their relationship? What visual connection is made between "il matto" and the Church/Angels. There are at least two.

5. Compare and contrast the personalities of Gelsomina and Zampanò. Consider how Gelsomina is compared to a child, and how often we see in the company of children. To what is Zampanò compared? What does his refer to often? He taught Gelsomina to "bray" (ragliare) and he could even teach a dog he boasts. What animal signals their arrival in the circus?

6. In his opening performance Zampanò comments: "If a vein bursts, I'll spit blood. A man in Milan went blind during this act. When one loses his sight, it's finished." What is ironic here? When does Zampanò finally gain his vision?

7. In what way is the film unreal and poetic? Describe scenes/ Explain behaviors which do not seem plausible.

8. Consider the facial language of Gelsomina. How can we say that Giuletta Masina acts with her face?

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6. Guiding Questions to Mario Monicelli's *I soliti ignoti*  
*Big Deal on Madonna Street*, 1958

1. Describe the film's main protagonists. Which actors play each role?  
 How do the roles exploit regional stereotypes, film noir stereotypes,  
 cultural stereotypes?
  - a. Cosimo
  - b. Peppe
  - c. Tiberio
  - d. Mario
  - e. Capanelle
  - f. Ferribotte
  - g. Dante Crucciani
2. How does the group prepare the heist "scientifically"? Who is the brain of the group?
3. Why is the opening scene comic?
4. Comment on the tonality, dark to light and tragic to comic.
5. How does Cosimo obtain the information to plan the heist?
6. How does Peppe manage to steal the plan from Cosimo?
7. How does Mario manage to get Michele Ferribotte's sister to open the door?
8. Why doesn't the heist work? What throws off their plan?  
 What do the thieves in this film do at the end -- an activity during a break in-- which  
 we would probably not see in an American film?

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7. Guiding Questions to Federico Fellini's *AMARCORD* 1974, 127 minutes

1. Although Fellini's film mixes fantasy and reality, it has a serious message: how all systems of power, especially Fascism (but also others) bury individuality in mass conformity symbols of power. What scenes in the film show this process in a surreal manner? In comparison think of similar such themes in your own context, sporting events that impose Nationalist elements, etc.

2. Consider different types of camera shots.

Give examples of the following shots: full shots of crowds and persons, tracking shots, tilts, pans, close ups

3. Do the townspeople and the adolescents behave in a similar manner?  
Is Italy under Fascism adolescent like? Do you see the connections?

4. How does Fellini show that people want to be controlled or guided?

Give individual and collective examples.

5. Humor allows one to be more subversive and critical since points are made through laughter. How does Fellini achieve subversive criticism?

6. Can you think of any comedian you know who also does this successfully?

7. Which scenes shocked you, made you laugh and or think?

## 8. Guiding Questions to Visconti's *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*) 1963

Based on the novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il gattopardo*, 1958

READ THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM AND ANSWERING THE GUIDING QUESTIONS

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/movies/homevideo/27kehr.html>

Note this KEY HISTORICAL TERM:

**Risorgimento**, 19th-century movement for Italian unification that culminated in the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. Rome became the capital in 1871. It began around 1848, although this beginning could be dated even earlier. The Risorgimento was an ideological and literary movement that eventually engaged the national consciousness of a new Italian people, and it led to a series of political events that freed the Italian states from foreign domination and united them politically. This unification was not without many complications and setbacks. Even though the Risorgimento now has the equivalent of a national myth, its essential meaning remains a controversial question. Many of Italy's current problems can be traced to the manner in which the Risorgimento, or unification was achieved.

Synopsis of the Film:

In 1860 Garibaldi and his expedition of 1000 invade Sicily. They are fighting to defeat the Bourbon occupiers and annex Sicily to the Kingdom of Italy, which was born in 1861. Tancredi, the nephew of Don Fabrizio Prince of Salina, signs up to join Garibaldi's forces, also known as the "Red Shirts," *Camice rosse*. The Prince approves his favorite nephew's choice. Despite the revolutionary upheaval, the Prince and his family make their traditional trip to their summer estate in Donnafugata. Here a vote is underway to decide whether or not Sicilians want to be annexed to the Kingdom of Piedmont and Italy under the reign of the Savoia's and Vittorio Emanuele II. The Prince votes in favor of joining the Kingdom of Italy. Meanwhile he has learned that his daughter Concetta is in love with her cousin Tancredi. But when Angelica Sedara appears, the daughter of the town mayor don Calogero, Tancredi falls in love with her. The prince supports this future union between the rising middle class and the falling aristocracy. But this future will be accessible only to his nephew Tancredi who belongs to the new generation and plans on a political career which will require the money of the newly rich Don Calogero and his daughter Angelica. During the great ball, where Angelica makes her social debut, and which takes up about 40 minutes of the film, the Prince reflects upon his own decline, that is the decline of the aristocracy in Sicily.

**Themes:** class contrasts, Italian Unification, Sicily, Literature, Music, Art, Love, Politics, Social Climbing, the end of a world.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the film's establishing shot, zoom, exterior versus interior .
2. How is the Prince's family shown to us?
3. Describe this family. The Prince, his wife, Father Pirrone, Concetta, the sons, Tancredi the prince's favorite, etc.
4. What changes do we see in the Prince's life?
5. What relation does the family have with the surrounding townspeople and villagers?
6. Consider the sets, the costumes, the historical reconstruction of the Sicilian aristocracy of the 1860's.
7. Why is so much time devoted to the ball?
8. Why is this film considered "visually breathtaking" and meticulously filmed?

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9. Guiding Questions to Antonioni's *La notte*, part of the trilogy

*L'avventura*, 1960

*La notte*, 1961

*L'eclissi*, 1962

One of Antonioni's major themes: Alienation in the modern or contemporary world, impossibility of communication even in "intimate" or close relationships.

Read the following excerpt from Peter Bondanella's book:

Antonioni felt the need to "avoid certain established and proven techniques."

Another aspect of Antonioni's originality is his exceptional sensitivity to the philosophical currents of the times, his ability to portray modern neurotic, alienated, and guilt-ridden characters whose emotional lives are sterile or at least poorly developed and who seem to be out of place in their environments. If the perfect existentialist film could be imagined, it would probably be one of the works in Antonioni's trilogy [...]

As the director declared in a statement distributed in Cannes when *L'avventura* was first shown, modern man lives in a world without the moral tools necessary to match his technological skills; he is incapable of authentic relationships with his environment, his fellows, or even the objects which surround him because he carries with him a fossilized value system out of step with the times. As a result of this situation, man most frequently responds erotically, attempting to find in sex or love an answer to his moral dilemma; but this, too, proves to be a blind alley offering neither solutions nor possibilities for self-fulfillment. Self-knowledge and self-consciousness are an insufficient substitute for our outmoded values. Every emotional encounter must instead give rise to a new potential, a new adventure (the sense of Antonioni's title). Antonioni's characters thus suffer from the special kind of existential boredom or noia Alberto Moravia described so well in his novel *The Empty Canvas* (*La noia*, 1960):

....boredom is not the opposite of amusement...boredom to me consists in a kind of insufficiency, or inadequacy, or lack of reality.....The feeling of boredom originates for me in a sense of the absurdity of a reality which is insufficient, or anyhow unable, to convince me of its own effective existence...from that very absurdity springs boredom, which when all is said and done is simply a kind of incommunicability and the incapacity to disengage oneself from it.

From:

*Italian Cinema From Neorealism to the Present*, Peter Bondanella, p. 211.

[In Antonioni's films we often find the] "visualization of subjective, often irrational states of mind by representative means what one film historian has aptly termed "objective correlative, visual embodiments of pervasive mood and specific psychological states. [...] Every aspect of an individual shot is artistically organized for the fullest effect, just as if the director were a painter or a still photographer: a shot or sequence by Antonioni is marked as surely as though his signature were affixed to the celluloid. Characters frequently look away from each other, or remain speechless for lengthy periods; they are frequently framed by windows, doorways, long halls, and corridors, as if to emphasize their separation from other and their failure to communicate.

From:

*Italian Cinema From Neorealism to the Present*, Peter Bondanella, p. 215.

Guiding Questions for Antonioni's *La notte*:

1. Select at least three examples of long panning or tracking shots following an actor or actors after they have spoken or, as they are moving in a certain space.
2. Give examples of the Gherardini's wealth and consider the manner in which Antonioni presents it. Is their wealth shown in a positive or negative light?
3. What scenes suggested the crisis between Giovanni and Lidia. Does their marriage have any hope of improving by the end?
4. What is the subject of Giovanni's novel?
5. Which scenes most strongly showed the characters' alienation?
6. Which character seems to be the most alienated?
7. Look up the philosophical term "existentialism" and explain how the phrase "existential boredom" is suitable to this film. Does the above quotation from Alberto Moravia explain the phrase?

10. **Federico Fellini** *La dolce vita*, 1960

This film won the Palme d'or at the Cannes Film Festival and is considered Fellini's masterpiece. It is a film completely freed from traditional narrative frames. Without hesitation it shows the deep crisis of values in modern society and for this reason it was heavily criticized by the church.

It was also condemned by the church for its frank treatment of sexual matters including homosexuality, which appeared to challenge to catholic morality. The film was cheered and booed at its Milan première.

The following terms come from this film

paparazzo

felliniesque

dolce vita

The film's innovative structure:

Prologue (Christ statue over Rome: satire of Christ's second coming?)

1. Marcello's evening with the heiress Maddalena (Anouk Aimée)
2. His long, frustrating night with the American actress Sylvia (Anita Ekberg) that ends in the Trevi fountain at dawn
3. His reunion with the intellectual Steiner (Alain Cuny); their relationship is divided into three sequences spread over the entire film: a) the encounter, b) Steiner's party, and c) Steiner's tragedy
4. The fake miracle
5. His father's visit/Steiner's Party
6. The aristocrat's party/Steiner's tragedy
7. The "orgy" at the beach house

Epilogue (The monster fish)

Interrupting these seven episodes is the restaurant sequence with the angelic Paola.

Are the evocations the seven deadly sins, seven sacraments, seven virtues, seven days of creation?

Read the following excerpt from an article *Italian Cinema's Sweet Success* by Phillip French in the *The Observer*, 16 February, 2008:

*La Dolce Vita* is a large-scale satire with grand set pieces and forceful visual metaphors. Its target is a godless society that has become a kind of hell (there are pointed references to Dante) and it has rightly been compared with TS Eliot's depiction of a moribund post-First World War Europe in *The Waste Land*. Café society figures are the new gods of this celebrity culture, and to expand the metaphor beyond Rome the film features actors from France, America, Sweden and England as well as Italy. Marcello is torn between the sweet life (mostly a world of night-time frolics and daytime hangovers) of which he is participant and observer, and the detached milieu of his mentor, the desiccated intellectual Steiner, who rails against modern corruption, but has little to offer in the way of constructive hope.

Fellini and co-screenwriters Ennio Flaiano and Tullio Pinelli, forged a cinematic narrative that rejected continuity, unnecessary explanations, and narrative logic in favour of seven non-linear encounters between Marcello, a kind of Dantesque Pilgrim, and an underworld of 120 different characters. These encounters build up a cumulative impression on the viewer that finds resolution in an “overpowering sense of the disparity between what life has been or could be, and what it actually is”. (Richardson, Robert. "Waste Lands: The Breakdown of Order" (1969). Rpt. in *Essays in Criticism: Federico Fellini*. Ed. Peter Bondanella. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. 103-112)

In a device used earlier in his films, Fellini orders the disparate succession of sequences as movements from evening to dawn. Also employed as an ordering device is the image of a downward spiral that Marcello sets in motion when descending the first of several staircases

(including ladders) that open and close each major episode. The upshot is that the film's aesthetic form, rather than its content, embodies the overall theme of Rome as a moral wasteland.

Source: Phillip French, *Italian Cinema's Sweet Success* in *The Observer*, 16 February, 2008.

#### Guiding Questions on Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita*, 1960

1. Comment on the film's opening shot. Consider the reaction and censorship by the Catholic church the film underwent as a result. What do you think the opening shot means?
2. Select an image that represents each episode best and comment on it.
3. What do you think about the main character Marcello? How do you think Fellini wants us to judge him?
4. Do you think the final shot of Marcello and Paola failing to communicate because of the river in between them is emblematic of the entire film?

II. Guiding Questions to *Mimì metallurgico ferito nell'onore*  
(*The Seduction of Mimi*) by Lina Wertmuller, 1971

Greatly indebted to the exuberant imagery of Fellini, Wertmuller's work combined a concern with topical political issues and the conventions of traditional Italian grotesque comedy, with its vulgarity, its stock characters, and its frontal attack upon accepted values and mores; therefore, much of the critical confusion over the intentions of her films stems from an ignorance of her work's cultural background. But within the genre of Italian comic film, Wertmuller's works emerge as the most complex and visually rich of the last decade. (Bondanella 354-5)

1. The seduction of Mimi refers not to amorous capitulation, but to political defeat in a sense. Mimì is originally a communist, who is exiled from Sicily for voting against the Mafia candidate in local elections. But at the end he is seduced by the organization he voted against. How does this happen?
2. What are the contradictions of Mimi's character? Does he free himself of stereotypical Southern Italian Male values?
3. Comment on Mimi's (Giancarlo Giannini) acting style. Consider his facial gestures, use of eyes versus body.
4. Give examples of the following camera shots:
5. close ups
6. zooms
7. tracking shots
8. panning shots
9. panoramic shots
10. Which actor is shown the most through close-ups and zooms and why?
11. Comment on the other characters.
12. What statement seems to be made about Southern Italian politics?

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12. Guiding Questions's to Pasolini's *Uccellacci e Uccellini*

1. Define the word "parable". How is this film a parable within a parable?
2. Describe the two parables and their meanings.
3. Give examples of the following types of film shots:
  - a. close-ups
  - b. panning shots
  - c. tracking shots
  - d. full shots
  - e. any other type of shot you noticed
4. Did you notice different types of footage. Consider the funeral of the famous communist leader Palmiro Togliatti (actual footage) with other moments of the film. Togliatti was a member of the Italian Resistance against the Germans and was very loved by many Italians. By showing us his funeral Pasolini is also suggesting the death of communism.
5. In what scenes what the theme of capitalism and capitalists emphasized? How are these scenes comic, grotesque or satirical?
6. If communism doesn't work, does San Francesco's speech (Saint Francis' sermons) work?
7. What could be the symbolism with regards to the fate of the crow?
8. Do the father and son "absorb" his lessons?  
What scene did you find most comic and why? What made it funny?

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13. Guiding Question's to Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (Use General Questionnaire or write a one page film review as though for a newspaper or magazine or online journal)

14. Guiding Questions to Crialesse's *Nuovomondo (The Golden Gate)* ((Use General Questionnaire or write a one page film review as though for a newspaper or magazine or online journal)

15. Guiding Questions to Sorrentino's *La grande bellezza* (Use General Questionnaire)

Extra credit option:

Guiding Questions to Fiorella Infascelli's *Zuppa di pesce*, 1991  
102 minutes

This is a semi-autobiographical film by director Fiorella Infascelli, whose father, Carlo Infascelli was a well-known cinema producer in the 1950's and 60's during what is commonly referred to as Italy's economic "boom." The subject is the father-daughter relationship against the backdrop of a family through its emotional, economic and seasonal ups and downs. The story is set in Tuscany near the sea coast, hence the title "Zuppa di pesce" or "Fish Soup," the name of one of the best Italian seafood dishes.

1. Comment on the establishing shot and how each of the family characters are introduced.
2. Caterina is the mother. Her first husband died on the Russian front. She has a daughter, Anna, from this marriage. Caterina then remarries Alberto, a cinema producer, who has two sons, Lello and Giulio from his first wife. Caterina and Alberto have one daughter together, Isabella.
3. Compare the daughters and the sons. Which characters does the camera visit the most?
4. Consider Isabella's relation with her father.
5. How does Isabella evolve?
6. Analyze the tonality (LIGHTING) of the film from beginning to end.
7. Does the sound track reinforce the tonality or clash with it?
8. What images recur? What sorts of camera shots are frequent? Pans, close-ups, full shots, panoramic shots, tracking shots. Who has the most close-ups?
9. What portrait emerges of this family? Is this a convincing depiction of a father daughter relationship??

**Vittorio Gassman**

*Se uno di voi ha una sigaretta e non me la offre, che venga un colpo ai suoi genitori...*

*(Silenzio)*

*...Tutti orfani, eh?*

**Capannelle e un bambino, nella Roma del dopoguerra**

*Conoscete uno che si chiama Mario che abita qua nei dintorni?*

*Ma qua ce ne sono cento di Mario.*

*Sì, ma questo è uno che ruba.*

*E sempre 100 so'!*

**Tiberio Murgia**

*Femmina piccante, prendila per amante; femmina cuciniera, prendila per mugliera.*

**Marcello Mastroianni si rivolge ai compari**

*Rubare è un mestiere impegnativo. Ci vuole gente seria, mica come voi. Voi al massimo potete andare a lavorare.*

**Il carcerato Memmo Carotenuto e la fidanzata Rosanna Rory**

*Guarda che quando esco, se quel lavoro viene bene, te compro la pelliccia, te compro!*

*Ma perché non me sposi?*

*Ma come, esco da una condanna e me ne vuoi appioppa' n'antra?!*

*A matta!*

**Totò insegna a Marcello Mastroianni e soci come aprire una cassaforte**

*Dunque un modo per aprirla è quello della dinamite. Sistema che usava il famoso fu Cimin.*

*Fu Chi Min? Chi è, un cinese?*

*Ma che cinese! Veneziano era! "Fu" sarebbe che morì, Cimin è il cognome, no?!*

**Memmo Carotenuto tenta di rapinare lo Sportello del Banco dei Pegni minacciando, pistola in pugno, l'impiegato**

*La conosci questa?*

*Sicuro che la conosco, è una pistola Beretta. Ma in cattivissime condizioni: mille lire!*

**Carlo Pisacane a Vittorio Gassman**

*"Beppe, ma lì ti fanno lavorare!!!"*

**Carla Gravina al ballo con Vittorio Gassman**

*Piano a parlar d'amore, che te la canti, che te la suoni! Se lo vuoi saver, ho dato appuntamento anche a Guido e a Renato.*

*Pure!*

*Eh, mi so' una ragazza seria, so'! Non posso mica andare a ballare con un ragazzo solo! Che mi compromette!*