**Department of French and Italian Spring 2017**

**USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences**

**ITAL 320 Critical Writing in Italian**

**(4 Units)**

**General Information**

Prerequisite:ITAL 224 Italian Composition and Conversation

Day/Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00—3:20 p.m.

Classroom: WPH 400

Instructor: Antonio Idini

Office Phone: (213)740—7479

E-mail: idini@usc.edu

Office: THH 176

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1—2 and 5—6; also by individual appointment

**Course Overview**

This course is designed to be a gateway for the Italian Majors and Minors. Students will expand

and strengthen their abilities to read, reflect on, and discuss works, trends, and ideas that

shaped today's Italy, focusing on critical writing in Italian. We will explore the basic literary

genres—poetry, fictional as well as nonfictional narrative, and theater —along with other

media such as cinema, music, and visual arts. One of the main emphases of this course is how

various critical approaches enable you to ask different kinds of questions about the texts or

media we analyze. What is the internal logic of a literary work? What are the commonalities and the

contrasts among poetry, drama, and narrative? When we study literature in school, what are

we really doing? How can we write about a movie or a work of art? This course will help

students become proficient in the skills of close reading, research, organization, writing, and

revising that they will need in order to write successful papers in upper-division Italian courses.

**Course Objective**

ITAL 320 is an advanced writing course designed to improve the writing, reading,

and critical thinking skills of advanced undergraduates. The course will feature

assignments from different genres culminating in a final research project. Students will

examine ideas critically, engage in reflective practices, interact with secondary source materials,

and learn to better understand and navigate the standard conventions of formal Italian.

Upon successful completion of the course students will be able to comprehend and analyze higher level written texts and other media. They will use critical writing to respond to readings, explore

unfamiliar ideas, question thinking different from their own, and develop sound arguments.

They will integrate primary and secondary sources with their own ideas through

summary, paraphrase, and quotation, and document these sources properly. Students will

produce writing that is free of serious grammatical and mechanical errors.

**Teaching Methods**

Each class period will be a combination of lectures, in-class activities, discussions, and student-lead

discussions.

**Course Requirements**

**○ Class Participation:** Your grade will be determined by keeping up with the reading, written

assignments, coming to class prepared and contribution to class discussion. Any unexcused

absence or regular tardiness will affect this portion of your grade and bring down your overall

grade. If you have an unavoidable conflict, please contact me in advance.

**○ Paraphrase:** You are required to write the paraphrase and a short lexical analysis of one of

the texts we will read. What does the poem say? Summarize the poem in your own words, in

detail. Formulate an initial idea of what you think the poem means, but allow yourself the

flexibility to change your mind. Then identify key words in the poem. What are their

denotations, connotation, and frames of reference? Why was a particular word chosen and not

a synonym?

**○ Summary:** Students are required to write summaries of one of the secondary reading we will

encounter throughout the semester (300 words, typed, double spaced). A good summary

incorporates all of the important aspects of a particular essay so that a reader who has not read

the original work can understand what it is about. Thus, the most important element of a good

summary is the ability to accurately depict what is in the original article. In order to do so, you

must be familiar with the work you are summarizing. A good summary begins by reading the

piece many times in order to gain a full understanding of it. Then, once the work is fully

understood, it is important to relate the thesis and the important points that support it.

The summary will be graded on grammar, organization and clarity of expression.

**Tips for Summarizing**

 Read the essay as many times as necessary to gain a full understanding of it.

 Do not interject your personal opinion into any summary. No first person ("I"

statements) are allowed (save these for the response portion, if there is one).

 Always name the author (full name) and the article or essay title in the introductory

paragraph, usually in the first or second sentence.

 After introducing the author with his/her full name, refer to him/her by last name

throughout rest of summary.

 Always use present tense to discuss the essay and facts from the essay.

 Use direct quotes from the text or paraphrase examples to support your claims.

Paraphrasing should be done more than quoting, which should be kept to a minimum.

Quoting should only be used with unique language that is hard to paraphrase.

**○ Film Review:** A film review is not a summary of the plot, it should go deeper into analysis and

reaction. It should discuss the issues raised by the film, address the film’s importance and

purpose, state reactions to the content and quality of the film, and connect it to ideas and

material presented in class. It should be 400 words, typed, double spaced.

**Tips for Writing a Film Review**

 Describe the film in general terms. What subjects does it cover? Describe the plot and

setting. What issues does it raise? What do you see as the main purpose of the film?

 What are the major theme(s) of the film?

 Evaluate the film for quality and interest. Comment on the acting, direction, production

values and music. Are any literary techniques such as symbolism, character

development and foreshadowing used?

 Relate the film to class discussions, readings, notes or knowledge. Is the film historically

(or factually) accurate and realistic? Does it contradict or support anything you have

learned?

 Summarize briefly emphasizing the strengths and weaknesses of the film.

**○ Response papers:** Throughout the course of the semester, you will write six 300-600 word

response paper on some of the materials we are covering in class. Your response paper should

pose a tightly structured argument and incorporate and discuss quotations from the text. I

suggest that you state your thesis in the first one-two sentences (long introductions are not

necessary). Remember that you must not let your quotes stand alone. Explain the quote’s

significance, what it demonstrates, and how it relates to your argument. Also, pay attention to

the use of literary devices—metaphors, imagery, irony, etc. I also suggest that you focus your

response on a particular passage or a very specific theme in the text. You may even write an

entire response paper on the use of a single word or line. Do not try and battle out the entirety

of the text. Your response will be corrected using a correction key and you will have the

possibility to submit a second draft. **You must submit your response paper by midnight of the**

**day before class. Plan ahead!**

**○ Midterm:** There will be a comprehensive midterm on Monday, March 6, 2017. The exam will

consist of analysis of selected extracts, identification and vocabulary questions and short answer

questions. You will be asked to relate the extracts to the major themes discussed in the course.

**○ Final:** Students are required to write a basic research paper of no fewer than 4 pages. All

papers must be typed (double-spaced, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman). This analysis will be

graded on grammar, literary analysis and original thought. The successfulness of your paper

depends to a large degree on your ability to formulate a clear thesis statement and develop a

coherent argument with close references to the primary text and to relevant secondary

sources. Secondary sources should be quoted in correct MLA format. Given the level and nature

of this course, students are expected to proof-read their work and submit CLEAN copies of

these papers. **Copying and pasting from the internet or any other source will earn you an F for**

**the entire course as will any other type of plagiarism.** The paper is due by 4 p.m. on May 8,

2017.

**Grading Breakdown**

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

 15% Class participation

 30% Response papers (6 papers, 5% each)

 5% Paraphrase

 5% Summary

 5% Movie Review

 15% Midterm

 25% Final paper

**Grading Scale**

87-89 B+ 77-79 C+ 67-69 D+

93-100 A 83-86 B 73-76 C 63-66 D

90-92 A- 80-82 B- 70-72 C- 60-62 D- 0-59 F

**Grading Rubric for Response Papers and Final Paper**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Unacceptable** | **Basic** | **Proficient** | **Outstanding** |
| **Specificity** | Relies mostly on plot summaries and uses almost no examples from the films and the readings. | Uses few examples from the films and the  readings, frequently  incorporates plot  summaries | Uses examples from the films and the readings, most of the times. Avoids plot summary for the most  part | Always uses apt, concrete examples from the films and the  readings; shows mastery of concepts. Avoids plot summaries all the time |
| **Accuracy** | Makes incorrect and inappropriate use of concepts. | Use of concepts,  examples from the films, and reading is not always correct or appropriate | Makes correct and  appropriate use of  concepts, examples from the films, and reading most of the times | Makes correct and appropriate use of concepts, examples from the films, and readings at all times |
| **Organization** | Argument is incoherent,  disorganized and digressive | Argument is not always coherent and organized; there are frequent digressions | Argument is coherent and organized, with occasional digressions | Argument is coherent, well organized and follows through on one line of thought |
| **Originality** | No new insights; rehashes older material | Provides very few  insights, ideas and  perspectives; frequently rehashes older material | Provides some new insights, ideas and perspectives | Provides new insights, original ideas and perspectives |
| **Clarity of Expressions** | The analysis is very poorly written and lacks revision and polish | The analysis is hastily written; revision and  polish are minimal | The analysis is fairly well written, shows some amount of revision and polish | The analysis is well written, shows consistent revision and  Polish |

**Policies**

• Students’ behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered

disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other

students’ ability to learn and a professor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive

behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and

may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures

may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

• Students with Disabilities requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are

required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP, STU 301; x00776) each

semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP.

Please have the letter delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is

located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number

is 213-740-0776.

• Academic integrity: USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General

principles of academic honesty include the respect for the intellectual property of others, the

expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by the professor,

and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to

avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by

these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in

Secton 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A;

http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov./.Students will be referred to the Office

of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any

suspicion of academic dishonesty. The review process can be found at:

http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/.

• Failure to attend classes will result in deductions from the final course grade.

• Late papers will be subject to point penalty deductions.

• Extensions are seldom granted.

• Students may not keep laptops open throughout class. (Listen to discussions attentively and

participate. Surf on the web or read email before class or during the break.)

**COURSE OUTLINE**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **WEEK 1** | **9-11 GEN.** | * **Introduction to the course** |  |
| **WEEK 2** | **18 GEN.** | * **Petronio Arbitro, *La cena di Trimalchione*** | ***MON. JAN. 16: MLK DAY: NO CLASS*** |
| **WEEK 3** | **23-25 GEN.** | * **Petronio Arbitro, *La cena di Trimalchione*** * ***Fellini Satyricon* [FILM]** |  |
| **WEEK 4** | **30 GEN-1o FEB.** | * **Dante Alighieri, *Inferno: il canto di Ciacco*** * **Dante, Alighieri *La vita nova*** * **Cecco Angiolieri** | **RESPONSE PAPER 1 on *Fellini Satyricon* DUE MON. JAN. 30** |
| **WEEK 5** | **6-8 FEB.** | * **Dario Fo, *Mistero Buffo*** | **PARAPHRASE OF A POEM BY Angiolieri or Dante DUE MON. FEB. 6** |
| **WEEK 6** | **13-15 FEB.** | * **Carlo Goldoni, *Arlecchino servitore di due padroni*** | **RESPONSE PAPER 2 on Dario Fo, *Mistero Buffo* DUE MON. FEB. 13** |
| **WEEK 7** | **22 FEB.** | * **Alessandro Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*** | ***MON. FEB. 20: PRESIDENTS’ DAY: NO CLASS***  **RESPONSE PAPER 3 on Goldoni, *Arlecchino…* DUE WED. FEB. 22** |
| **WEEK 8** | **27 FEB.- 1o MAR.** | * **Alessandro Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*** | **SUMMARY of a critical essay on Manzoni DUE MON. FEB. 27** |
| **WEEK 9** | **6-8 MAR.** | * **Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio*** | **MIDTERM EXAM MON. MAR. 6** |
|  |  |  | ***MAR. 13—17: SPRING BREAK*** |
| **WEEK 10** | **20-22 MAR.** | * **Giovanni Verga, *I malavoglia*** | **RESPONSE PAPER 4 on *Pinocchio***  **DUE MON. MAR. 20** |
| **WEEK 11** | **27-29 MAR.** | * **Giovanni Verga, *I malavoglia*** * **Luchino Visconti, *La terra trema* [FILM]** | **RESPONSE PAPER 5 on *I Malavoglia***  **DUE MON. MAR. 27** |
| **WEEK 12** | **3-5 APR.** | * **Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli, *Sonetti*** * **La cucina futurista** | **MOVIE REVIEW on *La terra trema* DUE MON. APR. 3** |
| **WEEK 13** | **10-12 APR.** | * **Carlo Emilio Gadda, *Risotto* alla milanese** * **Achille Campanile, *Gli asparagi e l’immortalità dell’anima*** | **RESPONSE PAPER 6 on Futurism**  **DUE MON. APR. 10** |
| **WEEK 14** | **17-19 APR.** | * **Pierpaolo Pasolini, *La ricotta*** |  |
| **WEEK 15** | **24-26 APR.** | * **Final discussion** * **General review** |  |
|  |  |  | **FINAL PAPER DUE ON MON. MAY 8 by 4 PM** |