

**GESM 120g: Seminar in Humanistic Inquiry  
Transforming Italy: Italian Literature Today  
Fall 2017**

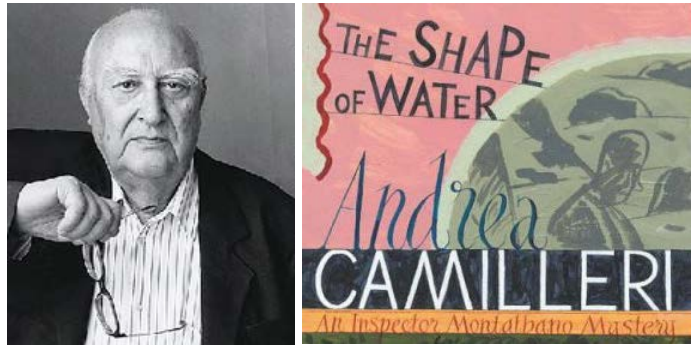
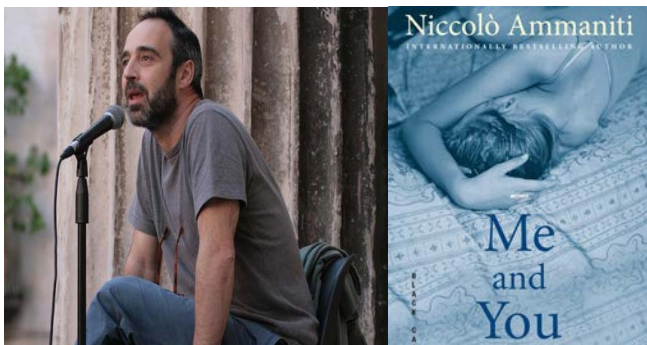
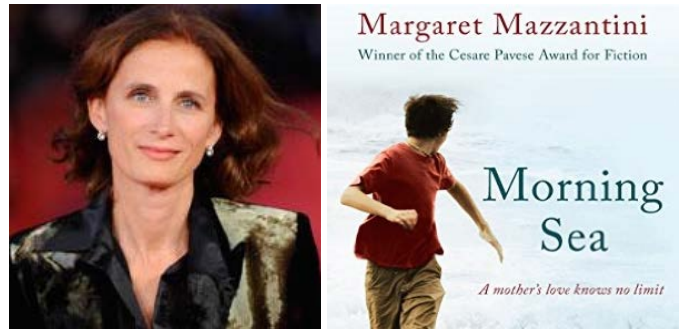
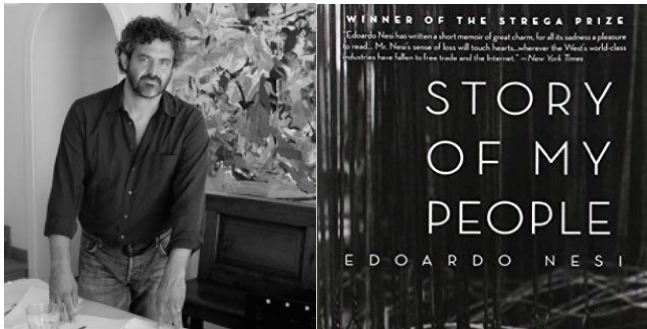
**Professor: James M. Fortney**

**Course Hours: 2:00-3:20 T/TH**

**Meeting Room: VKC 210**

**Email: fortney@usc.edu**

**Office Hours: Wednesday 1-4 or by appointment (THH 155)**



Today's Italy is very different from the stereotypes of the culture that have traditionally informed our ideas. The land of history, art, food, and culture by all means still exists. Nevertheless, new tendencies have emerged over the last couple of decades that have challenged, provided hope and created new possibilities for this people that trace their roots back to before the ancient Romans. In this course students will read recent award winning and bestselling narratives that complicate our understanding of this country and shed greater light on what it means to be Italian within the European Union and globalized world of today.

Edoardo Nesi's *Story of My People* utilizes memoir to capture the downfall of a lifestyle, an industry and the Italian nation. Margaret Mazzantini's *Morning Sea* places recent Mediterranean migration stories in the context of Italy's colonial past as it tries to make sense of the over eight percent of the immigrant population residing within Italy today. *Me and You* is another well-received novel by Niccolò Ammaniti that conveys the inner psyches of young Italians, brought up in nontraditional familial contexts, who struggle with substance abuse and neglect. Andrea Camilleri's *The Shape of Water* reveals as much about the mechanisms of organized crime and the north/south divide as it does about the mystery at the heart of its story. Finally, Elena Ferrante's *The Lost Daughter* is a haunting tale that explores the boundaries of family, death and solitude. More than ever, the outpour of recent contributions of contemporary Italian literature is saturated with a dazzling array of stories that question core values, culture, society and identity itself.

## Learning Objectives

- Reflect on the act of storytelling to acknowledge how fundamental it is to the human experience and how it brings us closer to understanding what it means to be human.
- Factor in the role that culture plays to evaluate ideas of diverse perspectives as we consider some of the most successful narratives in Italy today.
- Closely read narratives of different literary genres such as fiction, memoir, fictionalized memoir and nonfiction to explore how categorical expectations impact the story a narrative represents.
- Develop arguments in classroom discussions and papers to enhance analytical and critical interpretive skills.
- Enrich, collaborate, and share knowledge about narratives and ideas discussed in class.
- Construct a nuanced vocabulary of narrative language and concepts to broaden considerations of events, characters, authors/narrators and genres in narratives.
- Compare and contrast written and filmic texts to explore how cinematic language alters representation.

**REQUIRED TEXTS: To be purchased at the USC bookstore in the editions indicated below. Make sure that you acquire the correct edition, as these texts may exist in other translations and editions.**

Ammaniti, Niccolò. *Me and You* (originally published in 2010 ). Trans Kylee Doust. New York: Black Cat, 2012.

Camilleri, Andrea, *The Shape of Water* (originally published in 1994). Trans Stephen Sartarelli. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.

Ferrante, Elena. *The Lost Daughter* (originally published in 2006). Trans. Ann Goldstein. New York: Europa Editions, 2008.

Mazzantini, Margaret. *Morning Sea* (originally published in 2011). Trans Ann Gagliardi. New York: Random House, 2015.

Nesi, Edoardo. *Story of My People* (originally published in 2010). Trans Anthony Shugaar. New York: Other Press, 2013.

## **STATEMENTS ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

### **Academic Conduct:**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

## **Support Systems:**

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.

<https://equity.usc.edu/>

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

*Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

*Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/>*

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

## **Course Requirements and Dates:**

### **Assignments:**

**First paper (3-4 page)(Thur., Sept. 14, email before class to [fortney@usc.edu](mailto:fortney@usc.edu)):** 10%

**Midterm Exam (Thur., Oct. 12):** 15%

**Second paper (4-5 page)(Thur., Nov. 9, email before class to [fortney@usc.edu](mailto:fortney@usc.edu)):** 20%

**Final Exam (Thur., Dec. 7, 2:00-4:00):** 20%

**Presentations (scheduled throughout the semester)** 10%

**Participation (in-class discussions, group work, readings, quizzes):** 25%

\* Bring to class the text we are discussing.

\* Keep up with the reading schedule and plan ahead. Think about budgeting your time.

\* Come to class prepared to discuss the day's text and engage in group activities. Bring notes on articles and additional readings.

\* Keep up with handouts and other class notes.

\* Laptop use is discouraged in lecture or discussion. Take notes in a notebook and in your copies of the novels. Similarly, no cell phones, etc.

### **1. Participation (in-class discussions, group work, readings, quizzes)**

Be sure not to miss any classes. Daily attendance is a key factor in our course. Coming allows you to 1) interact with the other students and 2) discuss and receive explanations about what you read and studied at home. Please remember that, although attendance is not graded *per se*, unexcused absences will have a negative effect on your participation grade (see point 4 below).

USC official policies allow for some absences to be excused. Thus, the following circumstances would not be considered unexcused. Students who can verify that they were prevented from completing assignments and/or taking exams due to illness or religious holidays are permitted to make up the work they missed. Students who miss class because of their performance in university-sponsored events, such as athletic competitions, fine-arts performances, ROTC activities, etc. are also allowed to make up the work they missed. Students who are summoned for jury duty are excused as well.

Finally, a death in the immediate family would also excuse a student's absence.

On the other hand, personal reasons for missing class are not excused. These include personal trips to attend university-sponsored events as a spectator, to visit family, to attend weddings (and similar events), to attend court (except for jury duty), even when plane tickets have already been purchased.

In order to make up any work (assignments, quizzes, exams, etc.) that you miss, you must bring valid, original documentation. For illness, a medical excuse from a doctor or other appropriate health-care provider is required and is subject to confirmation. Students using the University Park Health Center should have a valid release on file at the UPHC with my name on it. For university-sponsored events, an original memo from the appropriate advisor must be provided in advance. Documentation from a newspaper, funeral, memorial service, etc., must be provided in the event of absence due to a death in the immediate family. The court papers summoning you for jury duty are required in order to be excused.

Unannounced quizzes and in-class exercises will take place regularly. The purpose of the quizzes and exercises is testing for preparedness and comprehension. The quizzes will contribute to the "participation" portion of your grade.

### **2. About the papers and other writing assignments**

- \* Each paper should have the specified length, typed in 12-pt. Times New Roman font, and have one-inch margins.
- \* Include your name and the title of your paper at the top of the first page.
- \* All papers must have titles.
- \* You should number pages.
- \* Spell check and proofread adequately.
- \* Be sure that you cite all secondary material and present bibliographical information according to either the guidelines of either the Modern Language Association or Chicago Manual of Style.
- \* You must list all material cited, even if you are only using the required text.
- \* There will be information distributed in class for the three papers.
- \* You will email me your papers. Any papers that do not meet requirements (length, assignment instructions, etc.) will be emailed back to you with further instructions for completion. You will earn one grade lower on the completed draft.

### **3. Presentations**

Students will be assigned one to two presentations throughout the semester. Presentation topics will contextualize the novels that we are reading this semester and deal with social, economic and political issues in Italy, the Mediterranean and the European Union. Students will present to their peers their research that they organize in PowerPoint. Their PowerPoint and handouts will be shared with other students in a public Dropbox file. Although students can use notes and refer to their PowerPoint to assist them in their presentations, their performances should be practiced and be between seven and ten-minutes. A question and answer session will follow the presentation and students' grades will be based on interactions with their peers. Students will be graded not only on their presentations but on how they ask and answer questions, respond to each other, etc.

### **4. Midterm and Final Exams**

The midterm will cover all material in the first half of the semester and the final exam will cover all material for the semester. Students will receive review materials to help them focus their studies before each exam.

### **GRADES**

<b>93-100</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>90-92</b>	<b>A-</b>
<b>87-89</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>83-86</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>80-82</b>	<b>B-</b>
<b>77-79</b>	<b>C+</b>
<b>73-76</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>70-72</b>	<b>C-</b>
<b>67-69</b>	<b>D+</b>
<b>63-66</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>60-62</b>	<b>D-</b>
<b>0-59</b>	<b>F</b>

## SYLLABUS:

**READINGS ARE TO BE COMPLETED FOR THE DAY THEY ARE ASSIGNED. YOU MUST BRING TO CLASS THE CURRENT READING. Assignments, in bold, are listed under the day for which they are to be completed.**

### Week 1

- Tue., August 22 Introduction to Narratives: Some Considerations, Course/Syllabus Overview
- Thur., August 24 Watch for class *Italy: Love It Or Leave It* (2011; 79 min) by Gustav Hofer and Luca Ragazzi (available on streaming through Amazon, Netflix, etc.)

## NICCOLÒ AMMANITI'S ME AND YOU (2010)

### Week 2

- Tue., August 29 Read for today pages 1-25
- Thur., August 31 Read for today pages 27-64

### Week 3

- Tue., September 5 Read for today pages 65-103
- Thur., September 7 Read for today pages 105-153  
\*Discuss as a class when to schedule a screening of the filmic adaptation

### Week 4

- Tue., September 12 Watch for today Bernardo Bertolucci's filmic adaptation *Me and You* (2012)
- Thur., September 14 **First Paper Due, EMAIL BEFORE CLASS to [fortney@usc.edu](mailto:fortney@usc.edu)**

## EDOARDO NESI'S STORY OF MY PEOPLE (2010)

### Week 5

- Tue., September 19 Read for today pages 1-25

Thur., September 21 Read for today pages 26-54

### **Week 6**

Tue., September 26 Read for today pages 55-81

Thur., September 28 Read for today pages 82-99

### **Week 7**

Tue., October 3 Read for today pages 100-129

Thur., October 5 Read for today pages 130-163

### **Week 8**

Tue., October 10 Midterm Review

**Thur., October 12 Midterm Exam**

## **MARGARET MAZZANTINI'S *MORNING SEA* (2011)**

### **Week 9**

Tue., October 17 Read for today pages 15-45

Thur., October 19 Read for today pages 49-69

### **Week 10**

Tue., October 24 Read for today pages 70-102

Thur., October 26 Read for today pages 103-143

## **ELENA FERRANTE'S *THE LOST DAUGHTER* (2006)**

## **Week 11**

Tue., October 31 Read for today pages 9-49

Thur., November 2 Read for today pages 49-84

## **Week 12**

Tue., November 7 Read for today pages 84-125

Thur., November 9 Read for today pages 125-140

**Second Paper Due, EMAIL BEFORE CLASS to [fortney@usc.edu](mailto:fortney@usc.edu)**

## **ANDREA CAMILLERI'S *THE SHAPE OF WATER* (1994)**

## **Week 13**

Tue., November 14 Read for today pages 1-35

Thur., November 16 Read for today pages 36-90

## **Week 14**

Tue., November 21 Read for today pages 91-149

Thur., November 23 NO CLASS TODAY, THANKSGIVING

## **Week 15**

Tue., November 28 Read for today pages 150-218

Thur., November 30 Final Exam Review

**Thur., December 7, 2-4 p.m. Final Exam to be held in our normal classroom VKC 210**