Refining reading and writing skills lie at the center of this course, which uses Marco Tullio Giordana’s 2003 film *The Best of Youth* as its central object. This six hour long family drama, which covers the major events of recent Italian history from 1966 to the early 2000s, serves as a gateway to contemporary Italian cultural history and literature. The course turns to *The Best of Youth* to plot a larger cultural ecology, and studies much of the writing and culture the film directly, or even indirectly, mentions: modern poetry, short stories, political texts calling for activism, and popular music, to name just a few. We will thus explore difficult grammatical structures and stylistics in their cultural context, and work to improve the expression of complex ideas through a sustained engagement with the world that *The Best of Youth* portrays.