



Faculty of Arts
School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures

ITAL 399.3

Topics in Italian Masterpieces: Film and Literature (Boccaccio's *Decameron*)

Winter 2022

MF 14:00 - 15:15 – CHF 214 (in person)

COURSE OUTLINE

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: Dr. Eleonora Buonocore

OFFICE HOURS: M-F 12.00-12.50 (in person or zoom – CHD 420) or by appointment.

E-MAIL: Eleonora.buonocore@ucalgary.ca

I will try my best to give a timely response, but as a policy, I will respond to e-mails within 48 hours during weekdays and within 72 hours during weekends

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 403 -993 -7877 (only for emergencies)

DESCRIPTION

This is a CURE course focused on Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a masterpiece of Italian literature and a crucial text that lays at the foundation of European culture. The students will learn skills necessary to do research within a humanities literary context. We will begin by reading closely Boccaccio's proem to his collection of short stories and by explaining the mechanisms of frame narrative in medieval storytelling as the springboard to understanding the positive, healing value of telling stories at the time of the plague (1348).

The aims of this course are threefold. On the one hand the students will discover the beginning of Italian Literature in prose, understand the complex interplay between the characters in the frame narrative of the book and will become familiarized with selected tales from the *Decameron*, in order to identify the main themes present in the collection. Secondly, the course will explore the historical context of medieval Italian history, paying particular attention to the development of the cities, the rise of the merchant class and the politics of gender. Finally, we will learn how to write a research paper on the inner workings of the short-story genre, how to interpret, analyze and write a short story. In order to do so, the students will analyze a selection of short stories, their tropes, and their language. They will select a topic for their research, present their preliminary findings in a Video Presentation, write a short proposal of their thesis statement and necessary bibliography before finally writing the research paper. Throughout the class the students will be reflecting on their own learning process in a class blog, they will all write 2 entries and respond to 2 other students' entries. We will read and analyze tales about the varied humanity in a Medieval Italian city: cunning merchants and their even smarter wives, monks and nuns, priests and prostitutes, rich and poor people, noblemen and noblewomen. We will investigate the themes of love, gender dynamics, fortune, ethics and rhetoric (metaliterary reflections).

OBJECTIVES

This course aims to prepare the students to engage with the Italian literary tradition. The objectives of this course are manifold:

- to provide the students with the necessary analytical tools to decode a short literary text such as a short story, particularly focusing on the development of cities, the rise of the merchant class and the politics of gender.
- to provide an introduction to Italian Literature which includes the historical background of Medieval and Renaissance Italy.
- to show how to recognize and trace ideas in short literary texts.
- to familiarize the students with one of the greatest figures at the beginning of Italian literature in the vernacular, Giovanni Boccaccio.



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- to explain the main characteristics of analytical writing, and of close reading.
- To learn how to do research in a humanities context, how to select secondary sources from a library or database and how to use literary evidence to support a thesis statement.

OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- analyze a short story in depth.
- recognize the short story form, its origins and development in Medieval Italian Literature.
- understand how a frame narrative works, and be able to explain it.
- follow the development of an idea in a text, and in multiple texts through time.
- Know the basic history of Italy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, especially the development of urban culture, of the merchant class, and the role that women had in this historical process.
- Reach an understanding of the complex dynamics that lie at the foundation of Italian Literature in the vernacular, and specifically of the role of Boccaccio in this process.
- Become familiar with Giovanni Boccaccio and with the most important figures in the Decameron
- Write a creative short story in the style of the Decameron.
- Present your preliminary research findings in a short Video Presentation of Research
- Write a Research Paper Proposal, including an abstract with a thesis statement on a short story and some preliminary secondary literature
- Produce a Final Research Paper focusing on the interpretation of a selected tale from the Decameron (or more than one)

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

1. Boccaccio, Giovanni, and G H. McWilliam. *The Decameron*. London: Penguin Books, 2003. (required)
2. Boccaccio, Giovanni, and Vittore Branca. *Decameron: 1&2*. Torino: Einaudi, 2014 (required for Italian Majors and Minors).
3. Additional material provided in PDF format on D2L

(Both books are available at the Book Store)

In addition, as per University requirements for partially web- based delivery courses, students need to have reliable access to technology, as follows:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security, and malware updates;
- A current and updated web browser;
- Webcam/Camera (built-in or external);
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone; In order to be able to listen to media and to record themselves.
- Current antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;
- Stable internet connection

RECOMMENDED COURSE MATERIALS



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Any good Italian-English, English-Italian dictionary for advanced students.

COURSE NOTES

- The course will consist in class readings, writing and communicative activities: analyses and seminar discussions will be in English. Regular attendance is strongly recommended.
- This course is a CURE project course, meaning that students will be trained in techniques to perform research within a literary context. Students will learn how to describe and clearly state their research question, they will examine the text, analyze it and mine it for clues and evidence supporting their thesis, find secondary literature to back up their thesis and finally students will articulate the results of their research in a paper, as well as reflect on their own process of learning in the class blog.
- Active participation is warmly encouraged. Active participation is defined as coming to class prepared to discuss the reading, and to ask questions about the reading. Students will read the text of the *Decameron* in translation and peruse the footnotes to clarify hard points. Participation includes being prepared and ready to give active and positive contributions to class interactions. Participation also includes posting on the class blog at least twice in the term and responding to the other students' post at least once. Lack of attendance or of participation will adversely affect your overall performance and will have a negative impact on your final grade. The instructor should be informed of any reasons for prolonged absence.
- Attendance at two co-curricular events during the term will earn students 4 bonus marks in the participation portion of the grade. In general, attendance to all co-curricular events is encouraged in order to have more occasions to practice your language skills and can help make up your absences for the participation portion of the grade.
- Italian Major and Minor students are expected to write their assignments in ITALIAN and they are strongly encouraged to communicate consistently on the target language during office hours and to attend IL CIRCOLINO (CHC 318) to practice Italian.

Important dates:

- In person class meetings will start on Monday January 10th.
- Term break will be the week of February 20th – 26th.
- The two exams will take place on February 18th (delivered as a D2L quiz), and April 8th (delivered as an in-class exam)
- The first writing assignment is due in a dedicated D2L folder by February 11th
- Video Presentation of the Research Question is due in a dedicated D2L folder by March 7th.
- The Research Paper proposal will be uploaded to a dedicated D2L folder by March 18th
- The Final Research Paper will be uploaded to a dedicated D2L folder by April 12th.
- In class meetings will end on Tuesday, April 12th.

Additional Notes

- Attendance at all tests and examinations is mandatory. The first exam will take the form of a D2L quiz. The D2L quiz will be available to the students for a period of 48 hours, starting on class time on February 18th, but when the students begin the test, the assessment will be timed to a full class period and a half (115 minutes), to account for technical difficulties. The second exam will be administered in person, and it will last a class period (75 mins). Missed tests, assignments and examinations will be given a grade of F. A student who is absent /unable to take the test in the 48h



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period for legitimate reasons must inform the instructor immediately and an alternative course of action may be considered.

- **Written exams:** The first exam will take the form of a D2L quiz. The D2L quiz will be available to the students for a period of 48 hours, starting on class time on February 18th, but when the students begin the test, the assessment will be timed to a full class period and a half (115 minutes), to account for technical difficulties. The second exam will take place in-class (in person) on April 8th. The exams will evaluate students' knowledge of the key characters and themes as well as of the structure of the *Decameron*. Students will be asked to write a composition and analyze selected passages chosen among those short stories the *Decameron* read in class.
- **Writing Assignment:** throughout the term students will write 1 short story of 500/600 words on a topic of their choice among those covered in class (i.e. the short story needs to include the principal issues at play in a specific story of the *Decameron* or comparing two short stories, or on a character of the *Decameron*, or dealing with the frame narrative, etc.). The Writing Assignment will be uploaded to a dedicated D2L folder by February 11th.
- **Class Research Blog:** Students will reflect on their learning experience and articulate their engagement with research by participating to the class blog on D2L with at least 2 entries and by commenting on at least 2 other students' entries.
- **Video Presentation of the Research:** Students will prepare and deliver one 5-minutes Video presentations about the preliminary results of their research on the class material, one short story from the *Decameron* or an important character or issue in the text. The Video Presentation of the Research will be uploaded to a dedicated D2L folder by March 7th.
- **Research Paper Proposal:** Students will create an abstract with a research question (thesis statement) and some preliminary bibliography, primary and secondary literature that they intend to use to support their statement. The Research Paper Proposal will be uploaded to a dedicated D2L folder by March 18th.
- **Final Research Paper:** the research paper will present an original argument dealing extensively with a theme discussed in class, using evidence from the text and from the bibliography to prove it (i.e. focusing on one canto of the *Decameron* or on a specific issue in the *Decameron* as it relates to medieval culture). The topic will be agreed with the instructor. The paper will have a length of 4/5 pages, The Final Written Paper will be uploaded to a dedicated D2L folder by April 12th.
- There will not be a final examination.
- The Procedure for Course evaluation will be online via a dedicated D2L Link

ASSESSMENT

Active class participation 10% [includes actively participating to class discussions and responding to other students' questions]

1 Written Assignment 10% [Due February 11th on the D2L Folder]

2 Written exams (2 at 15% each) = 30% [in class – on February 18th and April 8th]

1 Video Presentation of the Research Question 15% [Due March 7th on the D2L Folder]

1 Research Paper Proposal 5% [Due March 18th on the D2L Folder]



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Class Research Blog 5% [participating to the class blog with at least 2 entries and comments on other students' entries - Due throughout the semester – last entry due before April 12th on D2L]

1 Final Research Paper 25% [Due April 15th on the D2L Folder]

GRADING SCALE

A+ = 100-96 A= 95-91 A- =90-86

B+ = 85-81 B =80-76 B- =75-71

C+ = 70-67 C= 66-62 C- =61-58

D+ = 57-54 D= 53-50 F =49%-0%

The official grading system (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1) will be applied for the calculation of the final mark

INTEGRITY AND CONDUCT

All members of the University community have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with the Statement on Principles of Conduct, and to comply with the University of Calgary Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures (available at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>).

Academic misconduct

Academic Misconduct refers to student behavior which compromises proper assessment of a student's academic activities and includes: cheating; fabrication; falsification; plagiarism; unauthorized assistance; failure to comply with an instructor's expectations regarding conduct required of students completing academic assessments in their courses; and failure to comply with exam regulations applied by the Registrar.

For information on the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure please visit: <https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-policy.pdf>, and <https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-procedure.pdf>

Additional information is available on the Academic Integrity Website at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND COPYRIGHT LEGISLATION

Course materials created by instructors (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may not be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf>) and requirements of the Copyright Act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY (FOIP) ACT

Graded assignments will be retained by the Department for three months and subsequently sent for confidential shredding. Final examinations will be kept for one calendar year and subsequently sent for confidential shredding. Said material is exclusively available to the student and to the department staff requiring to examine it. Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip> for complete information on the disclosure of personal records.



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ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures listed below. The student accommodation policy can be found at: <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/access/prospective-students/academic-accommodations>.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf>.)

Students needing an Accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfil requirements for a graduate degree, based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their Instructor or the Department Head/Dean or to the designated contact person in their Faculty.

FACULTY OF ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING AND STUDENT INFORMATION RESOURCES

Have a question, but not sure where to start?

The Arts Students' Centre is the overall headquarters for undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Arts. The key objective of this office is to connect students with whatever academic assistance they may require.

In addition to housing the Associate Dean (Undergraduate Programs and Student Affairs) and the Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning & Student Engagement), the Arts Students' Centre is the specific home to:

- Program advising
- Co-op Education Program
- Arts and Science Honours Academy
- Student Help Desk

Location: Social Sciences Room 102

Phone: 403-220-3580

Email: ascarts@ucalgary.ca

Website: arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at 403-210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Block.

Contacts for the Students' Union Representative for the Faculty of Arts: arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca.

INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Devices such as laptops, palmtops and smartbooks are allowed provided that they are used exclusively for instructional purposes and do not cause disruption to the instructor and to fellow students. Cellular telephones, blackberries and other mobile communication tools are not permitted and must be switched off.

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Links to information that is not course-specific related to student wellness and safety resources can be found on the Office of the Registrar's website: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines>.