Spaghetti Westerns & Italian Pop Fiction: The Roaring Sixties

M 2:30/3:30 HSS
W 2:30/5:30 Hodges Library-Audiovisual

“Unlike all the other popular Cinecittá genres of the 1960s - the sentimental weepy, the commedia all'Italiana, the peplum, the horror film, the spy story etc. - the Spaghetti Western was almost exclusively concerned with a masculine universe in which men strutted their stuff and did nasty things to one another, usually in homo-social spaces such as saloons or gun duels or hideouts in the desert. Spaghetti Westerns were a celebration of a masculine world where men were men and women - on the rare occasions they appeared - seemed to like it that way: the understated masculinity of the classic Hollywood Western had turned into in-your-face close-ups of rugged faces, twitching hands and fetishised weaponry, maleness as spectacle and style, and sometimes into extraordinary feats of athleticism and grace. The women were usually madonnas or whores and sometimes both at once... Italian formula films of the 1960s and 1970s were certainly popular, and were the product of an industry which seems to have been directly in touch with its audience: Italy was producing over 2000 feature films a year, could support nearly 13,000 cinemas and registered over 540 million million cinema attendances per annum. "(C. Frayling)

The course will address the following questions: why formula cinema?, why such a success? what are the politics of the Spaghetti Westerns (SW)? what do SW reveal about Italian society of the 1960s and 1970s?, what is the legacy of Sergio Leones's films? did SW deepen and reshape the understanding of the Western as a genre? why so much violence? but was it violence or self- irony?... We will examine the most important films by Sergio Leone, Corbucci, Tessari etc., and we will read some popular novels of the same period. The course will meet twice a week: Monday for one hour and Wednesday for a three hour session to allow for film viewing and discussion. The course is designed for both non-majors and majors of Italian (Italian majors will read the literary works in Italian). All the films are in Italian with English subtitles and all the literary texts are in translation. There are no prerequisites. Requirements will include a mid-term, one final exam and one class presentation. For further information contact Flavia Brizio-Skov, Dept. of Modern Foreign Languages: fbrizio@utk.edu. (Because the content of this course changes, students may take it twice, for up to 6 credits).

Week I

Jan 12 Introduction - Fort Apache (125m., 1948, dir. John Ford)

Week II

Jan 17 HOLIDAY - Martin Luther King Day
Jan 19 High Noon (85m., 1952, dir. Fred Zinnemann)

Week III
Jan 26 Shane (117m., 1953, dir. George Stevens)

Week IV

Feb 2 The Magnificent Seven (127m., 1960, dir. John Sturges)

Week V

Feb 9 A Fistfull of Dollars (100m., 1964, dir. Sergio Leone)

Week VI

Feb 14 Spaghetti: Leone's trilogy - Barzini: 74-100.
Feb 16 For a Few Dollars More (132m., 1965, dir. Sergio Leone)

Week VII

Feb 23 The good, the bad and the ugly (163m., 2 videos, 1966, dir. Leone)

Week VIII

March 1 Once Upon a Time in the West (165m., 1968, 2 videos, dir. Leone)

Week IX

March 6 MIDTERM - Barzini: 133-156.
March 8 MIDTERM due - A Fistful of Dynamite (138m., 1971, dir. Leone)

Week X

March 13 Spaghetti: the fortune of the formula - Barzini: 157-189
March 15 El Chucho, Quien sabe? /A bullet for the General (113m., 1967, dir. Damiano Damiani)

Week XI

March 20-22 Spring Break - HOLIDAY

Week XII
March 27  Spaghetti: the influence of the formula - Barzini: 190-213.
March 29  Gunfight at Red Sands /Gringo (95m., 1963, dir. Richard Blasco)

Week XIII

April 3 Spaghetti: the influence of the formula - Barzini: 214-233.
April 5 The Last Tomahawk (89m., 1965, dir. Harald Reinl - Germany)

Week XIV

April 10 Spaghetti and society - Barzini: 234-251.
April 12 For a Few Bullets more/ Any Gun Can Play/ Go Kill and Come Back (95m.,
1967, dir. Enzo Castellari)

Week XV

April 17 Spaghetti and politics - Barzini: 252-275
April 19 MANDATORY LECTURE Hodges Auditorium 3:30PM

Week XVI

April 26 The Grand Duel (90m., 1973, dir. Giancarlo Santi)

WeekXVII May 1 Review Final

FINAL WEEK May 4-6 to 8-9 Final Week

Grade Distribution:
The final grade will be calculated as follows:
Midterm  30%
Final  30%
Oral Report  30%
Attendance  10%

Grade Scale:
A 90-100  C+ 76-79
B+ 86-89  C 70-75
B 80-85  D 60-69

Exams: will include the material covered in class. Please note that Attendance at
the screening is mandatory -- all the films are available for extra-viewing at the
Audiovisual Center in Hodges Library in order to give you the opportunity to review the
films before your class presentation or exams.

Midterm and Final: will include questions on the material covered in class. Books
and articles are available at the Reserve Desk (Hodges Library) for consultation, see list handed by teacher.

Oral Presentation: students will choose a book or a film and they will base their report on (at least) two critical articles. The oral report has to be presented to the class but it also has to be written and handed in after the oral presentation: at least 4 pages typed with a biblio of the critical material used.

Attendance: to be active is essential in a class whose main object is critical discussion about literature and cinema. Good class participation requires regular attendance and actual involvement in all class activities and assignments.

Italian Majors and Minors: the students will be required to read some material in Italian.

Purpose of course: The course will address the following questions: why formula cinema?, why such a success? what are the politics of the Spaghetti Westerns (SW)? what do SW reveal about the Italian society of 1960s and 1970s?, what is the legacy of Sergio Leone's films? did SW deepen and reshape the understanding of the Western as a genre? why so much violence? but was it violence or self-irony?... We will examine the most important films by Sergio Leone, Castellari, Damiani etc., and we will read some popular fiction of the same period.

Textbooks: photocopy materials; The Italians by Luigi Barzini (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1996) and a novel by Giovanni Guareschi (see Reserve Desk list). For the students of Italian: Fratelli d'Italia (1963) by Alberto Arbasino or Il cinema italiano degli anni ’60 by Lino Micciche' (see Reserve Desk list).

*Feel free to come to see me whenever you need help!