This course aims to dispel the amazement of those who wonder how feminism could have taken root in a country where women for centuries have been wearing black shawls and their public life has been limited to an appearance at mass. During the semester we will learn that Italy has been the scene of one of the most original feminist developments in recent years, especially in the light of the fact that the women's movement stemmed from a socio-political situation in which the Church has always dictated the roles of women in society. The relatively sudden change of the social condition of Italian women took place quickly over the last twenty years. The goal of this course is to examine the non-traditional roles played by women before the end of the '60s, when the only way to emerge was “divaism”, fame via beauty and sex, (i.e. Gina Lollobrigida, Sofia Loren, Claudia Cardinale); in the '70s, after the rise of the Left and the Student Revolution, the first women directors appeared and became famous (i.e., Liliana Cavani and Lina Wertmuller). At the same time there was a rediscovery of women writers previously ignored by the “official” literary critics like Sibilla Aleramo and authors like Dacia Maraini and others addressed in their works feminist issues, consciously taking a stand against patriarchal society; finally in the '80s we will examine how women were no longer confined to restrictive roles in their public and personal life, and how they were able to express themselves artistically and professionally in almost any field (cinema, literature, performing arts, academia etc.).

The course will meet twice a week and will be conducted in English: films will have subtitles, literary texts will be in translation. The class is designed for non-majors and majors of Italian (Italian majors and minors will read the works in Italian). There are no prerequisites. Requirements will include a midterm, a final paper and class presentations. For further information contact Flavia Brizio-Skov, Dept. of Modern Foreign Literatures, 974-2311.

Week I
Jan. 10  Film: Francesco by Liliana Cavani, 1989, 119m. Introduction to the course.

Week II
Jan. 15  HOLIDAY - Martin Luther King Day

Week III
Jan. 24  Beyond obsession by Cavani, 1982, 116 m.
Week IV  
Jan. 29  Birn. chap. 3. Maraini.  
Jan. 31  *Swept away* by Wertmuller, 1975, 125m. 

Week V  Feb. 5  Birn. chap. 4. Maraini.  
Feb. 7  *The end of the world... a night full of rain* by Wertmuller, 1977, 104m.  
Finish reading *The Silent Duchess*.  

Week VI  Feb. 12  Birn. chap. 5. Start reading A Woman by Sibilla Aleramo.  
Feb. 14  *Summer night with Greek profile...* by Wertmuller, 1986, 97m.  

Feb. 21  *Belle Star* by Wertmuller, 1979, 90m. Birn. chap. 7.  

Week VIII  Feb. 26  Birn. chap. 8. Aleramo  
Feb. 28  *Sotto... sotto...* by Wertmuller, 1983, 104m.  

Week IX  Mar. 5  Birn. chap. 9. Aleramo.  
Mar. 7  *Seduced and abandoned* by Pietro Germi, 1964, 118m.  

Week X  Mar. 12  Finish reading A Woman.   MID-TERM  
Mar 14  *Yesterday, today, tomorrow* by De Sica, 1964, 119m. .  

Week XI  Mar. 19,21  SPRING BREAK - HOLIDAY  

Week XII  Mar. 26  Start reading Woman at War by Dacia Maraini.Birn. chap. 11-12  
Mar. 28  *Love in the city* by Fellini, Antonioni, Risi, Maselli, Zavattini, Lattuada, 1953, 90m.  

Apr.4  *Woman of Rome* by Zampa, 1956, 93m.  

Apr. 11  *The Conviction* by Belloccchio, 1992, 92m.  

Week XV  Apr. 16  Birn. chap. 15. Maraini.  
Apr. 18  *What a woman!* by Blasetti, 1956, 95m.  

Apr. 25  *Where the hot wind blows* by Dassin, 1959, 120m. Finish reading  
Woman at war.  

Week XVII  Apr. 30  Birn. chap. 17.  

FINAL WEEK  May 3-5 (Th. to Sat.) to May 7-8 (Mon. and Tues.)
Grade Distribution:
The final grade will be calculated as follows:
- Midterm  25%
- Final  25%
- Oral Report/
  Written Report  25%
- Presentation/Participation in Discussion  30%

Grade Scale
- A 92-100  C+ 76-80
- B+ 87-91  C 71-75
- B 81-86  D 64-70

Exams: will include the material covered in class. Please note that Attendance at the screenings 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/ Final: will include essay questions on the material covered in class, and on the material assigned.

Oral /Written Report: each student will choose a book or a film and they will base their report on (at least) two critical articles; reports must be handed in, typed, 5 pages and should include a bibliography (MLA style) at the end. A complete list of suggested readings (material available at the Reserved Desk of Hodges Library) will be given to the students. The report has to be presented in class (or no points will be earned) and it has to be handed in AFTER the oral presentation (students can choose the date of their report). Internet sources do not qualify as critical sources.

Presentation/Participation in class discussion: Students will be assigned to present to the class (on a rotation basis) a chapter of liberazione della donna.

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

Purpose of course: We will follow three separate leads: -novels written by women, precursors and active member of the feminist movement; -films made by contemporary women directors who contributed to and presented feminist issues in their works -films made by men who created Divas, before the onset of the Italian women's movement; a non-feminist outlook at women. We will compare and read these different narratives vis-à-vis Birnbaum's liberazione della donna/feminism in Italy.

Italian Majors and Minors: they will read the novel by Dacia Maraini, La lunga vita di Marianna Ucria (original title of The Silent Duchess) and other critical material in Italian.

Reserve Desk/Bibliography:
Visions and revisions - Women in Italian Culture ed. Mirna Ciccioni and Nicole Prunster. HQ 1638.V56 1993 (Black and Other Popular Madonnas at Easter, The women's movement in Italy and the events of 1968, Violence against women and the response of Italian Institutions)

Le sirene immaginarie - dive raccontate da scrittori ed. Franco Prono PN 1998.2.S57 1995 (writers imagine or recount 65 Divas)

Donna-Women in Italian Culture ed. Ada Testaferri PQ 4053.W6D66 1987 (The originality of Italian feminism, Sexuality and exorcism in Liliana Cavani's Night Porter, Una donna: autobiography of exemplary text,

Italian Feminist Thought - a reader ed. Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp HQ 1642.I76 1991 (everything you want to know on Italian feminism: the cultures of Italian feminism, italian feminist groups, ways of sexualizing politics)


Sexual Difference The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective HQ 1638.N6613 1990 (The practice of Sexual Difference, the story of the Bookstore, the issues)

From margins to mainstream- Feminism and fictional modes in Italian women's writing 1968-90 Carol Lazzaro-Weis PQ 4174.L39 1993 (on Woman at war 73-77, The silent duchess 145-48)


Feminine Feminists - Cultural Practises in Italy ed. Giovanna Miceli Jeffries HQ 1642.F445 1994 (general, broad articles on history, fashion, cinema etc.)

Articles in a folder under Brizio-Skov at Reserve Desk:

“The New Italian cinema” on Wertmuller (2 copies)
“Romance Languages Annual 1990” on Sibilla Aleramo’s A Woman (2 copies)
“Feminisms in the cinema”: Introduction on cinema and article on Cavani’s Night Porter (2 copies)
“Dacia Maraini's Woman at War: victory or defeat?” by Anthony Tamburri (3 copies)

La lunga vita di Marianna Ucria, chap. 6-9
“Italica” su Una Donna di Sibilla Aleramo
(mandatory reading for Italian majors/minors)

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