SPRING 2018. GRADUATE COURSES – ITALIAN DEPARTMENT

16:560:691 Topics in Italian Literature and Culture (3 credits)
16:195:519 Topics in Comparative Literature and Other Fields (3 credits)
Six Friday Seminars (see syllabus for dates); 4:30-7:10. AB # 5050

In this seminar, we will explore an archaeology of virtual reality in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through five case studies focused on Italy as a “virtual” country and on historical figures of Italian modernity, representative of broader social, political and cultural dynamics. Each case-study focuses on an optical tool or spectacle: the mondo nuovo or cosmorama, the polemoscope, the magic lantern/phantasmagoria, the moving panorama, and stereoscopic photography. Primarily designed, or adopted, for entertainment and education, these media have this in common: they let the user/spectator see the world in a different dimension by impacting sensory perceptions in ways not dissimilar from those of our contemporary digital media. Each case study thus cuts across the fields of literature, art history, military history, the social history of technology, media archaeology, mobility studies, in order to explore five genealogical dimensions of the modern “panoptic Self”: virtual travel, social voyeurism, phantasmagoric consumption, instant history and stereoscopic memory are presented here as defining aspects of modern popular culture. Taught in English.

Massimo Riva is Royce Family Professor of Teaching Excellence and Professor of Italian Studies and Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. His most recent books include: Pinocchio Digitale. Post-umanesimo e Iper-romanzo (Digital Pinocchio. Posthumanism and the Hypernovel, Milan, 2012), and Il futuro della letteratura. L’opera letteraria nell’epoca della sua (ri)produtibilità digitale (The Future of Literature. The literary work of art in the age of its digital [re]production, Naples, 2011). He is the editor of Italian Tales. An Anthology of Contemporary Italian Fiction (Yale, 2004) and the co-editor (with F. Borghesi and M. Papio) of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man. A New Translation and Commentary (Cambridge, 2012). His NEH and ACLS-Mellon supported digital projects are now part of the Virtual Humanities Lab that he directs. They include the Decameron Web and the Garibaldi and the Risorgimento archive, which was featured in the Italian pavilion at the 23rd general conference of the International Council of Museums, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2013, as well as at the British Library in London and museums and libraries in Italy. He is currently at work on a digital monograph tentatively entitled: Italian Shadows. The Virtual Life of Casanova and Other Tales of Imaginary or Forgotten Media, selected for the Brown Digital Publication Initiative funded by a grant of the Mellon Foundation.

16:560:640 Language and Nation in Italian Thought (3 credits)
T 4:30-7:10. AB #5050

This seminar explores the ideas, essential notions, and rhetorical strategies adopted by Italian intellectuals to link language to national identity. Drawing on theories of the nation (e.g., Gellner, Anderson, A.D.Smith, Hobsbawm), we will analyze definitions of national language (Dante, Trissino, Manzoni, Gramsci, Pasolini), explanations of language diversity, issues of etymology (Vico), the translatability of the “genius of the nation” and reflections on national character (Cesarotti, Condillac, Leopardi). Among the questions we will discuss, are: how much is a person shaped by the language that she shares with
millions of other people and conversely, how far does a language bend to an individual’s personality? How do descriptions of language inform images of communities and nations? Taught in Italian. How could the written idiom of an elite come to be linked to an entire “national” – and largely illiterate – population who actually spoke different and at times mutually unintelligible vernaculars?

Paola Gambarota is Associate Professor of Italian at Rutgers. She is the author of the books *Surrealismo in Germania* (Udine: Campanotto, 1997) and *Irresistible Signs: The Genius of Language and Italian National Identity* (University of Toronto Press, 2011), winner of an MLA Award for Best Manuscript in Italian Literary Studies and of an American Association for Italian Studies Book Award. She is currently working on a book project entitled *American Naples: Cross-Cultural Memories of an Occupation*, for which she was awarded an ACLS Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome.