Belatedness is a recurring feature of Italian modernity: Italy, we often hear, was late to nationhood (it was unified only beginning in 1861); late to industrialization (the so-called economic ‘boom’ of northern Italy occurred in the 1950’s); late to the colonial contest (Eritrea, its ‘first-born colony,’ was ‘born’ in 1890). Likewise, postcolonial critique got a late start in Italy, coming to the fore only in the last decade or so. And yet, as scholars of the Italian postcolonial have argued, Italy’s belated status, far from conferring a sense of derivativeness, presents an opportunity to check in on some of the paradigms of postcoloniality.

This seminar introduces students to a selection of canonical Italian films through the lens of the (Italian) postcolonial. Films are drawn from three historical thresholds: 1) Fascist colonial conquest in Libya and East Africa; 2) “decolonization” in the post-WWII era and 3) contemporary responses to immigration from across the Mediterranean. Our readings will be guided by critical works of early film theory on physiognomy and the face, feminist film theoretical works on the body and desire, as well as postcolonial film criticism on race. Some questions that will shape our inquiry are: what are the contours of Italy’s tradition of cinematic representations of race? What is unique about Italy’s brand of racial representation? What are some of the collective fantasies engendered by Italian films about (post)colonialism and race? Instruction and readings in English; films in Italian (some without English subtitles). This course is open to all graduate students, regardless of their training in film, critical theory, and/or Italian studies.

Films on Reserve at the Media Center (Douglass Campus).

Readings available on Sakai.

Course requirements and grade distribution:

Participation: 20%
Regular attendance and active participation are required. Each week, students will be assigned questions on the readings, upon which they should reflect before each seminar discussion. Students who make the most of the seminar time by posing thoughtful questions, engaging directly with the texts assigned, and listening attentively to their classmates will receive excellent participation grades.

Four in-class presentations/responses: 20%
Each student will choose two topics and/or texts from the syllabus to present to the class during the weekly seminar. The presentations are meant to be thought provoking and to generate a group discussion on the connections between the week’s film and readings. Students may choose to do independent research in line with their own research interests, but they must be sure to present any new material to clearly to the group, and they must draw explicit connections to the assigned viewings/readings. During the time allotted to each student for his/her presentation (20 minutes each), the student is responsible for presenting 1) a detailed close reading of a film shot or sequence (we will watch clips together in class); 2) a concise summary of at least one
of the assigned secondary or theoretical readings; 3) some attempt to link the readings to the shot and/or sequence in question; 4) at least one original thought or fresh insight; 5) lead a group discussion by offering questions for further analysis. The goal of this exercise is to hone cinematic close reading skills, and to incite discussion about intersections between film theory and practice. Each student will offer two formal responses to student presentations. Respondents will listen actively to presentations, and will be asked to engage with the presentation in as detailed a manner as possible, offering questions on the presentation and/or further lines of discussion for the group. Respondents are strongly encouraged to prepare some material in advance in order to enhance the quality and depth of the response.

Two Think Pieces: 10%
Students will submit two 2-3 page “think pieces” over the course of the semester. The purpose of the think piece is to refine your close-reading and film analysis skills, in preparation for the final research paper. Each think piece should contain: 1) a detailed close reading of a film shot or sequence; 2) a concise summary of the primary arguments of the assigned secondary or theoretical readings; 3) some attempt to link the readings to the assigned filmic text, and, when possible, to draw connections to earlier assigned readings or films; 4) at least one original thought or fresh insight.

Final paper: 50%
Students will write a 15-page final research paper consisting of a close reading of a film or a film-theoretical essay, drawing from at least one film on the syllabus and relating to at least one of the major topics covered in the course. Students should consult between 4 and 5 secondary sources, and should include a bibliography in MLA format. Papers are due Monday, May 4 by 5pm.

Week 1. Wednesday, January 21
Introductions

Week 2. Wednesday, January 28
Colonialism and Visual Culture

1 Alan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive”
3 Silvana Palma, “The Seen, the Unseen, the Invented: Misrepresentations of African ‘Otherness’ in the Making of a Colony”
4 David Forgacs, Italy’s Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861 (selections)

(Strongly recommended):
David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art: An Introduction (any edition; chapters on mise en scène; cinematography; editing; sound).

(Optional reading):
Loredana Polezzi, “Imperial Reproductions: The Circulation of Colonial Images across Popular Genres and Media in the 1920s and 1930s”

Week 3. Wednesday, February 4
Spectrality and the Italian Postcolonial
1 Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, “The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto”
2 Sandra Ponzanesi, “The Postcolonial Turn in Italian Studies: European Perspectives”
3 Colin Davis, “Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms”

(Optional reading):
Miguel Mellino, “Italy and Postcolonial Studies: A Difficult Encounter”
Alessia Ricciardi, *The Ends of Mourning. Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film*
Sigmund Freud, “Morning and Melancholia”

Week 4. Wednesday, February 11

Film: Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, *Dal polo all’equatore* (1986)
1 Robert Lumley, “Amnesia and Remembering: Dal polo all’equatore”
3 Tobias Nagl, “The Aesthetics of Race in European Film Theory”

Week 5. Wednesday, February 18

Film: Giovanni Pastrone, *Cabiria* (1914)
2 Shelleen Greene, “From ‘Making Italians’ to Envisioning Postcolonial Italy”

(Optional reading):
(In Italian) Antonia Lant, “Spazio per la razza in Cabiria”
Richard Dyer, “The White Man’s Muscles”
Tom Gunning, “A Little Light on a Dark Subject”

Week 6. Wednesday, February 25

Film: Augusto Genina, *Lo squadrone bianco* (1936)
1 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”
2 Jane Gaines, “White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory”

(Optional reading/viewing):

Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “The Italian Colonial Cinema: Agendas and Audiences”

Cecilia Boggio, “Black Shirts/ Black Skins: Fascist Italy’s Colonial Anxieties and Lo squadrone bianco”


(In Italian) Archivio Luce: Giornale LUCE B0907 Lavorazioni del film Lo squadrone Bianco (1936)

Week 7. Wednesday, March 4

Lecture: Enrico Cesaretti (University of Virginia)

Week 8. Wednesday, March 11

Film: Augusto Genina, Bengasi 41 (1942)

1 Stephen Heath, “On Screen, In Frame: Film and Ideology”

2 Barbara Spackman, “Preface,” Fascist Virilities

(Optional reading/viewing):

Slavoj Zizek, “The Spectre of Ideology”

Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”

(In Italian) Archivio Luce: Documentario LUCE: Conoscere le colonie: Ghat (1933); Giornale LUCE B1061, Tobruk. Il Duce in Libia (1937); and LUCE, Cronache dell’Impero CI005 “Addis Abeba.”

Week 9. Wednesday, March 18

Spring Recess

Week 10. Wednesday, March 25

Written Assignment: 2-3 Page ‘Think Piece’ on this week’s materials.

Film 1: Corrado D’Errico, Il cammino degli eroi (1936)

Film 2: Carmine Gallone, Scipione l’Africano (1937)

1 Jacqueline Reich, “Mussolini at the Movies”

2 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction [of Its Technological Reproducibility]”
(Optional reading):

Michel Foucault, “Panopticism”
Michel Foucault, “Governmentality”
Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Envisioning Modernity: Desire and Discipline in the Italian Fascist Film”

Week 11. Wednesday, April 1

Film: Roberto Rossellini, Paisà (1946)
1 Richard Dyer, “The Light of the World”
2 Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness”
3 Gilberto Perez, “The Documentary Image”

Week 12. Wednesday, April 8

Film: Michelangelo Antonioni, L’Eclisse (1962)
1 Karen Pinkus, “Empty Spaces: Decolonization in Italy”
2 Robert Stam, “Fanon, Algeria, and the Cinema”
3 Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism”

Week 13. Wednesday, April 15

Written Assignment: 2-3 Page ‘Think Piece’ on this week’s materials.

Film: Pier Paolo Pasolini, Appunti per un’Orestiade Africana (1972)
1 Robert Stam and Louise Spence, “Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction”
2 E. Ann Kaplan, “Preface”; “Travel, Travelling Identities, and the Look”

(Optional reading):

Pier Paolo Pasolini, “The Screenplay as a Structure that Wants to Be Another Structure”; “The Cinema of Poetry”
Giovanna Trento, “From Marinetti to Pasolini: Massawa, the Red Sea, and the Construction of ‘Mediterranean Africa’ in Italian Literature and Cinema”

Week 14. Wednesday, April 22

Film: Gianni Amelio, Lamerica (1994)
1 Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man”
2 Derek Duncan, “Italy’s Postcolonial Cinema and its Histories of Representation”
3 Luca Caminati, “The Return of History: Gianni Amelio’s *Lamerica*, Memory, and National Identity”

Week 15. Wednesday, April 29

**Film 1:** Marco Tullio Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (2005)
**Film 2:** Moshen Melliti, *Io, l’altro* (2006)

1 Elena Benelli, “The Other from Another Shore: Identity at Sea in *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti*”
2 Áine O’Healy, “[Non] è una somala: Deconstructing African Femininity in Italian Film”
3 Giovanna Lerner, “From the Other Side of the Mediterranean: Hospitality in Italian Migration Cinema”

(Optional reading):

Jacques Derrida, *On Hospitality*

**Papers due in Prof. Welch’s departmental mailbox: Monday, May 4 by 5pm.**

**Works Cited in Syllabus**


--- “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, Second Version”


Sigmund Freud, “Morning and Melancholia.”


