

**Georgetown University
Villa Le Balze**

Fall Semester 2009

Italian Literature

**Modernity and Its Parody: From Verga to
Calvino, and Beyond**

**Prof. Carlo Zei
cz10@cornell.edu**

This course focuses on particular trends in the development of Italian narrative since the end of 19th century. The emphasis is on the evolution of different genres in twentieth century Italian novel. We will read such prominent writers as Verga, Pirandello, and Buzzati. By placing these authors in the broader context of European culture students will be provided with a critical language appropriate to the reading and analysis of the 'modernist' novel. Furthermore, by reading works by such authors as Svevo and Calvino, and consequently discussing their often humorous and ironic reflections on modernity, students will achieve an understanding of the implications of 'postmodernism' in the Italian literary tradition.

Literary Texts

1) **Cavalleria Rusticana and Other Stories** (1880)
by Giovanni Verga

2) **Six Characters in Search of an Author** [Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (1920)] in: Plays
by Luigi Pirandello

3) **The Confessions of Zeno** [La coscienza di Zeno (1923)]
by Italo Svevo

4) **The Tartar Steppe** [Il deserto dei Tartari(1940)]
by Dino Buzzati

5) **Beautiful Antonio** [Il bell'Antonio (1949)]
By Vitaliano Brancati

6) **The Sergeant in the Snow** [Il sergente nella neve(1953)]
by Mario Rigoni Stern

7) **Invisible Cities** [Le città invisibili (1972)]
by Italo Calvino

Course Reader

Pirandello *The Man with a Flower in His Mouth*

JoAnn Cannon *The Question of the Frame in Pirandello's Metatheatrical trilogy.*

Carlo Zei *Dialogue about Theatre, Literature, and Other Things.*

Thomas F. Staley *James Joyce and Italo Svevo*

Carlo Zei *Why Zeno's Lies are Not Hazardous to Your Health*

Ellen Nerenberg *Tartar Control: Masculinity and impegno in Buzzati's Il deserto dei tartari*

Carol P. James, *Seriality and Narrativity in Calvino's Le città invisibili*

Meetings: Tuesday 17:15 - 18:45; Thursday 17:15 - 18:45

Requirements: attendance and participation to class discussions (25 %), a mid-term Exam (25 %), a Final Exam (25%), and a Research Paper or Presentation (25%).

Office Hours: after class or by appointment.

Calendar:

- 8 September **Introduction:** Literature and the representation of reality; The "Questione Meridionale"; The rise and fall of Positivism and its myth of progress; The language of science and the language of literature.
- 10 September Italian Poetry and Culture from unification to *Decadentismo*
Reading: Poems from: "A Selection of Modern Italian Poetry in Translation": Carducci, Pascoli, D'Annunzio. (handouts)
- 15 September Italian Poetry and Culture from *Decadentismo* to Futurism
Reading: Poems from: "A Selection of Modern Italian Poetry in Translation": Corazzini, Gozzani, Marinetti, Palazzeschi (handouts).
- 17 September Giovanni Verga and the Italian *Verismo*
Reading: Giovanni Verga, "*Cavalleria Rusticana*" and *Other Stories*
- 22 September **Reading:** M. P. Ginsburg *I Malavoglia* and Verga's "*Progress*" (Reader)
- 24 September The breaking of the "fourth wall" in modern theatre: Pirandello
Reading: Luigi Pirandello, *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*)
- 29 September **Film Screening:** *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (DVD, Broadway Theatre Archive) (1976)]
- 1 October "Deconstruction of the Self" on stage; Theatre on Theatre, Films on Films, Metafiction.
Readings: Pirandello *The Man with a Flower in His Mouth* (reader), JoAnn Cannon *The Question of the Frame in Pirandello's Metatheatrical trilogy.* (reader), Carlo Zei *Dialogue about Theatre, literature, and other things, between a Character and a Peaceful customer in a Cafè* (reader).

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 6 October | Literature, Psychoanalysis and Paradoxes: Zeno's lies and his "last cigarettes" Reading: Italo Svevo, <i>La coscienza di Zeno</i> (<i>The Confessions of Zeno</i>) |
| 8 October | Reading: Thomas F. Staley <i>James Joyce and Italo Svevo</i> (reader), Carlo Zei <i>Why Zeno's Lies are Not Hazardous to Your Health</i> (reader) |
| 13 October | Using literature to say the unsayable: Buzzati's "Magic Realism". Reading: Dino Buzzati, <i>Il deserto dei Tartari</i> (<i>The Tartar Steppe</i>) |
| 15 October | Reading: Ellen Nerenberg <i>Tartar Control: Masculinity and impegno in Buzzati's Il deserto dei tartari</i> |
| 20 October | Review Session |
| 22 October | Mid-term Exam |
| 27 October | FALL BREAK |
| 29 October | FALL BREAK |
| 4 November | Literature in post-war Italy Reading: Vitaliano Brancati, <i>Il bell'Antonio</i> (<i>Beautiful Antonio</i>) |
| 6 November | Reading: TBA |
| 10 November | War literature Reading: Mario Rigoni Stern, <i>Il sergente nella neve</i> (<i>The Sergeant in the Snow</i>) |
| 12 November | Reading: TBA |
| 17 November | From Experimentalism to Post-modernism: Italo Calvino and the OuLiPo |
| 19 November | Reading: TBA |
| 24 November | Reading: Italo Calvino, <i>Le città invisibili</i> (<i>Invisible Cities</i>) |
| 26 November | Reading: Carol P. James, <i>Seriality and Narrativity in Calvino's Le città invisibili</i> (reader) |
| 1 December | Presentations |
| 3 December | Review Session |
| 9 December | Final Exam, Final Paper Due |