



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Methods of Illusion: la Mise-en-scène from Drama to Fiction and Visual Arts

PROF. LAURA BELLONI

Area of study:	Italian Culture: Literature, Theatre, Cinema, Music, Philosophy and History
Area Code:	LT/AR315
Method of Instruction:	In-person

Description

Should art tell the truth or lie? Should art allow the audience to escape reality or to understand it better? Can a lie be truer than the truth? What is there behind an image, a character, a scenario, behind the many stories that millions of creative artists have imagined for us?

This interdisciplinary course explores the theme of ILLUSION and REALITY in different works of art to highlight its crucial importance not only in theatre, but also in fine arts, novels, opera and finally in cinema. ILLUSION is the very essence of the theatre as on stage everything appears ‘as if’ it is something else: a sort of deception that takes the audience back and forth in time, in distant locations real or imaginary. After a closer view, we discover that it is an essential element used to represent the world, to transform an ephemeral reality into a permanent and universal truth in any work of Art, not just on stage.

Each class is dedicated to a different masterpiece and will analyse different illusions in varied situations with their corresponding outcomes: comic, tragic and frightening. The key concepts that describe Illusions in art are: artifice, deception and seduction. The artifice tells us that every story is ‘artificially’ real, the deceptions reveal surprising and unexpected truths, and finally to rely on the illusion, to believe the deception, the audience needs to be ‘seduced’. Illusions are present in many stories, described by powerful symbols and motifs such as masks and disguises, doppelgängers, dreams or nightmares, mirrors and other mysterious artifices to help us see beyond the eyes, within the illusions, in the deepest and remotest corners of our mind.

COURSE CONTENTS

PART 1: THE COMIC AND THE TRAGIC

- Miguel de Cervantes *Don Quixote* [novel]
- Niccolò Machiavelli *The Mandrake Root* [play]
- William Shakespeare *Othello* [play]
- W.A. Mozart *Don Giovanni* [opera]
- Gustave Flaubert *Madame Bovary* [novel]
- Lev Tolstoy *Anna Karenina* [novel]
- Luigi Pirandello *The Late Mattia Pascal* [novel]

PART 2: THE UNCANNY. MASKS, DOUBLES AND DOPPLEGANGER

- Stories about transformations and metamorphoses
- Stories about ghosts and apparitions
- Illusion, deception and suspense in Hitchcock’s cinema
- Illusion and Italian contemporary cinema

PREREQUISITES

None



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METHOD OF TEACHING

Lectures, seminar

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In order to get their credits, students will be required to:

- Attend class regularly. More than five absences will result in halving your grade for class participation.
- Keep up with the assigned readings, be focused during classes and participate in class discussion.
- Prepare an oral presentation or hand in, before the Final Exam, a 6-10 page paper on one text (drama, fiction, cinema) on a subject to be defined with the teacher. The assignment will focus on the themes discussed in class, namely *artifice, deception/ illusion and seduction*.

Mid-term and Final Exams are written.

Handing in papers late without a satisfactory explanation will result in a diminished grade.

CREDITS

6 ECTS

GRADING

Participation	25% of final grade
Oral presentation and work in class	20% of final grade
Midterm	25% of final grade
Final exam	30% of the final grade

COURSE READINGS AND MATERIALS

A packet including all required readings, along with a list of suggested critical texts will be available at the beginning of the course.

INSTRUCTOR BIO

Prof. Laura Belloni received her degree in Languages and Foreign Literatures at UCSC in Milan, with a senior thesis on the English Opera, and a PhD in English Drama, with a dissertation on “The Ascent of F6 (1936) and the dramatic theatre of W. H. Auden”. She attended courses in American Literature and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, in Norwich, UK. After working at Radio24, a national radio, and “Airone” a national magazine, she went into teaching and she is currently running courses in Comparative Literature and Literature & Drama at the UCSC Department of International Relations. She also teaches English at the faculty of Languages and Business English at the UCSC Department of Economy. Her current research areas focus on Drama, as well as Comparative Literature. Among her recent publications is “Methods of Illusion. La mise-en-scène from Drama to Fiction and Visual Arts” (Educatt, 2010); “L’artificio, l’inganno e la seduzione. Elementi meta teatrali e illusioni nel teatro italiano tra commedia e opera buffa” (Aracne, 2013) e *Il Rapimento della Sposa. Fughe e rapimenti a lieto fine nel teatro comico e musicale*, Guida edizioni (2018).

E-MAIL ADDRESS

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