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## LT/AR315 - Methods of Illusion: la Mise-en-scène from Drama to Fiction and Visual Arts

Prof. LAURA BELLONI

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

ILLUSION is a key word in the world of Art which points to the staging process, to the mechanisms of the communication process and to the ultimate relation between Life and Art, involving thus the opposite notions of truth and deception. Struggling upon the verge of conterminous realms, works of arts are both realistic illusions or illusory realities, they move in the worlds of the possible and the probable, in the realms of verisimilitude and of contingency. Many masterpieces about ILLUSION have been questioning the relationship between life and art, examining the power of imagination and how it works on stage and off stage to produce an 'illusion' of reality. Following the themes of 'illusion' and 'deception' the course will present different typologies of texts with very different outcomes: from the comic effects of illusion, to its most tragic or even horrifying consequences. In a continuous play between deceivers and deceived the theatre, fiction and films have presented memorable characters that embody the very essence of illusion, showing how its meaning has evolved in the past centuries. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Flaubert's *Emma Bovary*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, Stoker's *Dracula*, Kafka's *Gregor Samsa* and many others show the progressive interest towards the subconscious, towards the mechanisms of the human mind and its creative processes, linking the illusion ever more to the notion of reality and to the creative process: perspective, point of view, narrative modes, meaning giving process open the door to ways of distorting the truth, to an infinity of illusions refracting without end in a mirror, fragmenting reality in infinite images and reflections.

In order to study from within the methods of production of the Milanese artistic scene, the course will also include field trips to the workshops of the most famous Opera House in the world, Teatro alla Scala and visits from guest speakers representative of the Milanese stage and artistic life.

### COURSE CONTENTS

#### PART 1: THE COMIC AND THE TRAGIC

- Miguel de Cervantes *Don Quixote*
- Niccolò Machiavelli *The Mandrake Root*
- Giacomo Puccini *Gianni Schicchi*
- W.A. Mozart *Don Giovanni*
- Gustave Flaubert *Madame Bovary*
- Leo Tolstoy *Anna Karenina*

#### PART 2: FICTION AND FILMS

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



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- Illusion and Italian contemporary cinema

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

The student will be able to identify the peculiarities of the staging process as it evolves from drama to other forms of art and to contextualize texts and authors discussed in class. The course will consider the evolution of the theme of ILLUSION from the European Renaissance to the contemporary artistic scene.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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

- Attend class regularly. More than three absences will result in halving your grade for class participation.
- Keep up with the assigned readings, bring the text to class and participate in class discussion.
- Participate to a group project on a subject to be defined together with the teacher and to be presented shortly before the mid-term exam.
- Prepare an oral presentation or hand in, before the Final Exam, a 6-10 page paper on one texts (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 an explanation satisfactory will result in a diminished grade.

## CREDITS

6 ECTS

## GRADING

Participation (guest-speaker and field study)	25%
Group Project / Oral Presentation	20%
Mid-term	25%
Final Exams	30%

## 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.

Students will be required to read integrally at least one of the works treated in class.



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## INSTRUCTOR BIO

**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) and "L'artificio, l'inganno e la seduzione. Elementi metateatrali e illusioni nel teatro italiano tra commedia e opera buffa" (Aracne, 2013).

## E-MAIL ADDRESS

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