This interdisciplinary seminar course offers students the opportunity to study significant and influential literary and cinematic works and cultural phenomena in 20th-century Italy in their socio-historical contexts.

The focus is on the dynamics between tradition and modernization, and local and global forces for the Italian case. Key issues to be addressed include migration, war experience, identity politics, gender, hegemony and agency, the media and consumer society, and localism and globalization.

The course goal is for students to gain a good understanding of the workings of cultural production and consumption, and cultural representation and agency in 20th-century Italy through discussions of primary materials (literature, journalism, cinema, music, visual arts, new media, etc.) and cultural theory. To this end, students are encouraged to reflect on and to articulate the meaning of culture in the contexts of Italy and its relations with the wider world.

Topics to be Discussed:

The fine-di-secolo in Italy: Geography (Sicily and Turin)
Liberal Italy and WWI: Identity Crisis
Fascism: Modernity and Empire
WWII: War Crimes and Resistance
Neorealism: Narration and Nation
Reconstruction: Catholicism and the American Dream
The Economic Boom: Urbanization and Alienation, Domestic Migration
1968: Student Revolts and Factory Struggles
Social Theories and the Feminist Movement in the 1970s
Social Theories and the “Gay Liberation” Movement in the 1970s
The Cold War in Italy: Terrorism and Organized Crime
Italian Mafia in Cinema
The Crisis of the First Republic:
The Mani Pulite Movement and Transition, Albanian Refugees in Italy
The Berlusconi Era: Media Empire and the Bunga bunga
A Multicultural Italy? A Case Study: Northern African Immigration to Italy

No previous knowledge of Italian language and culture is required. All course readings are in English.