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

Prof. LAURA BELLONI

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will focus on the notion of mise-en-scène, that is, on the staging process and on how this concept can be extended from drama to other artistic fields, such as fiction and visual arts. From the use of play-within-the-play devices to the open artificiality of contemporary works, many masterpieces 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. The course will therefore focus on the themes of ‘illusion’ and ‘deception’, as metaphors of the staging process, examining alongside the motifs of artifice and seduction involved. While disguising, deceiving or seducing, characters such as Cervantes’ Don Quixote, Mozart’s Don Giovanni, Flaubert’s Emma Bovary or the dramatic and solitary mask of Pirandello’s Mattia Pascal express the mechanisms of production in a continuous play between deceivers and deceived. Their fictional lives mirror the basic steps involved in the staging process, and eventually come to question the very notion of identity and reputation. The course addresses the points of contact between the methodological practices of various disciplines (i.e. art history, dramaturgy, film studies, linguistics, and philosophy).

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, actors from one of the most important theatre in Milan, Il Piccolo Teatro as well as photographers and music video directors.

COURSE CONTENTS

PART 1: THE THEATRE - COMEDIES
- Miguel de Cervantes: from Don Quixote
- Machiavelli: "The Mandrake Root"
- Moliere: "The Imaginary Invalid"
- Puccini: Gianni Schicchi
- Mozart’s Don Giovanni

PART 2: FICTION - THE NOVEL
- Gustave Flaubert: from Madame Bovary
- Leo Tolstoy: Anna Karenina
- Luigi Pirandello: from The late Mattia Pascal
- 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 above all three significative periods: the European Renaissance, the Eighteen century, finally the Nineteenth century, from expressionism to the illusions of cinema.

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

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (guest-speaker and field study)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments (long paper)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Project / Oral Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Mid-term</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Final Exams</td>
<td>30%</td>
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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.
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 began teaching and she is currently teaching courses in Comparative Literature and Literature & Drama at the UCSC Department of International Relations. She also teaches 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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