ITAL 285-910
Black Italy: Transnational Identities and Narratives in Afro-Italian Literature

Summer Session I (online)
05/24/21 – 06/30/21
MW: 3:30 – 5:30 (Zoom meetings)
MW: 5:30 – 7:20 (Asynchronous component)

Instructor: Dr. Rossella Di Rosa
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Office hours: by appointment (Zoom)

Course Description

This course focuses on how the migration movements to Italy, mainly from the Maghreb and the Horn of Africa in the ’80s and ’90s contributed to change Italy’s status and image. From a country of emigration to other parts of the world, Italy became—as many historians, geographers, and scholars have observed—an immigration site, playing a pivotal role in the African diaspora. In the shadow of Italy’s colonialist heritage (a past that Italy still has not fully confronted), these phenomena of mass migration challenge, complicate, and develop the notion of Italian-ness and undermine the fixity of an Italian identity in favor of multicultural and transnational identities. This course focuses on several Black Italian artists, writers, filmmakers, and activists of Somali, Eritrean, Tunisian, Ethiopian, and Egyptian origins (e.g. migrants or children of immigrants who were born or raised in Italy and children of mixed-race unions) who contribute to broaden the definition of Italian-ness and to challenge its racial, social, and cultural boundaries.

Students will analyze short stories, novels, documentaries, songs, blogs, journal articles by Igiaba Scego, Cristina Ali Farah, Gabriella Ghermandi, Fred Kudjo Kuwornu, Amir Issaa, Amara Lakhous, Pap Khouma, and Kaha Mohamed Aden, among others. They describe their multicultural identities, their senses of belonging, their feelings for the place that is depriving them of foundational rights (such as citizenship or a legal status), their nostalgia for their homeland or the countries where their parents were born, their fights to find or create a social and literal space where being recognized not as foreigners or worse as “clandestini.” Their works offer an original, complex, and multilayered depiction of contemporary Italy and its social and cultural changes, where the African community is becoming larger and better represented.

Some questions this course will ask include: what are the historical and geographical components of blackness in Italy? How, if at all, have these phenomena of migration changed Italian identity? How do black Italians live within the context of anti-blackness? How do these Italian writers and artists relate to African American histories and experiences of diaspora? How can African Italian literature contribute to a deeper understanding of the Black diaspora in Europe and elsewhere? The course will pursue answers to these questions by exploring issues of race, color, gender, class, nationality, identity, citizenship, social justice in post-colonial Italy while drawing on related disciplines such as Geography, Mediterranean Studies, Diaspora Studies, Post-Colonialism, and Media and Cultural Studies.
Course taught in English. Course Material in English. Synchronous and asynchronous components. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Attendance
After 2 absences students will receive grade reductions; students who do not participate in class discussions and assignments will also experience grade reductions. For further information regarding attendance, consult the College webpage on Policies Governing Class Attendance: https://www.college.upenn.edu/attendance

Assignments
Students will contribute to daily/weekly written discussions, voice and video recordings on our Course Site. These will expand upon themes discussed in class and allow students the opportunity to be better prepared for future class meetings. They will also enhance the greater goal of developing and maintaining our Italian learning community outside the classroom and building and supporting connections to the Italian Studies Curriculum.

Students will research topics based on the course content and regularly present their work the class individually as well as in pairs and groups. They will also work on a final paper, presentation, and class project based on the topics that we study.

Class Preparation
Daily preparation of all assigned work is essential.

Participation
Active practice in class is vital toward student progress in this course and participation will be assessed regularly. The grade will be based on the ability and willingness to demonstrate that students have prepared and studied the content assigned and that they have completed and reflected upon tasks and content. Equally important is active engagement in class activities and discussions. Rubrics and Criteria for grading online participation will be available in Canvas.

Course Problem Notices (CPN)
Students will receive a CPN from the instructor notices difficulty in any aspect of performance in the course. Students may receive one for attendance, participation, homework, presentations, etc. The CPN is an opportunity for students and instructors to communicate clearly about performance in the course and for students to improve upon the points raised by the instructor.

Final Grade
Class participation & attendance 20%
Asynchronous assignments (forum discussions, videos, short response papers) 25%
Project 20%
Presentations 20%
Final Paper 15%

Grading Scale

| 99-100 | A+ |
| 88-89 | B+ |
| 79-80 | C+ |
Code of Academic Integrity
The Department of Romance Languages fully supports and adheres to all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) The work you submit in this class is expected to be your own. If you submit work that has been copied without attribution from some published or unpublished source including Internet, or that has been prepared by someone other than you, or that in any way misrepresents someone else’s work as you own, you will face severe discipline by the university. For more info consult:
University Code of academic Integrity: https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/
The Office of Student Conduct: https://www.osc.upenn.edu

The Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers a wide range of services including individual and group counseling and therapy, crisis intervention, structured workshops, psychological testing, medication reviews, and consultation. One or more of our services could be suitable for you. In the past few years, we have provided individual counseling services to over 2,900 Penn students per year. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). 133 South 36th Street, 2nd Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19104. Hours: 9am - 5pm, Monday – Friday. Emergencies: 215-349-5490 (ask for CAPS Clinician on Call). Tel: 215-898-7021. Fax:215-573-8966. Email: caps@pobox.upenn.edu http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps/

Gender Pronoun
This class community affirms people of all gender expressions and identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let your instructor and colleagues know. Feel free to correct others on your preferred gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your instructor.

Statement of Inclusivity
This class community strives to be an inclusive learning space, valuing all of our differences. We aim to be respectful of all members of this class, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientation, etc.

Director of Italian Language Program, Undergraduate Chair of Italian
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Primary Sources provided by the instructor
Aden, “Open Sesame.”
Ali Farah, Little Mother.
Ghermandi, Queen of Flowers and Pearls.
Khouma, I, The Elephant Seller.
Lakhous, Divorce Islamic Style.
Scego, Home is where I am; “Sausages.”
Scego, Adua.
Documentaries
Aden, “The fourth Road”
Kuwornu, 18 Ius Soli

Week 1
May 24: Introduction to each other and to the course; Heather Merrill’s *Black Spaces: African Diaspora in Italy* (Introduction and Terminology)
Igiaba Scego, “Home is where I am” (selections) and “Sausages”
Camilla Hawthorne, “In search of Black Italia”

May 26: Igiaba Scego, *Adua* (selections)
Celebrating Colonialism: Rome and its obelisks
Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Why Are So Many Fascist Monuments Still Standing in Italy?”

Week 2
May 31: Gabriella Ghermandi, *Queen of Flowers and Pearls* (selections)
Gregoria Manzin “Colonizing the Novel: Voice of Chorality in Ghermandi’s *Regina di fiori e di perle.*”
Moving beyond to redefine the Boundaries of Italian Literature.”

June 2: Ghermandi, “I remember” and “The Neighborhood Phone”
https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/contributor/gabriella-ghermandi

Week 3
Christopher Hogart, “Afro-Italian Literature: From Productive Collaborations to Individual Affirmations.”

The city of Asmara,“Africa’s ‘Little Rome,’ The Eritrean City Frozen in Time by War and Secrecy,”
The Guardian, 18 August 2015
Mia Fuller, “Italy’s Colonial Futures: Colonial Inertia and Postcolonial Capital in Asmara.”

Week 4
June 14: Amara Lakhous, *Divorce Islamic Style* (selections)
Barbara Spackman, “Italians DOC: Posing and Passing from Giovanni Finati to Amara Lakhous”
(section on Lakhous)

June 16: Amara Lakhous, *Divorce Islamic Style* (selections); Kaha Mohamed Aden, “Open Sesame”
Simone Brioni, et al. *The Horn of Africa and Italy. Colonial, Postcolonial and Transnational Cultural Encounters* (selections)
Aden’s “The fourth Road”  [https://www.opendbd.com/movies/the-fourth-road/](https://www.opendbd.com/movies/the-fourth-road/)

**Week 5**

**June 21:** Cristina Ali Farah, *Little Mother* (selections)
Alessandra Di Maio, “Transnational Minor Literature: Cristina Ali Farah’s Somali Italian Stories”

**June 23:** Cristina Ali Farah, *Little Mother* (selections)
Sandra Ponzanesi, Post-colonial Women’s Writing: A case study of Ribka Sibhat

**Week 6**

**June 28:** Fred Kudjo Kuwornu’s *18 Ius Soli*
Marie Orton, “Counter-Memory and Representations of Otherness: Three Documentaries by Fred Kudjo Kuwornu.”

**June 30:** Is Italy a racist country? Black Italians and the role of media: Open Letter by a group of Black Italian Women; The case of Cécile Kyenge
Black Lives Matter Italy: Rapper and Activist Amir Issaa “Non Respiro” (“I don’t breathe”); Ghali’ “Vossi Bop”
Clarissa Ciò, “Hip-Pop Italian Style: The Postcolonial Imagination of Second-Generation Authors in Italy”

Conclusions

**Suggested Readings and Documentaries**

- Part 1: Identity [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjSn-_7NVDo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjSn-_7NVDo)
- Part 2: Racism [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydOEAmvhQS8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydOEAmvhQS8)
- Part 3: Immigration [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qT7Ro3g5iw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qT7Ro3g5iw)

Carter, Donald Martin. “Blackness Over Europe: Meditations on Culture and Belonging”
Di Maio, Alessandra. “*Black Italia*: Contemporary Migrant Writers from Africa.”
Merill, Heather. “In Other Wor(l)ds: Situated Intersectionality in Italy.”
Zaccaria, Paolo. “The Mediterranean Sea: Open Port or Border Wall.”