

LT250 Realism, Naturalism, "Verismo", Magical Realism: The Metamorphosis of a Style

Seminar Leader: Laura Scuriatti

Course Times: Tue 15:15 - 16:45, Fri 13:30 - 15:00

Office Hours: Thursdays 13.30-15.00

Email: l.scuriatti@berlin.bard.edu

Course Description

Since its emergence, the novel has been seen in two completely divergent ways: as potentially deceitful, exercising dangerous power over readers, or, alternatively, as the only modern genre capable of representing the reality of the world and the human condition at large. The latter characterization, prevailing in the nineteenth century, was associated with a specific narrative style - realism - which almost came to function as a defining marker of the genre itself. The course aims at investigating the historical and cultural significance of the emergence of the novel as a genre, and of realism as a style that took on various forms during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. During the course, we will address different forms of realism, including French Naturalism, Italian "Verismo" and "Magical Realism" in South America. The labels will be investigated both as historical concepts and as sets of specific narrative techniques, and will be discussed on the basis of a few primary sources and theoretical texts. Through the analysis of narrative techniques, narrative structure, form and historical context, we reflect on the ideology of realism and the significance of its mimetic claims.

Week 1 – What is “Realism”?

Tuesday 30 January

Discussion of different excerpts of novels and of paintings

Friday 3 February

Readings for the session:

Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (excerpts: “Farinata and Cavalcante”)

Week 2 – Reality, realism and the novel I

Tuesday 7 February

Readings for the session:

Thomas Pavel, “Fiction and Imitation”

Friday 10 February

Readings for the session:

Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (excerpts: “Realism and the Novel Form” and “Realism and the Later Tradition: a Note”)

Week 3 – Reality, realism and the novel II

Tuesday 14 February

Readings for the session:

George Levine, “The Realistic Imagination”

Friday 17 February

Readings for the session:

György Lucács, “Realism in the Balance”

Weeks 4 and 5 – Jane Austen, *Emma*

Tuesday 21 February to Friday 3 March

Readings for the weeks:

Jane Austen, *Emma*

Week 6 – Realism and Naturalism

Tuesday 7 March

Readings for the session:
Émile Zola, “The Experimental Novel”

Thursday 9 March

Readings for the session:
Émile Zola, “Le Réalisme” and Gustave Flaubert, “On Realism”

Weeks 7-8 – Honoré de Balzac’s *Cousin Bette*

Tuesday 14 March to 24 March

Reading for the weeks:
Honoré de Balzac, *Cousin Bette*

Week 9 – Giovanni Verga and “Verismo”

Tuesday 28 March

Readings for the session:
Giovanni Verga, “Gramigna’s Mistress” and “Picturesque Lives”

Friday 31 March

Readings for the session:
Giovanni Verga, “Preface to *The House of the Medlar Tree*”

FRIDAY 31 MARCH: ESSAY DUE

Week 10 – Reality, Realism and the Novel III

Tuesday 4 April to Friday 7 April

Reading for the week:
Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (excerpts)

Spring Break

Week 11 – Reconsidering Realism as Style and Concept

Tuesday 11 April

Reading for the session:
Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect"

Friday 14 April

Reading for the session:
René Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Criticism"

Weeks 12-13 – Magical Realism I

Tuesday 18 April to Friday 28 April

Reading for the weeks:
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Week 14 – Magical Realism II

Tuesday 2 May

Readings for the session:
Alejo Carpentier, "On the Marvellous Real in America"
Luis Leal, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction"

Friday 5 May: FINAL EXAM

Week 15 – Conclusions

Tuesday 9 May

Readings for the session:
Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (excerpts)

Friday 12 May

Open session

Requirements

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness influences the class performance grade. More than two absences (that is absences from two

sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the grade for the course. Please consult the absence policy in the Student Handbook.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on the basis of **one written exam to be held in class, one essay, one response paper, one oral presentation** (details below), and **participation** during class.

Response papers are short pieces of writing in response to a reading assignment. At the beginning of the course each student will choose one text to respond to. Response papers should be sent to Laura Scuriatti per email before class starts on the day in which the chosen text is discussed.

Length: approx. 1000 words

Written exam

To be held on: Friday 5 May

Students will be asked to answer two questions in an essay-like format.

Essay

Length: approx. 3500 words

Due date: Friday 31 March, 23:59

Please submit the essay electronically to the server.

Oral presentation

Each student will be in charge of an **oral presentation**. For the oral presentation, students will bring to class one or more pages of written notes with questions and bullet-points intended to introduce the assigned reading and to facilitate the discussion. These notes will be handed to the instructor at the end of the class and will be part of the presentation grade.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All written work must be submitted electronically and on time. The network administrator will create a file for course essay submissions ahead of each deadline, and all essays are submitted electronically.

Please note that:

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Class performance: 20 %

Oral presentation: 20 %

Response paper: 10 %

Written exam: 25 %

Essay: 25%

Scheduled class times are available online under the relevant course heading:

<http://www.berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/spring-2017/>