



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM - FIRENZE

ITL 342 ITALIAN OPERA AS DRAMA FALL 2019-20

Prof. DANIELA COSTA

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Tues 5:30 PM -8:15 PM

Credits: 3 CSU semester units

Office hours: 1 hour before class (OR by appointment)

1 – COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course gives a broad overview of Italian operatic history. As a cultural form of art, opera has not only been influenced by its social and political environment but it has also contributed to the shaping of its cultural context reflecting - directly or in more subtle ways - through its characters, amorous intrigues, dramatic tension, mystery of sexuality and spectacle, the complexity and the ambiguity of the tastes of the public of each different era.

CSU GE category: C3, C4 or C ELECTIVE

Instructor's Note : The course gives a broad overview of Italian Operatic History, and through a interdisciplinary approach (musical, theatrical, literary, sociological and historical) will develop the knowledge of the ways in which opera and performance styles in opera have changed over time.

Tracing its origins back to the late sixteenth century 'Camerata' in Florence (which led to the first music dramas of Claudio Monteverdi), the course explores the history of Italian opera through a chronological selection of representative works from the 17th to the 20th centuries.

No prior musical background (technical) or historical knowledge of music is required. The topic is not geared only towards lovers of classical music and opera goers. It investigates the complexity and the ambiguity of women's voices and bodies, how some Italian operas and certain voices have the capacity to provoke admiration, rapture, identification even in the younger generation (the transposition of *Bohème* into the musical *Rent* and *Madam Butterfly* into *Miss Saigon* are typical, wonderful examples).

It illuminates also mysteries of sexuality, fandom, obsessions, history, performances, recordings, extravagant gestures, and divas. It explores the power of Italian opera to capture the fluidity of sexuality through voices that transcend the prescription of gender, reflecting at the same time the new American musicology's trend for new interdisciplinary approaches for the study of the human voice and opera theatre, and the interests of the young generations for phenomena such as the Drag Queens - whose origin has to be seen in the Castratos and *Primadonnas* roles en travesty- and for the transvestism-masquerading phenomena of the 21th century productions.

Other topics include: the technical issues of opera production, the role of singers and the relationship between the composer and the playwright or librettist, the heroine's role in opera examined as a reflection of the culture, religion, society, and literature over the centuries.

Classes include lectures, class discussions, excerpts of recorded material and videotapes.

Selected works include: Monteverdi's *Incoronazione di Poppea*, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Puccini's *Bohème*.

2 – LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To provide students with a deeper understanding of the musical and cultural aspects of opera. By the end of this course, students gain a thorough knowledge of the works of the most important composers of the history of Italian Opera. They will be able to place them in historical context and appreciate the aesthetics of their art and better enjoy the live productions of the Italian operas in the theatres of the world!

- LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Gain a thorough knowledge of the works of the most important composers of Italian opera. The vocal, theatrical, social, cultural, and psychological aspects of their operas as the operatic representation of women and gender roles. Students will be able to relate each work to the social/historical and vocal context of the composer's time and style. **Assessed in Mid-term and Final Exam.**
- Develop a sense of the evolution of Italian opera, and of the variations of theatrical cross-dressing through the ages. Students will be able to place different Italian operas on a chronological line and to investigate voices as sites of multiple meaning, including sonic and sexual ambiguity. **Assessed in Term Papers and Final Exam.**
- Acquire the ability to actively listen to operatic voices and **to enjoy operas in general!** Students will be able to recognize different styles of singing (such as different types of arias, recitatives, etc.) and to identify their composer. **Assessed in Listening and Written Quizzes.**
- Compare the librettos to their original literary sources and to identify their gender's symbols. Students will read at least a couple of literary sources and be able to relate them to a specific opera. Students will also acquire the ability to analyze the particular species of cross-cultural music-theatre, such as the international genre of opera-musical, as a syncretic merging of different theatrical arts. **Assessed in Term Papers and Final Exam.**
- Develop a vocabulary and communicative skills related to opera, theatre and vocalisms. **Assessed in Term Papers, Home Assignment, Oral Presentations, and class discussion.**

3 - GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

There are no prerequisites for this course.

The course will be taught in English.

The Italian verses of the operas will be read in translation.

Some technical terms in Italian (such as aria, recitativo, etc.) are essential for a basic understanding of opera.

A glossary will be provided.

Mandatory Opera Performance at the Teatro dell'Opera di Firenze on Tuesday, Nov. 26 (TO BE CONFIRMED)

- Individual study of the notes, the readings, the handouts etc. at home is required after every lecture, at least on a weekly basis.
- Students will be asked to research, read and study quite often at the School Library. Please make sure you are familiar with it (know how it works, opening and closing times, facilities, etc.) from the very start of the course.
- For the material you will need to type, please check the school computer facilities.
- A responsible and active class participation is expected at all times and activities
- At all times cell phones must be turned off
- Please also consider important notes on attendance, participation and assignments (as described in pertinent paragraphs).

4 - TEACHING METHOD

The course consists of lectures, class discussion, listening and video projections and readings, live performances. Interdisciplinary approach by studying Italian opera's literary sources, music-dramatic features and production practices.

5 - ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

"3 – Hour" Attendance Policy 2019-20 (for classes that meet once a week for 3 hours)

Attendance to all CSU courses is mandatory. One unexcused absence is allowed during the semester but more than one unexcused absence will lower your grade as follows (excused absences will be accepted for serious medical reasons or emergencies): **TWO** unexcused absences, lowers by 1.5 letter grades (i.e., B to C-); **THREE** unexcused absences, lowers by 3 letter grades (i.e., A to D). More than **THREE unexcused absences could result in failure of the course.**

In order not to disrupt the class, punctuality is required. Students are expected to be in class at the beginning of the class hour; any delay exceeding **five** minutes will be considered an absence.

Dates of mid-term and final exams **can not** be changed for individual travel plans or personal needs. Students should take note of the dates and hours of the midterm and final exams and plan their trips after the last exam. It is important to inform friends and relatives about these exam dates so that no tickets are purchased for you that will interfere with these exam dates. **Missing the midterm or the final exam could result in failure of the course.**

During the academic year photocopies and other material may be distributed in class by the instructors. Students who were not in class are responsible for getting the material from their classmates and making their own photocopies.

Optional class policies:

Use of computer in class is restricted to oral presentations, unless previously approved by the professor.

Eating is **NOT** allowed in class.

Cellular phones must be **turned off** or placed on **silent mode** during class.

Active participation to class discussion is requested.

6 - TESTS - ASSIGNMENTS

The mid-term exam is in 2 parts: I part 4 answer questions; II part 1 essay question. Final exam is 2 parts: I part 7 answer questions; II part 1 essay question.

7 - GRADES AND EXAMS

Your grade will be determined by the following assignments: (select and list the ones applicable to your course)

- 20% Attendance and participation
- 25% Mid-term written exam
- 25% Final written exam
- 25% Individual Research Paper
- 5% Attendance at cultural events organized by CSU

100-94	A
93-90	A-
89-88	B+
87-83	B
82-80	B-
79-77	C+
76-73	C
72-69	C-
68-67	D+

66-63	D
62-60	D-
59 and below	F

A Student performance has been outstanding and indicates an exceptional degree of academic achievement in meeting learning outcomes and course requirements

B Student performance has been at a high level and indicates solid academic achievement in meeting learning outcomes and course requirements

C Student performance has been adequate and indicates satisfactory academic achievement in meeting learning outcomes and course requirements

D Student performance has been less than adequate and indicates deficiencies in meeting the learning outcomes and/or course requirements

F Student performance has been unacceptable and indicates a failure to meet the learning outcomes and/or course requirements

The + and - symbols will be used for grading (except for A+). Specific information about the paper, exams and other projects will be given to you during the semester. Late work... ***insert your policy here....***

You must complete all work assigned in the course to pass the class

Failure to complete all work and exams assigned in the course could result in failure of the class.

Class Code of Conduct

Activities unrelated to the course (including private conversations, emailing, text messaging, reading, web surfing, etc.) are not permitted during class time. Please turn off or put all electronic devices on silent mode prior to the beginning of the class.

Safety

All students are expected to respect the safety and security policies in place at CSU Firenze. Students will be expected to follow the procedures outlined by CSU Firenze for the safe use of all spaces, including the upstairs. Refusal to respect these policies and procedures could lead to access restrictions or disciplinary actions.

Academic Dishonesty Will Not Be Tolerated.

Any form of plagiarism or cheating may result in a failing final grade in the course and might be reported to IP and your campus. You are better off spending your time studying for the class. If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please refer to the student handbook and catalog of your campus and also ask me and/ or the Resident Director for more information.

Students with Disabilities

Upon identifying yourself to the instructor and the university, students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluations. For more information, contact the Resident Director

Important: Exams

You must attend all exams and quizzes as scheduled. Make-up exams are given only for valid reasons. Please check your academic calendar **BEFORE** you book trips, flights and hotels.

Copyright and Privacy Laws

No portion of the texts, films, videos, and other material used in this course can be reproduced in any format including scanning, electronic downloading or sharing of files.

In addition, no portion of class lectures, discussions, and activities can be reproduced and used any format, including electronic, without the written consent of the instructor and/or guest speakers.

Changes- Important

Information contained in this syllabus, including the class calendar, other than that mandated by the University, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

General Course Requirements

You are responsible for the weekly readings, the information given to you in class, on handouts **and via email**. Part of your grade will be determined by regular attendance, participation in class discussions and active engagement in all activities of this course. ***Make sure to check your email on a regular basis for updates and additional information.***

8 - TEXT BOOK - FURTHER READINGS - SOURCES

Required reading:

Headington C., Westbrook R., Barfoot T.,: Opera. A History.

Grout D.J.: A Short History of Opera.

Librettos of: Le Nozze di Figaro, Il Barbiere di Siviglia, La Sonnambula, Don Pasquale, Rigoletto, La Bohème.

Glossary (distributed in class).

9 – COURSE FEES

Approx. 25 Euro for the 1 opera performance (see point 10)

10 – CLASS VISITS - TRIPS

An evening at the Opera (TEATRO dell'OPERA di FIRENZE) on Tue. Nov. 26, at 8,00 p.m. The ticket requires approx. 20 Euro Attendance is mandatory.

Since the performance is at the beginning of the semester, please bring the money on the second day of class (Tuesday, Nov. 12).

Further details on the show will be given in class.

11 - MATERIAL LIST

Each student should be provided with a CD player for personal use.

CDs, DVDs and librettos of operas are available at the CSU Library.

RECORD STORES:

LA FENICE, Via Santa Reparata 8 B (the largest selection of classical music in town)

ALBERTI Borgo San Lorenzo 45-49 red (on the first floor)

VIDEOSTORES:

ALBERTI Borgo San Lorenzo 45-49 red (on the first floor)

PUNTO VIDEO via Sant'Antonino 7 red (Operas in video to rent)

12 - FINAL EXAM - FINAL PAPER

For the format of the final exam see #6 above.

The final research paper has to focus on a topic regarding Italian opera chosen by the student and approved by the teacher and developed through serious researches, readings, analysis, comparisons, observations.

Guidelines for the paper will be distributed on the first day of class.

The subject of the research paper should be decided by the end of the third week.

The deadline for handing in the research paper is ..

The paper has to be typed and can be 2500/3000 words excluding bibliography. **Handwritten and e-mailed papers are not accepted.**

Three points will be deducted for each day of delay in handing in the final paper.

All papers should have a pertinent bibliography and properly footnoted.

Websites must be cited as references

Plagiarism will bring you F grade.

Grading system for the paper

C: A correct work of compilation, for which one main source has been used.

B: A personal work, based on different sources, demonstrating a critical approach

A: A researched work, critical and insightful.

List of suggested topics for research papers:

- Analysis of one opera libretto's adaptation from a literary source.
- Opera considered as a phenomenon of social custom.
- Verdi and Pavesi: the form and function of a collaboration in opera.
- The situation of operatic vocalism before Verdi.
- The librettists Illica and Giacosa and their work with Puccini on *Tosca* or *Madama Butterfly*.

12 – CLASS CALENDAR LESSONS

Please consider that the contents of individual classes may be changed throughout the course according to the class's progress, and that some visits -whenever available and pertinent- may be included within regular class time. Note : Additional reading assignments will be distributed in class. Information contained in this syllabus, including the class calendar, other than that mandated by the University, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

NOVEMBER

5th (1) Introduction to the course. Aesthetic principles and great features of Italian operatic art. The birth of opera. Florentine camerata. *Recitar cantando*: music and poetry; the recitative style. Opera in Mantova: Claudio Monteverdi. Opera goes to Venezia. Opening of the first public Opera House in Venezia. Impact of the rise of the European middle class on opera. I Castrati and the mystery of desire: their origins and recruitment, the Roman Church and the practice of castration. The ambiguous, sexless, and angelical voice of the Castrato. The Castrati on stage: Female voice and male authority, beginning of the disguise.

Musical samples from Caccini *Le Nuove Musiche*, Benedetto Ferrari della Tiorba, Claudio Monteverdi *La Favola di Orfeo* and *Incoronazione di Poppea* (videos and cds.)

Reading assignment Textbook: Headington pp. 20-26; 71-92.2

12th (2) Opera Seria and Opera Buffa. From Monteverdi to Mozart. Mozart's place in Italian Opera: introduction to *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Critical analysis (musical, historical, social, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart: original play by Pierre Beaumarchais, the libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte, analysis of the different types of arias; the great ensembles; the Finale as principal vehicle of musical ideas. Musical samples from Idomeneo, *Nozze di Figaro*, (videos and CDs.)

Reading assignment Textbook: Headington pp. 93-105; Grout pp. 274-286; Libretto).

NOTE: BRING 20 EURO TO CLASS TO PAY FOR OPERA TICKET (performance on Nov. 26)

19th (3) Continuing the critical analysis (musical, historical, social, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart. Operatic condition at the first half of the 19th Century in Italy. *Canto Fiorito* and *Coloritura*. Rise of the tenor voice. The form of the Aria bipartita in Rossini. Introduction to *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* by Rossini.

Musical samples from Maria Callas singing Rossini and other samples of Coloratura. (videos and cds.)

Reading assignment Textbook: Headington pp. 152-164; Grout pp. 342-356; Libretto).

NOV. 26th (4) NO CLASS TONIGHT - This class is replaced by the Opera Performance at the Teatro dell'Opera di Firenze, at 8,00 p.m.: Rigoletto by Giuseppe Verdi Attendance is Mandatory!

DECEMBER

3rd (5) Critical analysis (musical, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* by Rossini: original play by Pierre Beaumarchais, analysis of the of arias: *cavatina and cabaletta*, the *crescendo rossiniano* and the great ensembles.

Musical samples from different Videos and CDs of the opera.

Reading assignment Textbook: Headington pp. 171-176; Grout pp. 357-361; Libretto).

HANDING IN OF THE RESEARCH PAPER FORM

10th (6) Continuing the critical analysis (musical, historical, social, theatrical and poetical) of the opera // *Barbiere di Siviglia* by Rossini.

Introduction to Bellini and *La Sonnambula*. The syllabic style of vocal writing. The *Canto Declamato*.

Critical analysis (musical, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *La Sonnambula* by Bellini: the heroine's role examined as a reflection of the culture, religion, society, and literature of the time; the psychoanalytical approach and the notion of *unconsciousness*; the *scena and aria* combination.

Summing up and consolidation of the first part of course content.

Musical samples from different Videos and CDs of the opera.

17th (7) Written **MID-TERM EXAM**.

WINTER BREAK – NO CLASSES (Dec 20- Jan 6, 2020)

JANUARY

7th NO CLASS TODAY - Make-up class will be on Friday, Jan. 17, 9:30 – 12:15 in aula magna

14th (8) Focus on Italian Romanticism. The technical issues of opera productions. The role of singers and their collaboration with the composer. The most famous *mad-scene* from *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti as a symbol of ill-starred romantic love. Introduction to *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti.

Critical analysis (musical, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti: the passage from the comic-sentimental comedy to the comic drama; the new romantic dimension of the buffo character that subverted comedy. The new style of recitativo.

Musical samples from Lucia di Lammermoor's mad-scene, Don Pasquale, Nabucco, Rigoletto (videos and cds.)

Reading assignment Textbook: *Headington pp. 167-171; Grout pp. 356-357; Libretto*

FRIDAY, JAN. 17th (9) MAKE-UP CLASS, 9,30 to 12,15 in aula magna (for class cancelled on Jan. 7)

21st (10) Introduction to the ideals of the Risorgimento era. Milano and its intellectual and political life. Introduction to Verdi as a symbol of the voice of the Italians, his general musical characteristics and introduction to his opera *Rigoletto*.

Critical analysis (musical, social, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Rigoletto* by Verdi: the unprecedented dynamism of the opera; the elimination of mere convention maintaining the traditional priorities of Italian Opera; the five arias and the ensembles; the sense of musical continuity; the *parola scenica*.

Musical samples from different Videos and CDs of the opera.

Reading assignment Textbook: *Headington pp. 194-211; Grout pp. 361-374; Libretto*.

28th (11)) Continuing the critical analysis (musical, social, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi. **HANDING IN OF THE FINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

FEBRUARY

4th (12) Introduction to Realism in opera and conversational style. Introduction to Puccini, considered as the successor of Verdi: similarities and differences; the *Turn of the century*; comparison between the death scene of Traviata and that of Mimì; Puccini and *Bohème*. Critical analysis (musical, historical, theatrical and poetical) of the opera *Bohème* by Puccini: the original source by Henri Murger; the freely adaptation of the libretto; Mimì as the symbol of love and youth; the musical device of the *recurring themes*; death-scene of the puccinian eroine.

Summing-up and Consolidation of Course Content. Final review.

Musical samples from Traviata and Bohème (videos and cds).

Reading assignment Textbook: *Headington pp. 212-217, 220-228; Grout pp. 440-445; Libretto*). (Video and CDs)

10th – 13th (13) Written **FINAL EXAM**. Exact day and time to be announced.