



UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA

FRENCH LITERATURE

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Anno accademico	2020/21
CdS	HUMANITIES
Codice	973LL
CFU	9

Moduli	Settore/i	Tipo	Ore	Docente/i
LETTERATURA FRANCESE	L-LIN/03	LEZIONI	54	GIANNI IOTTI

Learning outcomes

Knowledge

The student will acquire knowledge about the tools and methods for the analysis of literary texts; s/he will also gain historical and literary knowledge as well as a detailed description of the cultural background in relation to the eighteenth-century French context.

Assessment criteria of knowledge

The verification of knowledge will take place through a final oral exam. The exam can be preceded by a written test.

Skills

At the end of the course the student will be able to analyze a literary text placing it in its historical and ideological context, to describe and evaluate the elements of the formal structure, to extract thematic elements from the text appropriately without distorting their meaning.

Assessment criteria of skills

The student will have to demonstrate to know how to describe a literary text in relation to the period studied in its formal aspects, to interpret its semantic elements and to place the text itself in the continuity of its historical, literary and rhetorical tradition.

Behaviors

The student will acquire appropriate skills of accuracy and precision in carrying out activities of comparison and analysis of the literary text in poetic detail.

Assessment criteria of behaviors

Students will be asked to intervene during the lessons during interpretation exercises.

Prerequisites

The student should possibly possess some minimal knowledge in the field of modern French literature as well as a linguistic competence which is sufficient for the reading of the works that will be carried out through editions with original text accompanied by Italian translations.

Teaching methods

The course will be carried out through lectures (with the help of slides, etc.) and students will be asked to interact with the professor at each moment through interventions and questions. Students will be able to meet regularly with the professor during receiving hours. Lessons will be held in Italian and the texts in French will be translated by the professor.

Syllabus

Corporality in the French novel of the Eighteenth Century from Montesquieu to Sade.

In the wake of the English novel (Defoe, Richardson, Fielding), in the early 18th Century, French fiction also turned towards the realistic representation of contemporary customs. From this perspective, as characters began to refer less to universal types and more to individuals with peculiar somatic features, physical description acquires increasing importance. The traditional modes and topics of portraiture are replaced by a form of representation characterized by the sustained attention on specific physical elements which are able to define a single character. After having been interpreted for centuries (even in the 17th Century) according to physiognomic typologies, the body became the object of *in vivo* observation, an admirable testimony of the complexities of Nature that Reason observes fascinated, an unavoidable referent embodying the subject's identity and his/her social relations. With the affirmation of empiricist and sensualist philosophies, a cognitive model that aims at



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reconnecting spiritual phenomena to physical ones imposes itself in European thought, consequently loading the body with new values to which the *philosophes* attach explicitly polemical meanings. In the literary field, the attention reserved to the characters' sensory experience bestows body description an indispensable narrative role: from an object of religious prejudice and idealistic repression, relegated to comic-farcical representations, the body became the object of description and study, a privileged source of the psychological and moral truths that the novel aims at communicating. Not only do novelists represent characters as individuals endowed with a body conceived as a factor influencing the economy of narrative, but - more generally - the tendency of the romance discourse to shift from the diegetic to the descriptive way reflects the growing attention that literature pays to the import of physical contingencies. Using a series of narrative texts ranging from Montesquieu to Sade, the techniques of representation of the body will be analyzed both on a thematic level (a body language organizing itself according to a rhetoric that is no longer that of traditional physiognomy) and on a stylistic level (the achievement of a primacy of the body through a repertoire of figures and new narrative strategies). The aim of the course is to provide an attempt to redefine 18th-century fiction by privileging the importance assumed by the different paradigms of the representation of the body.

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

5 books among the following (the reference to the Italian edition is a simple suggestion; any other integral edition is admitted):

- Montesquieu, *Lettres Persanes* (trad. it. *Lettere persiane*, Mondadori 2010)
- Crebillon, *Les Egarements du cœur et de l'esprit* (trad. it. *I turbamenti del cuore e dello spirito*, Herodote 1983);
- Voltaire, *Zadig - Candide - L'Ingénu* (trad. it. *Zadig, Candido, L'ingenuo*, Einaudi 2004)
- Marivaux, *Le Paysan parvenu* (trad. it. *Il villan rifatto*, Einaudi 1992) o *la Vie de Marianne*
- Prévost, *Manon Lescaut* (trad. it. *Manon Lescaut*, Garzanti 2006)
- Diderot, *La Religieuse* (trad. it. *La religiosa*, Marsilio 2002)
- Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, parti I-II (trad.it. *Giulia o la nuova Eloisa*, Rizzoli 1992)
- Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (trad.it. *Le relazioni pericolose*, Garzanti 2007)
- Casanova, *Mémoires* (trad. it. *Memorie scritte da lui medesimo*, Garzanti 2005)
- Sade, *Justine* (trad. it. *Justine*, Mondadori 2004);

For a historical and literary contextualization of the works we recommend the preliminary reading of the following book:

- G. Iotti (a cura di), *La civiltà letteraria francese del Settecento*, Laterza 2009.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Thorough knowledge of 3 essays among the following (alternative titles may be indicated during the lessons):

- E. Auerbach, *Mimesis. Il realismo nella letteratura occidentale*, cap. VI (« La cena interrotta »), cap. VIII (« All'hôtel de La Mole »), PBE Einaudi, vol. II, pp. 155-197; 220-268 ;
- G. Iotti - M.G. Porcelli (a cura di), *Il corpo e la sensibilità morale. Letteratura e teatro nella Francia e nell'Inghilterra del XVIII secolo*, Pacini 2011, pp. 29-44, 63-76, 115-139, 161-180, 221-233.
- Watt I. , *Le origini del romanzo del romanzo borghese*, Bompiani 1994.
- Lukacs G., *Teoria del romanzo*, SE 2015 (I ed. 1920).
- Moretti F. , *Il romanzo di formazione*, Einaudi 1981 e 2000.
- Orlando F. , *Illuminismo barocco e retorica freudiana*, Einaudi 1982 e 1997.
- Orlando F. , *Per una teoria freudiana della letteratura*, Einaudi 1973, 1987 e 1992.
- Pavel T. , *La pensée du roman*, Gallimard 2003 (trad. it. *Le vite del romanzo. Una storia*, Mimesis Edizioni, 2015).

* For those students who must acquire 12 credits, additional readings will be given, which will be the subject of exercises, upon indication of the professor.

Non-attending students info

Attendance is highly recommended and the inability to attend classes must be justified. For non-attending students, the exam program remains the same, but they will have to demonstrate that they have thoroughly prepared 5 (instead of 3) studies among those indicated in the Bibliography (secondary sources). Any changes to the program and the bibliographical load can be agreed with the teacher during office hours.

Assessment methods

The exam will have a final oral moment consisting of specific and general questions on the contents of the course and on the texts in the bibliography. Students may also be asked for comments on primary sources as well as on elements of literary history covered in class. In case it is possible to hold a written test, it will consist of some general questions about the course contents. Passing the written test, the contents of which will be discussed during the final interview, exempts the student from part of the oral exam.

Notes

Lessons will take place in the second semester (the timetable will be fixed later).

The Examination Committee will be formed by:

Chairman : Gianni Iotti

Members : Antonietta Sanna, Giulia Bullentini

Substitute Chairman: Antonietta Sanna

Substitute Members : Francesco Attruia, Lorella Sini

