

A spring syllabus for reading a group of 20th century Italian novels and memoirs, an essay and poetry in English translation

Online at: <https://ellenandjim.wordpress.com/2023/02/17/olli-at-au-20th-century-italian-memoir-and-novels-spring-2023-syllabus-online-class/>

For a course at the Oscher LifeLong Learning Institute at American University

Day: Tuesday afternoons, 1:45 to 3:15 pm, Feb 28-May 2

SG 690: 20th century Italian Memoirs and Novels

10 sessions online (location of building: 4801 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20016)

Dr Ellen Moody

Description of Course:

In this course, participants will read a group of Italian works with a view to understanding the culture, history, and politics of Italy. These works will include: Natalia Ginzburg's memoir, *The Family Lexicon* (1963) which takes place in Turin and Rome before, during, and after WWII; Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, a memoir of his time in exile in WWII (1947); Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* (1957), a historical novel set in Palermo during the risorgimento; Primo Levi's *The Periodic Table* (1975), a memoir of his using the periodic tables wittily; and a non-fiction essay by Iris Origo, "Biography: True and False" found in her *A Need to Testify*, poetry by Elsa Morante and [Noble-prize winner] Salvatore Quasimodo (texts taken from various books) and an excerpt from Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After*, all sent via attachment. The course will have as sub-themes Italian-Jewish writers, women's and life-writing and WW2.

Required Books:

Natalia Ginzburg's *Family Lexicon*, translated by Jenny McPhee, afterword by Peg Boyers. New York Review of Books Classics paperback. ISBN 978-59017-838-6
Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, translated by Frances Fenaye, introduction Mark Rotella. NY: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux. ISBN 978-0-374-53009-2
Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, translated by Archibald Colquhoun, introd. Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi, trans. Guido Walman. NY: Pantheon. ISBN 978-0-375-71479-5 (the Everyman edition with introduction by David Gilmour is an alternative)
Primo Levi's *The Periodic Table*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal. NY: Schocken Books. ISBN 0-8052-1041-5

Format: The class will be a mix of informal lecture and group discussion. The schedule is not cast in cement; if we find we need more or less sessions for any particular text or topic, we can be flexible.

Feb 28: 1st week: Introduction: Italian Literature and history. Ginzburg & women's writing. Begin *The Family Lexicon*

Mar 7: 2nd week: *The Family Lexicon*

Mar 14: 3rd week: Carlo Levi & WW2 & fascism. *Christ Stopped at Eboli*

Mar 21: 4th week: *Christ Stopped at Eboli*

Mar 28: 5th week: Iris Origo's essay on biography (life-writing), poetry by Elsa Morante, the historical novel

Apr 4: 6th week: The Risorgimento, Lampedusa. Begin *The Leopard*

Apr 11: 7th week: *The Leopard* and Lucino Visconti's film

Apr 18: 8th week: Holocaust Memoirs. An excerpt from Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz and After*. Primo Levi, Post-WW 2 Italy. Begin *The Periodic Table*

Apr 25: 9th week: *The Periodic Table*

May 2: 10th week: *The Periodic Table*. Poetry by Salvatore Quasimodo. Last thoughts. Some movies to watch.

Suggested supplementary reading and a remarkable French TV serial:

Boyers, Peg. *Hard Bread* [A memoir of the life and writing of Natalia Ginzburg through poetry]. University of Chicago Press, 2002.

A French Village. Developed by Frederic Krivine, Phillipe Triboit. Various writers and directors. 7 year French

serial set in occupied Vichy France, 1941-1946, with fast forward to 1975; 2002. Amazon prime, also to buy as DVD sets

Gilmour, David. *The Last Leopard: A Life of Giuseppe di Lampedusa*. NY: Pantheon, 1988.

Gordon, Robert S, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Primo Levi*. Cambridge, 2007.

Houlding, Elizabeth, "Auschwitz and After by Charlotte Delbo and Rose Lamont," *Women's Review of Books*, 13:2 (1995):1-3.

Jeannet, A.M., and G. Sanguinetti Katz, ed. *Natalia Ginzburg: A Voice of the Twentieth Century*. University of Toronto Press, 2000.

Moorehead, Caroline. *Iris Origo: Marchesa of Val d'Orcia: A Biography*. Boston: Godine, 2002

Quasimodo, Salvatore. *The selected Writings*, ed., introd., trans. Allen Mandelbaum. NY: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1960.

Tuck, Lily. *A Woman of Rome: A Life of Elsa Morante*. Harper Collins, 2008.

Weaver, William, ed. Introd. *Open City*. Begins with a long fine essay on literary and political life in Italy, especially in the north, and then is a book of biographies and excerpts of Italian Writers in Post-War Rome, includes material on Carlo Levi (among others)