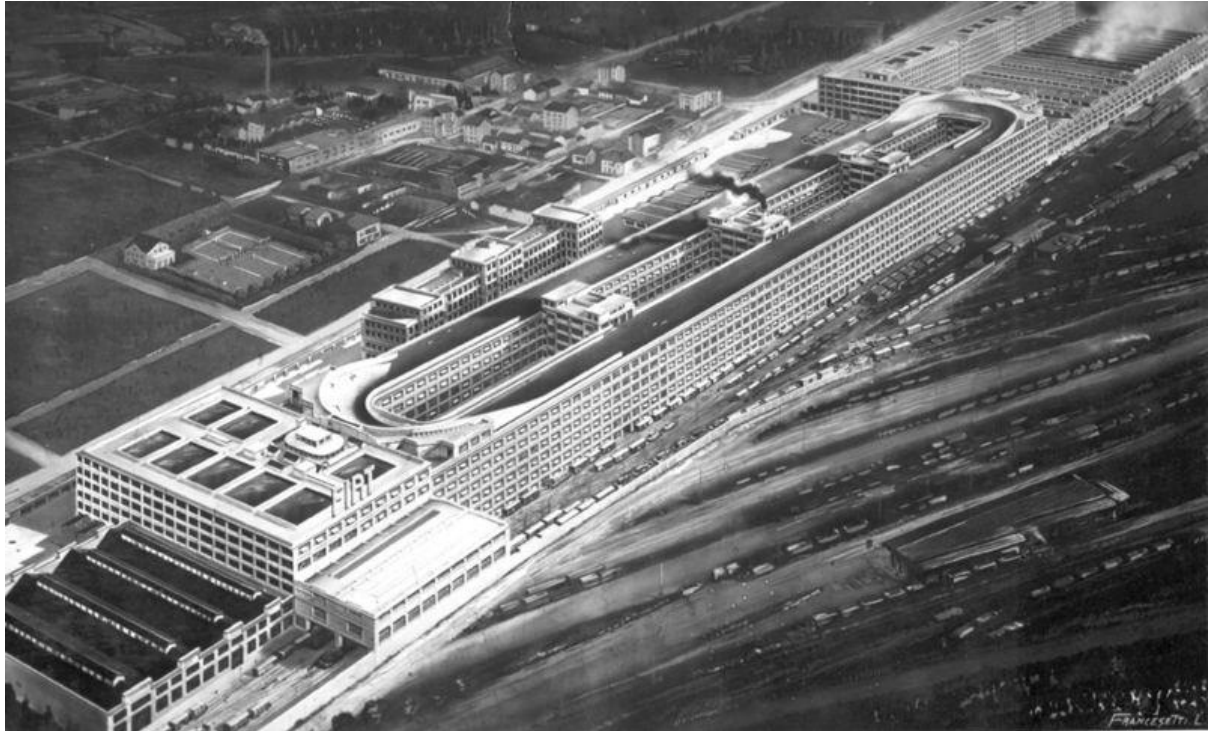


University of Manchester, academic year 2020-21

## ITAL20501 Aesthetics and Politics of Italian Fascism

Course Convenor: Francesca Billiani (Francesca.Billiani@manchester.ac.uk)



This course unit explores Italian history between 1922 and 1945, the period dominated by the rise and rule of Mussolini and Italian Fascism. It focuses on the historical, artistic and the cultural dimension of Fascism, by analysing the main developments of Fascist ideology and politics alongside the different cultural and aesthetic spaces which were created in Italy during the Fascist period. The Fascist era still elicits complex and conflicting responses, and generates contrasting interpretations and memories. Issues and debates that will be considered include the ideological coherence of Italian Fascism, the significance of the Cult of the Duce, and the degree of support enjoyed by the regime and the role the arts played in shaping the idea of totalitarianism.

The cultural and aesthetic dimensions of Fascism will be explored through a variety of different artefacts, ranging from visual, architectural, cinematic and political ones. Particular emphasis will be also placed on the role played by intellectual agents both in shaping and negotiating common aesthetic understanding among different communities and in articulating forms of resistance to dominant literary and cultural discourses. Key Italian intellectuals, such as Antonio Gramsci and their portrayal in the film *Il conformista* by Bernardo Bertolucci will be examined. References will be made particularly to recent critical approaches to cultural theory and historiography.

The course will also use digital resources for the storage of artistic information, such as the website The Dialectics of Modernity, see <http://dialecticsofmodernity.manchester.ac.uk>

The unit aims to provide students with:

- a sense of the chronology of Italian history during the period 1915-1945;
- a knowledge and understanding of the main forces shaping Italian history in this period;
- an awareness of key debates regarding Italian Fascism;
- a knowledge of Italian social and economic history as well as political history;
- an understanding of the significance and memory of the Fascist era for Italy and Italians after 1945.
- a detailed knowledge of key concepts of cultural theory;
- an insight into the aesthetic features of the selected artefacts

### Methods of Delivery and Assessment (NO KNOWLEDGE OF ITALIAN REQUIRED)

Delivery a mix of synchronous seminar-type sessions and asynchronous lecture-type sessions.

Assessment:

Building two thematic event timelines (one about historical events, one about artistic events)	Summative	With approximately 20 artefacts	25%
Building an virtual online exhibition (group work)	Summative	A total of 20 events per timeline	35%
Essay	Summative	2,000 words	40%

- Adamson, Walter L., *Avant-garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1993)
- Affron Matthew and Mark Antliff (eds), *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1997)
- Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities, Italy 1922-1945* (Berkeley-London, University of California Press, 2001)
- Emilio Gentile, *The sacralization of politics in fascist Italy* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, Harvard University Press, 1996)
- Francesca Billiani and Laura Pennacchietti, *Architecture and the Novel Under the Fascist Regime* (Palgrave, 2019), Open Access publication.
- Marla Stone, *The Patron State* (Princeton UP, 1998).
- Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta, *Fascist Spectacle: the Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997).

