

Italian 485: Italian American Cultural Studies

Dr. Johanna Rossi Wagner

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Office Hours: 043 Burrowes, Monday 2:30-4:30 & Thursday 11-1

Course description: More than 5 million Italians left Italy for America in the latter half of the 19th century through the post-war period. **IT485** looks at Italian American culture through its literary and cinematic representations to explore themes of identity, ethnicity and heritage. We will look at why Italians left their newly unified nation for the often exploitative and harsh conditions of industrial America, and the cultural impact of this massive exodus on the American culture through generations. We will pay particular attention to the social, political and economic factors that motivated the migration and how those elements shifted and changed over a century in a new American cultural landscape. Throughout the semester, we will discuss what it means to be an Italian American cultural artifact and how ethnic markers on literature, film and art function in the intellectual community.

Course Objectives:

- Recognize and identify the factors that characterize the difficult relationship between Northern and Southern Italy from 19thC to the early 20th C
- Trace the lasting consequences of the Southern Question on social movements within Italian American communities in the United States
- Identify the role of literature and film in the study of migrations, and discern central arguments from texts
- Strengthen critical writing and speaking skills in class discussions and written essays
- Interpret how gender and religion shape discussions of inclusion/exclusion in recent scholarship about Italian American ethnicity

Required texts/Films:

Puzio Mario, *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (1965)

Mazzucco, Melania, *Vita* (2006)

Covino, Peter, *Cut off the Ears of Winter* (2005)

Mann, Daniel, *The Rose Tattoo* (1955) – YouTube Rental (\$2.99)

Savoca, Nancy, *True Love* (1989) - Swank Streaming Service via Canvas

*Selected articles and film excerpts will be available on Canvas or engaged in class

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

20% Participation & Preparation: Your dedicated and continued participation is essential to this course. You are expected to have all materials thoroughly read. You are expected to take notes and come to class with questions, comments, points of interest and general thoughts about the material every class period. Fruitful discussion during class time is central to the success of this class, and, as such, you should be prepared to comment each period with thoughtful input. Excessive absence or tardiness minimal class input, disruption of class with cellphones, etc., will all negatively affect your final participation grade. I have a *no tech* policy in this class and you will need the text each day. **Essentially, you should plan on adding to the class discussion each class period to do well in this requirement.**

Attendance Policy: Each student is allowed two absences for minor illness, family events, etc. This is NOT an allowance for late submission of work. The student is responsible for the material covered on the day of the absence. Absences beyond this will incur 1% off the final grade for each absence or require documentation for one of the following: observance of a religious holy day, serious illness, university-sponsored activity, serious family emergency.

20% Quizzes Three scheduled in-class quizzes on the readings and discussions.

15% Creative Project: Each student will work on a creative engagement of Mario Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. Projects can include a creative text inspired by an original, video project, lesson or others. Project details will be established in a one-on-one meeting with me. Due February 15th. Guidelines on Canvas.

15% Writing Project on Melania Mazzucco's *Vita*. Students will write a three-page analytical paper on the novel. Due April 12th. Guidelines posted to Canvas.

15% Presentations: In pairs students will chose an example of a contemporary representation of Italian Americans in American popular media (film, television, videogames) and prepare a 20-minute class presentation that critically analyzes the choice. You will need to have a written bibliography of your scholarly sources to hand in. Guidelines on Canvas. Due Week 11 & 12.

15% Final Paper. Students will submit a 6-7 page critical paper that develops themes and questions from the course. It is *strongly* suggested that students meet with me to discuss. Due April 30th. Guidelines on Canvas.

GRADING SCALE:

A 95-100 A- 90-94.9 B+ 87.7-89.9 B 83.3-87.6 B- 80-83.2 C+ 75-79.9 C 70-74.5
D 60-69.9 F below 60

Penn State Learning – Free peer tutoring in Italian is available this semester at the Foreign Language Tutoring Center in 7 Sparks. Tutors for IT001, IT002 and IT003 are available without appointment Sunday through Thursday from 6-9pm. Texts and reference materials for Italian Language Courses are also kept on reserve at the tutoring center. **Services begin Tuesday, January 16;** visit <https://pennstatelearning.psu.edu/tutoring/french-and-italian> for more information.

Italian Resources at PSU – The Pattee Library has an extensive collection of Italian resources. Many good bilingual (English-Italian) and monolingual (Italian-Italian) dictionaries are located in the Reference Room (PC1640.A17 and following), and you can find numerous grammar books and other reference materials in the stacks (PC1412.M26 and following). At the Media and Music Center, on the 2nd floor of West Pattee, you will find Italian weekly magazines and many Italian DVDs. Browse the CAT by typing in “Italian Motion Pictures” to find titles of films. For additional information on Italian Resources at Penn State, please refer to the Canvas page for this course.

Academic Integrity – We support active collaboration with classmates, more proficient speakers, and tutors in completing and correcting homework, in practicing dialogues or other activities, or discussing the material of compositions. You may share notes and ideas with other students, however, you may not ask tutors, more proficient speakers or classmates to complete your own work, and **you may not use electronic translation programs**. In accordance with *PSU Senate Policy 49-20*, plagiarism, cheating, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor may lead to lowered course grades, a failing in the course, or more severe measures, depending on the gravity of the individual case according to the judgment of the Academic Integrity Committee. Visit <http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html> for further information. For other general university policies regarding Academic Code of Conduct, please read <http://www.sa.psu.edu/ja/conduct.shtml>.

Cell Phones: Cell phones are to be turned off and stored before class begins. Professors reserve the right to penalize a student's final grade for continued cell phone interruptions (including sending and receiving text messages).

Laptops/Tablet Computers: Your instructor will provide information on the use of these tools specific to his/her classroom. Any use of laptops or tablet computers unrelated to coursework is prohibited and professors reserve the right to penalize a student's final grade for disregarding this policy.

University Policy on Disabilities – Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for modifications or reasonable accommodations in this course, you **must** contact the Office for Disability Services, ODS, located at 116 Boucke Building at 1-814-863-1807 (V/TTY) and provide documentation. If the documentation supports the need for academic adjustments, ODS will provide a letter identifying appropriate academic adjustments. Please share this letter and discuss the adjustments with your instructor as early in the course as possible. Many disabilities are not readily noticeable and students are therefore encouraged to identify their needs early in the semester so timely adaptations can be made. Please note you must contact ODS and request academic adjustment letters at the beginning of *each* semester. For further information regarding ODS please visit their web site at www.equity.psu.edu/ods.

Counseling and Psychological services – Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural

and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation. For further information regarding CAPS please visit their web site at <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>.

Educational Equity/Report Bias – Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the [Report Bias webpage](#).

Provisional Calendar

Week #1

Jan 9 & 11 Introduction to course
Canvas: *Negotiating the Hyphen*
(DeLucia)

Week #2: 19th C Italy

Jan 16 Canvas: Verga
“War of the Saints,”
“Malaria”

Jan 18 Canvas: “Nedda”

Week #3: Disillusionment and Politics

Jan 23 In class viewing: Taviani, *Kaos*
“The Other Son”

Jan 25 *Kaos* & Canvas: Pernicone, “Carlo
Tresca”

Week #4: The Other Half

Jan 30 Canvas: Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*
Feb 1 In class screening: Scorsese,
Italian American, **Quiz #1**

Week #5: Pilgrimages

Feb 6 & 8 Mario Puzo, *The Fortunate Pilgrim*

Week #6: Hardships and Assimilation

Feb 13 Puzo
Feb 15 Presentation of projects,
Puzo Creative Project Due

Week #7: Prejudice, Labor & Gender

Feb 20 Canvas: Mary Bandiera “Sacco &
Vanzetti in the Arts”
Feb 22 Daniel Mann, *The Rose Tattoo*

Week #8: 1950s Italian Americana

Feb 27 *Rose Tattoo* Discussion
Mar 1 **Quiz #2**

SPRING BREAK

Week #9: Assimilated Ethnics

Mar 13 Nancy Savoca, *True Love*
Mar 15 Savoca discussion

Week #10: IT AM Cultural Representations

Mar 20 Presentations
Mar 22 Presentations

Week #11: IT AM Cultural Representations

Mar 27 Presentations
Mar 29 Presentations

Week #12: Recovering (from) the Past

Apr 3 Melania Mazzucco, *Vita*
Apr 5 *Vita*

Week #13: Hyphenated Identity

Apr 10 *Vita*
Apr 12 *Vita*,
Mazzucco Project due

Week #14: Poverty of Language

Apr 17 Peter Covino, *Cut off the Ears of Winter*
Apr 19 Covino

Week #15

Apr 24 **Quiz #3**
Apr 26 Final discussions, Paper presentations
***Final Paper due 4/30 by 11:59p**