

Italian 497

The Pennsylvania State University

Fall 2018

Growing Up in the Italian Renaissance: Family, School, Sport

Prof. Michele Rossi



Contacts and Information

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 2:30pm-3:30pm, and by appointment

Class Schedule: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:35pm-2:50pm (Sackett 110)

Course Description

Imagine growing up in the Italian Renaissance. How would that be different from our current lifestyle? This course will explore topics such as family, education (with special attention to the physical training), and ethical values through various literary genres and authors: the epistle (Francesco Petrarca), the treatise (Pier Paolo Vergerio, Leonardo Bruni, Leon Battista Alberti), the short story (Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*), the poetry (Laura Battiferri, Veronica Franco, Gaspara Stampa), and the comedy (Machiavelli). We will also watch and discuss a movie (*Wondrous Boccaccio* by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, 2015), and investigate the intersections between literature and art, with the final goal of illuminating the fascinating process of growing up during the Italian Renaissance.

The course will be taught in English.

Prerequisite: Junior standing or permission of instructor.

Major Readings:

1. Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters* (selections)
2. Vergerio, *Book on the Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth* (selections)
3. Bruni, *The Study of Literature* (complete)
4. Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence* (selections)
5. Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (selections)
6. Battiferri, *Poems* (selections)
7. Franco, *Poems in Terza Rima* and *Familiar Letters* (selections)
8. Stampa, *Poems* (selections)
9. Machiavelli, *The Mandrake Root* (complete)

All the readings (even secondary readings) will be posted on Canvas. You must read the assigned texts before class.

Movie:

1. *Wondrous Boccaccio* by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani (2015)

Course Requirements

- **Attendance (5%).** Class participation constitutes a substantial part of your final grade (see below), and you cannot participate in class unless you are present. **You are not permitted to miss class** with the exception of absences due to officially documented, university-approved curricular and extracurricular activities. 4 late arrivals (or two late arrivals of 15 minutes or more) are equivalent to one absence. **You are responsible for all material covered in class, regardless of whether you are present.** If you do miss class, you should get in touch with your instructor or a classmate as soon as possible to find out what assignments you missed. Absence from class is NOT an excuse for the late submission of work; it should be recognized that not all work can be “made-up” and that absences can affect student performance in a class. **If an evaluative event will be missed due to an unavoidable absence, you must**

contact your instructor as soon as the unavoidable absence is known to discuss ways to make up the work. An instructor might not consider an unavoidable absence legitimate if you do not contact the instructor beforehand. Students will be held responsible for using only *legitimate, unavoidable reasons* for requesting a make-up in the event of a missed class or evaluative event ([Policy 42-27](#)). Requests for missing class or an evaluative event due to reasons that are based on false claims may be considered violations of the policy on Academic Integrity ([Policy 49-20](#)). **You are required to provide verification from [University Health Services](#) or outside clinicians for significant prolonged illnesses or injuries resulting in absences from classes.**

Extended Absences: During your enrollment at Penn State, unforeseen challenges may arise. If you ever need to miss an extended amount of class in such a circumstance, please notify your professor so you can determine the best course of action to make up missed work. If your situation rises to a level of difficulty you cannot manage on your own with faculty support, reach out to the Student Care & Advocacy office by phone at (814-863-2020) or email them at StudentCare@psu.edu. Office hours are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- **Class Participation (20%)**. Class participation is vital in order to complete successfully this course, and you will be graded weekly. Highest grades are earned by students who come to class regularly (see the Attendance Policy above), participate actively, and are well prepared every time, having read the materials for each class. In class you will also work and present in pairs / small groups: it is essential that you provide an effective contribution and collaborate in a positive way with your classmates.
- **In-class Short Oral Presentation (10%)**. During the semester a few classes will be devoted to short oral presentations (about five minutes) by students. You will pick-up a topic of your interest, present it to the class, and be ready to answer questions/comments both from your classmates and the professor.
- **Quizzes (15%)**. There will be **two written quizzes** throughout the semester during class time. Guidelines will be provided.
- **Midterm Project (15%)**. Midterm projects are **due on Tuesday, October 2**. Detailed guidelines will be provided. You will have the possibility to decide your own project. Some options: a book review, a comment/description of art images connected to the topic of our class, a creative work (poem, short story), etc. Highest grades are earned by students who show originality and a deep analysis of the topics covered in the first part of our course.
- **In-class Final Oral Presentation (15%)**. The last two weeks of our class will be dedicated to individual class presentations. You will decide a topic with the professor and present it in class. Detailed guidelines will be provided.
- **Final Paper / Final Project (20%)**. Final papers/projects are **due on Thursday, November 15 (first draft) and Thursday, December 6 (final draft)**. You can write a classic research paper (minimum 5 pages, maximum 8, double space, in English, with detailed bibliography), or create your own final project (for example: film a video, create a graphic novel, create a work of art, etc.). In both cases you need to discuss ideas, topics, structure of the project, etc. with me. Your final paper/project needs to be well connected with the readings and the topics we cover and discuss in class. Highest grades are earned by students who submit original, well-finished, and meaningful final papers/projects.

Grading Scale (based on departmental guidelines)

There is **no curving or rounding** of the grades in this course

A: 95.0-100.0 **A-:** 90.0-94.9 **B+:** 87.7-89.9 **B:** 83.3-87.6 **B-:** 80.0-83.2

C+: 75.0-79.9 **C:** 70.0-74.9 **D:** 60.0-69.9 **F:** 0.0-59.9

There is no extra credit in this course

Late Work: Work that is handed in late automatically receives a lower grade.

Academic Integrity - 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. The professor reserves the right to penalize a student's final grade for continued cell phone interruptions (including sending and receiving text messages).

Laptops/Tablet Computers: Any use of laptops or tablet computers unrelated to coursework is prohibited and the professor reserves 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 reasonable academic adjustments, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services website at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>. In order to receive consideration for course accommodations, you must contact ODS and provide documentation (see the documentation guidelines at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/guidelines/documentation-guidelines>). 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. You must contact ODS and request academic adjustment letters at the beginning of each semester.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(note: this is a tentative schedule. You will find updated versions of this syllabus on Canvas)

WEEK 1

Tuesday, August 21: Course Introduction. What is the Renaissance? Examples of Renaissance art.

Thursday, August 23: Francesco Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters* (IV, 1: on climbing the Windy Mountain). **Readings:** 1) Diane Wolfthal, *The Bed in the Arnolfini Portrait*; 2) Petrarch 1

WEEK 2

Tuesday, August 28: Francesco Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters* (VII, 17, and XII, 3: on education).

Readings: Petrarch 2; Bartlett, *Petrarch*

Thursday, August 30: Francesco Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters* (XXII, 1: on marriage; XXIV, 13: conclusion of the book) **Reading:** Petrarch 3

WEEK 3

Tuesday, September 4: Pier Paolo Vergerio, *Book on the Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth*. Introduction and reflections about family. **Readings:** Vergerio 1; Bartlett, *Humanism and Education*

Thursday, September 6: Pier Paolo Vergerio, *Book on the Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth*. Physical education in the Italian Renaissance. **Reading:** Vergerio 2

WEEK 4

Tuesday, September 11: QUIZ 1. Female education in the Italian Renaissance (1). Leonardo Bruni, *The Study of Literature*. **Reading:** Bruni 1

Thursday, September 13: Female education in the Italian Renaissance (2). Leonardo Bruni, *The Study of Literature*. **Reading:** Bruni 2

WEEK 5

Tuesday, September 18: Physical education and female education in Leon Battista Alberti's *The Family in Renaissance Florence*. **Readings:** Alberti 1; Bartlett, *Humanism and Women*

Thursday, September 20: Marriage in Leon Battista Alberti's *The Family in Renaissance Florence*. **Readings:** Alberti 2; Bartlett, *Marriage and the family*

WEEK 6

Tuesday, September 25: SHORT PRESENTATIONS (1)

Thursday, September 27: SHORT PRESENTATIONS (2)

WEEK 7

Tuesday, October 2: MIDTERM PROJECT DUE. Familiar honor and passionate love: Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* IV, 1 (Ghismunda and Guiscardo). **Reading:** Boccaccio 1

Thursday, October 4: The misadventures of a noble lover: Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* V, 9 (Federigo degli Alberighi). **Reading:** Boccaccio 2

WEEK 8

Tuesday, October 9: Painters and ghosts in the Italian Renaissance: Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* VIII, 3 (Calandrino). **Reading:** Boccaccio 3

Thursday, October 11: Religion and desire: Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* IX, 2 (The abbess and the priest's pants), and X, 4 (Messer Gentil de' Carisendi and Monna Catalina). **Reading: Boccaccio 4**

WEEK 9

Tuesday, October 16: QUIZ 2. Movie: *Wondrous Boccaccio* by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani (2015). Introduction and vision of the first part.

Thursday, October 18: Movie: *Wondrous Boccaccio* by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani (2015). Vision of the second part and discussion.

WEEK 10

Tuesday, October 23: Italian Female Poets of the Renaissance (1): Laura Battiferri. **Reading: Battiferri Poems**

Thursday, October 25: Italian Female Poets of the Renaissance (2): Veronica Franco. **Readings: (1) Franco Introduction; (2) Franco Poems and Letters**

WEEK 11

Tuesday, October 30: Italian Female Poets of the Renaissance (3): Gaspara Stampa. **Reading: Stampa Poems**

Thursday, November 1: Italian Female Poets of the Renaissance (4): conclusions.

WEEK 12

Tuesday, November 6: Bibliography class

Thursday, November 8: Machiavelli's *The Mandrake Root*: song, prologue, act 1. **Reading: Machiavelli 1**

WEEK 13

Tuesday, November 13: Machiavelli's *The Mandrake Root*: acts 2 and 3. **Reading: Machiavelli 2**

Thursday, November 15: **FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE (FIRST DRAFT)**. Machiavelli's *The Mandrake*: acts 4 and 5. **Reading: Machiavelli 3**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

(no classes on Tuesday, November 20, and Thursday, November 21)

WEEK 14

Tuesday, November 26: Course Conclusions

Thursday, November 29: **FINAL ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

WEEK 15

Tuesday, December 4: **FINAL ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

Thursday, December 6: **FINAL ORAL PRESENTATIONS** and **FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE (FINAL DRAFT)**