

IT130 Italian Culture and Civilization¹

The Pennsylvania State University - Fall 2022

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Class Meetings: **Section 001:** Tuesday and Thursday, 10:35AM – 11:50AM; Hammond Building 214
 Section 002: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:05PM – 1:20PM; Hammond Building 214
 Section 003: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:05PM – 4:20PM; Hammond Building 214
Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom, weekdays, 24-hour notice required

This class will meet **in person**. Class sessions will not be offered remotely, and the instructor will not post recordings of the lessons. The course will be following [Penn State COVID-19 guidance for faculty and instructors](#).

Course Description and Goals

IT 130, Italian Culture and Civilization, examines Italian life from antiquity to the present. It is designated an International Cultures course, which aims to develop critical and analytical skills of undergraduate students through a global exploration of the historical, cultural, and political aspects of Italian society. Historical material will be studied to facilitate understanding of how Italian unity is imagined across time, and will emphasize the continuous process of fragmentation and negotiation of cultural, national, and political identity through the ages. The course traces, among other topics, the importance of the Roman Empire, the Catholic Church, the Renaissance, Italian Unification, Fascism, and contemporary immigration to Italy. Students will analyze primary texts – literature, visual art, essays and speeches, music, dramatic works, and film – to become familiar with significant aspects of Italian thought and culture. Consideration will be given to the various representative Italians such as Dante Alighieri, Leonardo Da Vinci, Niccolò Machiavelli, Galileo Galilei, and Vittorio De Sica; inclusion of lesser-known figures, such as Igiaba Scego and Amara Lakhous, will provide students with a wider range of voices that will enrich critical engagement with course themes. (Taught in English. No previous knowledge of Italian culture is expected.)

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- demonstrate a familiarity with the key moments, people, and products of Italian culture from antiquity to the present
- develop a critical appreciation of the influence of Italian culture on Western civilization
- recognize and articulate similarities and differences among international cultures
- identify and critically analyze diversity within Italian culture.²

Required Texts (available at bookstore)

- Conaway Bondanella, Julia and Mark Musa. Eds. *The Italian Renaissance Reader*. (Penguin Books, 1987)
- D'Epiro, Peter and Mary Desmond Pinkowish, *Sprezzatura: 50 Ways Italian Genius Shaped the World* (Anchor Books, 2001)
- Pirandello, Luigi. *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Trans. Eric Bentley. (Signet Classics, 1998; please be sure to purchase **this** version of the text.)
- Additional readings and resources will be made available on Canvas.
- **Note:** Please be sure you bring or have access to our texts during our class meetings.

Course Films (available through streaming on Canvas through Penn State Libraries)

Vittorio De Sica, *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) *Course film subject to change depending on course needs and availability of material.*

¹ My sincere thanks go to previous course instructors: much of the language, policies, and general structure of the course comes from syllabi for previous iterations of IT130.

² These course goals align with the following learning objectives: by the end of this course student will be able to describe, classify, compare, and analyze key moments, people, and products of Italian culture from antiquity to the present; identify, describe, explain, and analyze the influence of Italian culture on Western civilization; identify, describe, explain, and analyze similarities and differences among international cultures; identify, describe, explain, and analyze diversity within Italian culture.

Communication:

- The primary form of course communication will be through Penn State e-mail. **You are responsible for checking your university e-mail account (...@psu.edu) for any class correspondence.**
- Please contact me directly through webmail at mje13@psu.edu.
- I generally aim to respond to student emails within 24 hours, excluding weekends or holidays.

Note: The use of electronic devices for anything not related to the course activity is prohibited. Interfering with the learning of others will result in a request to leave the class session. After an initial written warning, a deduction will be made from the final grade for each occurrence of behavior that disrupts any aspect of our community's learning.

Course Requirements: Final grades for the course will be calculated according to the follow components:

5% - Discussion Questions

Starting in Week 2, students will submit 2 thoughtful discussion questions for each class meeting (excluding exam/presentation days). Questions are to be uploaded to Canvas no later than 11:00pm the night before the class period. You may choose two "free days" during the semester for which to skip submission, for which the grade of 0 will be dropped. See guidelines on Canvas on how to formulate useful discussion questions and evaluation criteria.

10% - Bi-Weekly Reflection Posts

Starting at the end of Week 2, students will submit bi-weekly (once every two weeks) reflections on Canvas relating to the readings, film/opera screenings, and class discussions. Students will reflect and provide evidence on how their preparation and in-class participation has helped them in their process of working toward course goals. See guidelines on Canvas for expectations and evaluation criteria.

20% - Online Quizzes

Starting in Week 2 students will complete online Canvas quizzes that cover course readings and material discussed during class meetings. Quizzes will be posted at 5:00pm on Friday and students will have until the following Friday at 5:00pm to complete the quiz. Questions will generally take a multiple choice or short response format.

- Students may use readings, class notes, and other appropriate resources.
- Quizzes, however, **will be timed** at 30 minutes. Students therefore must attend lectures and regularly prepare for class to complete these assessments in a satisfactory manner.
- No quizzes will be dropped.
- If necessary – in the case of inadequate preparation/participation – unannounced pop quizzes may be incorporated into this category.

30% - In-Class Exams

Exams will draw from lesson preparation (readings, films, etc.) and in-class learning. Exams may contain multiple choice, identification, short response, etc. Additionally, there will be one section in which students will complete a brief essay. This is **not** an open book test: course notes, texts, computers, etc., will **not** be permitted during the examination. There will be **no make-up exams**.

30% - Final Presentation (5% Preparation Assignments, 5% Presentation Proposal, 20% Presentation)

Students will complete an individual presentation (under an umbrella group topic) that will demonstrate critical analysis of a topic relating to course content. This presentation must show evidence of reading beyond the required course texts. The overarching goals of this project are to develop students' research skills and their ability to construct a coherent and inventive argument that analyzes an aspect of Italian culture. The topic of this individual presentation should not be something that we have directly covered in class, and students are encouraged to develop this project throughout the semester. First, students will identify a common umbrella topic with group members; then they will develop individual arguments in consultation with the instructor. More information will be posted on Canvas regarding the process, expectations, and evaluation of Final Presentations.

5% - In-Class Final Reflection

To be taken in class during our final class meeting. At the end of the semester, you will write a short essay that will require critical reflection on course content, including our discussions on contemporary Italy and immigration.

Students must have attended and participated in all class meetings to have the necessary critical tools to complete this reflection in a satisfactory manner. More information will be posted on Canvas regarding the expectations and evaluation of the In-Class Final Reflection.

Grading Scale (SIP Grading Scale; there will be no rounding of percentages at the end of the semester.)

A 100 – 95 A- 94.9 – 90

Student demonstrates an exemplary understanding of the material and concepts studied. Exemplary understanding is shown through depth of argument and analysis.

B+ 89.9 – 87.7 B 87.6 – 83.3 B- 83.2 – 80

Student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the material and concepts studied. A thorough understanding is shown through careful argument and clear analysis.

C+ 79.9 – 75 C 74.9 – 70

Student demonstrates a variable depth of understanding of the material and concepts studied. Argument and analysis are of a variable standard.

D 69.9 – 60

Student demonstrates a minimally acceptable depth of understanding of the material and concepts studied. Analysis and argument are weak.

F below 60

Student does not demonstrate an acceptable understanding of the material and concepts studied. There is little evidence of any depth of knowledge or analysis.

Grade Turnaround

I generally have a one-week turnaround time for feedback on shorter assignments. For larger assignments or assessments (such as In-Class Exams) the turnaround time for is typically two weeks (holiday breaks excluded).

Process for Grade Review

If students wish to request a grade review of a given assignment, they must complete each of the following steps:

- Wait 24 hours after receiving a grade to allow for a reasoned reaction.
- Send an email to the instructor requesting a meeting. This message must include a concise, well organized, and coherently written paragraph justifying the reason for the grade review request.
- Next steps will be determined at grade review meeting.
- **Important: Unless evidence of error or obvious oversight is presented, it is extremely unlikely a grade will be changed. Thus, the grade review process should not be abused as a means to “bump up” a grade without a solid, justifiable reason (error or obvious oversight).**

Class Attendance

(Faculty Senate Policy 42-27, abridged; [complete text](#).) **Regular class attendance is one of the most important ways that students learn and understand course materials.** It is a critical element of student success.

Accordingly, it is the policy of the University that class attendance is expected and that students should follow the attendance policy of the instructor, as outlined in the syllabus. **A student should attend every scheduled class and should be held responsible for all work covered in the courses taken.**

Class attendance is expected regardless of the format of the course and this expectation applies equally to students in face-to-face, online, and hybrid courses. Attendance in online courses goes beyond course login and is based on documentable participation in class activities, such as interacting with the instructor, interacting with enrolled students, completing assignments with specific due dates, and/or participate in online discussions on a regular basis. It is the student's responsibility to complete work early, or make alternate arrangements with the course instructor, if due dates or required work will be missed because of a University-approved absence as described in this policy.

Instructors should provide, within reason, the opportunity to make up work for students who miss class for regularly scheduled, University-approved curricular and extracurricular activities (such as Martin Luther King Day of Service, field trips, debate trips, choir trips, and athletic contests). In addition, instructors should provide, within reason, the opportunity to make up work for students who miss class for post-graduate, career-related interviews when there is no opportunity for students to re-schedule these opportunities (such as employment and graduate school final interviews.) In both cases, **students should inform instructors in advance and discuss the implications of any absence.** Missing class, even for a legitimate purpose, may mean that there is work that cannot be made up, hurting the student's grade in the class. Likewise, students should be prepared to provide documentation for participation in University-approved activities, as well as for career-related interviews, when requested by the instructor. Instructors also should provide, within reason, the opportunity to make up work for students who miss classes for other legitimate but unavoidable reasons. Legitimate, unavoidable reasons are those such as illness, injury, military service, family emergency, or religious observance. Again, it should be recognized that not all work can be "made-up" and that absences can affect student performance in a class. [...] Instructors can determine when irregular attendance negatively affects a student's scholastic achievement, and thus grade, in the course, even to the point of failure. If class absence constitutes a danger to the student's scholastic attainment, the instructor should make this fact known to the student. The student may appeal this decision to the head of the department in which the course is offered.

If an evaluative event will be missed due to an unavoidable absence, the student should contact the 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 the student does not contact the instructor before the evaluative event.** 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. (Conflicts with non-final examinations are covered the Policy 44-35.) **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).**

If a student becomes ill and needs to be away from class for an extended period of time, the student should contact the instructor so that a plan can be made to catch up with missed work.

In the event that the instructor of this class is unable to teach in person, due to illness or need to quarantine, classes will be met by a temporary instructor, delivered remotely and synchronously (via Zoom), or addressed through asynchronous assignments and activities. If classes are remote and synchronous, students can bring their own devices to the classroom during the scheduled class time to connect to class from that location.

Late Work

Late work is not accepted in this course. (In the *rare* cases where the instructor deems it appropriate to accept a late assignment, a *minimum* penalty of 10% will be assessed for each day past the assignment deadline.)

Late Online Quizzes will NOT be accepted and will receive a grade of 0. Any missed in-class assessments (In-Class Exams, Final Presentation, In-Class Reflection) will receive a grade of 0 and no make-ups will be given except for:

- Participation in an officially documented, university related activity (official documentation must be presented to instructor as soon as the activity is known to the student and **no less than 14 days in advance**)
- A grave personal illness or emergency, with instructor notified in advance of the assessment.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) plagiarizing, fabricating information, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. **Any idea which is not a student's own, whether paraphrased or quoted verbatim must give credit to the source from which it originated.** Should you have any questions as to what is acceptable, please speak to the instructor. **Suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to the appropriate university authorities.**

Academic Adjustments

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides [contact information for every Penn State campus](#). For further information, please visit the [Student Disability Resources website](#).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [See documentation guidelines](#). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Educational Equity and Reporting 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](#).

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.

[Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park \(CAPS\)](#): 814-863-0395
[Counseling and Psychological Services at Commonwealth Campuses](#)

Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400
Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

Note on course content: It is likely we will read about and discuss sensitive topics in this course. Literary and artistic works can often present us with beauty, and knowledge of history and exposure to diverse ideas can be illuminating. But the experience of widening our perspective can also be difficult and uncomfortable. It is possible that exposure to unfamiliar materials could potentially trigger a traumatic response. Please prepare yourselves for reading assignments/film screenings and class meetings accordingly (which might include skimming the preparation beforehand, or checking-in with the instructor). In order to fully meet the goals of this course, I do not typically provide content warnings for individual texts/assignments. Such warnings often condition our readings of texts, and I am not qualified to determine what content might be triggering. That said, I will do my best to proceed with common sense and advise students of particularly sensitive content. In all course interactions, it is expected that everyone (including myself) maintains an environment of respect, especially in discussions on potentially delicate topics. If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, please send an email request to meet with me during the first week of the semester.

Provisional Course Schedule

Some Important Dates:

Exam 1: To be taken on **Tuesday, October 4th** during class session

Exam 2: To be taken on **Tuesday, November 15th** during class session

In-Class Final Reflection: to be taken on **Thursday, December 8th** during class (final class meeting)

The instructor may change this provisional schedule as needed. Appropriate notice will be given if changes are made.

Readings or assignments in the “Preparation” column are to be completed **before the class meeting**. Please be sure you bring or have access to our texts during our meetings.

Week	Topic	Preparation
Which Italy?		
1	8/23 – Course Introduction: Defining Italy... Why Study Italy?	---
Ancient Rome - <i>Urbs Aeterna</i>		
	8/25 – Legendary Beginnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i>: Book I (until the star; Canvas) • Livy, <i>History of Rome</i> (from “Start Here” to the star; Canvas)
2	8/30 – Republic and Empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 2 (“The Roman Republic”) • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 3 (“Julius Caesar”)
	9/1 – Roman Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 5 (“Master Builders”) • Virtual Tour of Rome 320 AD (Link on Canvas)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-Weekly Reflection Post #1 due Sunday 9/4 by 11:59PM • Quiz #1 opens FRIDAY 9/2 at 5PM and is due on FRIDAY 9/9 by 5PM (start no later than 4:30PM) 		
Medieval Italy		
3	9/6 – Dante	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 14 (“Dante’s incomparable <i>Comedy</i>”) • Dante: <i>Inferno V</i> (Canvas)
	9/8 – Petrarch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 16 (“Petrarch”) • Petrarch: “The Ascent of Mt Ventoux,” pp. 14-21 in <i>The Italian Renaissance Reader</i>
4	9/13 – Boccaccio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 17 (“Boccaccio”) • Boccaccio: <i>Decameron</i>, selections from <i>The Italian Renaissance Reader</i> to be determined (TBD)
	9/15 – Transition Day – Introduction to the Renaissance	TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-Weekly Reflection Post #2 due Sunday 9/18 by 11:59PM • Quiz #2 opens Friday 9/16 at 5PM and is due on Friday 9/23 by 5PM (start no later than 4:30PM) 		

Week	Topic	Preparation
Renaissance Italy		
5	9/20 – Patrons of Renaissance Art: The Medici	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 19 (“Inventors of the Visual Language of the Renaissance”) • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 21 (“Cosimo and Lorenzo de Medici”)
	9/22 – Renaissance Art: Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 23 (“Leonardo da Vinci”) • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 26 (“Michelangelo”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for completing Final Presentation Guidelines Activity-Quiz: Monday 9/26 by 11PM 		
6	9/27 – Machiavelli’s Prince	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 25 (“Machiavelli”) • Machiavelli: <i>The Prince</i>, selections from <i>The Italian Renaissance Reader</i> (TBD)
	9/29 – Castiglione and the Perfect Courtier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 27 (“<i>Sprezzatura</i> and Castiglione’s concept of the gentleman”) • Castiglione, <i>The Book of the Courtier</i>, selections from <i>The Italian Renaissance Reader</i> (TBD)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for establishing Final Presentation Umbrella Groups: Friday 9/30 by 5PM • Bi-Weekly Reflection Post #3 due Sunday 10/2 by 11:59PM • Quiz #3 opens Friday 9/30 at 5PM and is due on Friday 10/7 by 5PM (start no later than 4:30PM) 		
7	10/4– In-Class Exam #1	Prepare for Exam #1
	10/6 – Transition Day – Reformation and Counter-Reformation; Galileo and Modern Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 33 (“Galileo”)
Early Modern Italy		
8	10/11 - Introduction to Opera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 32 (“Pari’s <i>Euridice</i>”) • <i>Sprezzatura</i>: Chapter 35 (“Claudio Monteverdi”)
	10/13 – Verdi’s <i>La Traviata</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must see Verdi’s <i>La Traviata</i> before class (see instructions on Canvas in the module for Week 8)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for submission of Final Presentation Umbrella Group Topic: Friday 10/14 by 5PM 		
Risorgimento and Unification		
9	10/18 – Revolutionary Impulses: The National Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Podcast: <i>The Invention of Italy</i>, Episode 2 (Canvas)
	10/20 – Making Italy: Cavour, Garibaldi, Mazzini	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speeches by Mazzini, Cavour, and Garibaldi (Canvas)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for submission of Presentation Bibliography and Preliminary Research Document: Friday 10/21 by 5PM • Bi-Weekly Reflection Post #4 due Sunday 10/23 by 11:59PM • Quiz #4 opens Friday 10/21 at 5PM and is due on Friday 10/28 by 5PM (start no later than 4:30PM). 		

Week	Topic	Preparation
Twentieth Century Italy		
<i>Avant-garde Italy</i>		
10	10/25 Pirandello and Modernism	• <i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i> , pp. 1-45
	10/27 Pirandello Continued; Futurism: <i>Speed, War, and The Senses</i>	• <i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i> , pp. 46-74 • “The Futurist Manifesto” (Canvas)
<i>Fascism, Resistance, and WWII</i>		
11	11/1 – The Rise of Fascism	• Watch Video: <i>The Story of Fascism in Europe</i> (Canvas)
	11/3 – World War II and the Italian Resistance	• Duggan, <i>A Concise History of Italy</i> , pp. 223-234: “Forging the Fascist Nation”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for submission of Presentation Proposal: Friday 11/4 by 5PM • Bi-Weekly Reflection Post #5 due Sunday 11/6 by 11:59PM • Quiz #5 opens Friday 11/4 at 5PM and is due on Friday 11/11 by 5PM (start no later than 4:30PM). 		
<i>Cinema: Italian Neorealism and its Legacy</i>		
12	11/8 Introduction to Italian Neorealism; De Sica’s <i>The Bicycle Thieves</i> .	• Bondanella, <i>Italian Cinema</i> (Canvas)
	11/10 De Sica’s <i>The Bicycle Thieves</i> (discussion and analysis); The Cinematic Legacy of Neorealism	• Must see <i>The Bicycle Thieves</i> before class (see instructions on Canvas in the module for Week 12)
Contemporary Italy		
13	11/15 – In-Class Exam #2	Prepare for Exam #2
	11/17 – One Final Presentation; Immigration and Identity (I)	• Igiaba Scego, <i>Sausages</i> (Canvas)
Thanksgiving Break – Buone Vacanze!		
14	11/29 – Final Presentations	---
	12/1 – Final Presentations	---
15	12/6 – Immigration and Identity (II)	• Amara Lakhous, <i>Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio</i> (Selections on Canvas)
	12/8 – Course Wrap-Up In-Class Final Reflection	Prepare for In-Class Final Reflection
Grazie mille!		
		