IT 260 Italian Culture: *Bella Figura, Sprezzatura, La Chiesa* and a Whole Lot More  
Spring 2017

[Lady with an Ermine, Leonardo Da Vinci (1489)]

**Instructor:** Dr. Alan R. Perry  
MWF 10:00 – 10:50 in 202 Science Center  
Office Hours: ______________________________________________________________

**Course Description:**

Italians, through their creative genius, art, fashion, language, food, and flair, seem to exude a grace, intrigue, and beauty that others seem to find irresistible. Think about it: Michelangelo, Galileo, Loren, Benigni, Ferrari, Barilla, Pavarotti, St. Francis, Montessori, and De Sica — all of these names represent the best in their fields, from simple piety to boisterous comedy. What qualities of Italian culture and thought do these names represent? What values do Italians themselves cherish in these national characters? This course aims to answer these questions and get at the heart of shared Italian cultural traits that have come down from Roman times to today. As such, we will organize our discussion around six primary themes: the legacy of Rome, the influence of Catholicism, the abiding allure of the Renaissance seen in ‘making a good impression’ and ‘effortless mastery;’ the figure of the mother and importance of family; Regionalism; and the abiding force of Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch.

Our inquiry will be interdisciplinary. We will study historical texts, literature and films that address Italian history, art, philosophy, lifestyles, and values, often focusing on key players who represent the best, worst, and most stereotypical notions associated with Italy. Students will come away with a solid appreciation of Italian history, an informed awareness of contemporary Italy, and an enriched ability to think critically about notions of their own culture, a central aspect of the course that directly relates to the learning goals of the Department of Italian Studies as a whole. Learning in this course helps refine a student’s ability to think, synthesize, argue, and write with better expression, eloquence and conviction — all aspects central to the greater mission of the Liberal Arts that Gettysburg College fully embraces.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Students will learn a broad sweep of Italian history, from the Roman era to present day.

2. Students will understand key cultural values Italians share; they will explore those factors that have shaped those values.

3. Students will learn about key Italian historical figures, from saints and poets, to film directors and fashion designers.
4. Students will improve their study skills and continue to learn how to have a successful undergraduate experience at Gettysburg College.

Course Texts:

- “This Week in Italy” Blog: [thisweekinitaly.com]
- Electronic and Hard Copy Reserve: Selected Readings and Chapters
- Handouts as determined

Books on Electronic Reserve or as Hard Copy (HC):


Course Films:

- Crialese, Emanuele. *Nuovomondo (Golden Door).* 2006.
- Zefferelli, Franco. *La traviata* by Giupepe Verdi [Video recording]
- Documentaries on “Mammoni/Mamma’s Boys,” Benito Mussolini, and *Excellent Cadavers*

I. Course requirements:

1. **Attendance:** Students must come to class on time and prepared to learn. You may miss three classes (a week’s equivalent) for any reason without being penalized. After the third absence for any reason, each class missed will drop your final grade by two points. If you are not in class, you cannot solidify your grasp of the material, and your absence will effect your grade. **Example:** If you miss six classes (three are thus considered unexcused) and have a 92 final grade point average, you will receive a grade of 86 (92-6 points for absence). Furthermore, please come to class consistently on time. Any late arrival of more than 5 minutes will be considered an absence. **Please make sure to sign the attendance sheet.** If you choose to text or use any form of electronic media during class, I will consider you absent.

2. **Exams:** You will have three (3) exams this semester on class discussions and lectures, reading assignments, and video screenings. The format of the exams will be identifications, short answers, multiple-choice, True/False. Please note these exam dates: Friday, 17 February; Friday, 24 March; Friday, 21 April. **Make-up exams will not be granted. The exams count for 55% of your grade (15% for each individual exam).**

3. **Reading Quizzes:** You will have three reading quizzes on *Brunelleschi’s Dome* (Monday, 13 February), *The Monster of Florence* (Friday, 31 March), and *Ciao America* (Friday, 24 April). They will be short answer and multiple choice. They will test how well you read these texts. **Make-up quizzes will not be granted. The quizzes account for 15% of your grade. (5% each individual reading quiz)**
4. **Unannounced Reading Quizzes:** You will have five (5) unannounced reading quizzes this semester. Their format will consist of five to ten multiple choice questions. If you are absent the day of an unannounced quiz, the next one will count twice. I will drop your lowest unannounced quiz grade, and they will count for a **total of 10% of your grade**. If you are taking this course from an off-site institution, this quiz will be made available to you electronically.

5. **“This Week in Italy” Reflections [Fourth Hour], Final Project:** Students in this course are responsible for examining an important online blog (thisweekinitaly.com) kept by Mr. Robert Nordvall, a former administrator at the College, who decided to move to Pistoia, Italy after retirement in 2002. He offers a unique perspective as an American who weekly surveys several aspects of Italian culture that range from sex and the family to immigrant workers and train transportation.

   As a **Final Project**, you will be responsible for writing an eight to ten page report on one cultural aspect examined over a three-year period.

   Each week, (save for a week when you have an exam), you will review and write a short reflection on the thoughts and observations you have on Mr. Nordvall’s blog and place it in a drop box on Moodle. These twelve exercises will take on average a little more than an hour of your time, and thus it will constitute the fourth hour of study for this course. These assignments will not be graded, unless you fail to submit them outright; however, they are crucial help you with your graded report. Please refer to the detailed information provided on these reflections and final paper.

   **The report is due the day and time of the final exam. It counts 10% of your grade.**

6. **Student Power Point Presentations:** During the last two and a half weeks of class, pairs of students will present a twelve to fifteen minute power point presentation on a topic that they have chosen and researched. Please see the attached description at the end of this syllabus for possible topics and precise instructions on how to conduct the presentation. **This presentation will count for 10% of your grade.**

7. **Syllabus:** Each week I will go over the syllabus of assignments and if need be make adjustments. Students are responsible for following all instructions and for turning in all assignments on time.

8. **Films:** You are required to screen ten (10) full-length features or documentaries that we will discuss in class. This visual material will be available on Moodle on the dates indicated in the below schedule. Discussion questions will also be provided on Moodle. Please come to class ready to discuss these questions in small groups. The DVDs and videos are also on reserve in Musselman library. Please be prepared to watch the film on an appropriate browser format. If you are a Mac user, please download Firefox. If you have difficulty in accessing the films, please go to Musselman to watch them. Also feel free to contact Ms. Nancy Bernardi (nbernard@gettysburg.edu; x7022) for technical problems.

9. **Honor Code:** I appreciate your individual and collective efforts to foster and encourage academic integrity. I expect each person to do his or her work alone. On the first page of your exams, I will ask you to sign the Honor Pledge: “I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid, nor have I witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.” If I suspect any impropriety, I will discuss the matter with you and may ask you for a rewrite. If I find you egregiously at fault, I will seek proper disciplinary action through the Honor Commission.

II. **Grading:** * The final grade will be composed according to the following percentages:

   **Exams:** 55%
   **Reading quizzes:** 15%
   **Unannounced quizzes:** 10%
   **Pair Presentation:** 10%
   **Final Report “This Week in Italy”:** 10%

   **Grading scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>94.0–99.5</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0–93.9</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87.7–89.9</td>
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<td>83.3–87.6</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0–83.2</td>
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   **Grading scale:**
Students are to be responsible also for the following:

1. View the films before the lesson when we will discuss the film.
2. Read all materials before class in the course packet and on reserve in the library.
3. Maintain a notebook exclusively for the course.
4. Be informed of all information given in class in case of an absence.
5. Diligently observe Mr. Nordvall’s blog and finish the fourth hour [FH] assignment.

III. Course Vision and Mission Statement:

I fully commit myself to provide you with insightful, enthusiastic and exceptional teaching focused on Italian history and culture. I will come to class prepared and eager to engage you with new material. I will grade fairly and promptly and do my best to help you master this subject.

*Gettysburg College encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.*
Weekly Syllabus
(IT 260) Italian Culture: Bella Figura, Sprezzatura, and Much, Much More
Spring 2017

Please complete readings prior to the day indicated of their discussion.
• *Asterisk denotes electronic reading found on Moodle
• (HC) = Hard copy. On reserve in Mussleman. Please photocopy pages.

I. Week One: Course Introduction and Italian Geography
   1. Monday, 23 January: Course introduction and objectives
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: thisweekinitaly.com: Read 15 different weeks (“numbers”, i.e., 518) from the years between 2008 - 2013. What strikes you about Mr. Nordvall’s narratives? What are a few aspects of Italian culture that he finds interesting and of note? Are there patterns that you detect in what topics he discusses? Place responses in the dropbox. Thank you.

   2. Wednesday, 25 January: Common Stereotypes of Italian Culture.
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Video Screening on Moodle: Nuovo Mondo.
        Place responses to Discussion Questions in the drop box on Moodle.

   3. Friday, 27 January: Discussion of Nuovo Mondo
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Sprezzatura, [Ch. 1-8, pp. 3–58.]

II. Week Two: Roman Heritage
   1. Monday, 30 January: The Profound Roman Heritage: Memory and Myth
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: *Petrarch [Poem: “Italia Mia”]
      ➢ *Leopardi: [Poem: “To Italy”]
      ➢ (HC) Holmes [Verdi, pp. 221-227]
      ➢ (HC) Header: [Short History, Garibaldi, pp. 153-197]
      ➢ Sprezzatura [Garibaldi, Ch. 42, pp. 301-309]

   2. Wednesday, 1 February: The idea of Italy; Selection from Nabucco
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: *Schnapp [A Primer of Italian Fascism, Ch. 5, pp. 46-71]
      ➢ Video Screening on Moodle: Mussolini

   3. Friday, 3 February: Mussolini: The promise of Rome.
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: (HC) Modern Italian Culture, [Allum, Percy, Ch. 5, pp. 97-113]
      ➢ (HC) Italian Cultural Studies [Pratt, Jeff, Ch. 7, pp. 129-143]

III. Week Three: Catholicism and Catholic Culture
   1. Monday, 6 February: The Catholic Presence
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Sprezzatura: [Ch. 9, Ch. 13, Ch. 18]

   2. Wednesday, 8 February: Saints Benedict, Aquinas, and Catherine
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis [Chs. 12-15, pp. 66-72]

   3. Friday, 10 February: St. Francis of Assisi
      ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Brunelleschi’s Dome
IV. Week Four: The Legacy of the Renaissance: Humanist Thought

   - [Prepare for next class]: Sprezzatura, [Petrarch, Ch. 16, pp. 112-119]
   - *Petrarch [“The Man of Letters,” pp. 120-123]
   - *Petrarch [Poem: 23 “In the Sweet Time of my First Age,” pp. 60-69]
   - (HC) Heeder [A Short History, “Humanism,” Ch. 4, pp. 103-111]

2. Wednesday, 15 February: Francesco Petrarca and Humanism
   - Study for Exam 1

3. Friday, 17 February: Exam 1

Prepare for next class
   - Sprezzatura, [Da Vinci, Ch. 23, pp. 161-172]
   - Sprezzatura, [Michelangelo, Ch. 26, pp. 190-200]
   - Sprezzatura, [The Medici, Ch. 21, pp. 147-155]

Recommended Supplemental Readings for more back-ground
   - (HC) Heeder, [A Short History, “The Renaissance,” pp. 96-125]
   - (HC) Holmes [Oxford Illustrated History of Italy, “Politics and Society,” Ch. 3, pp. 57-85]

V. Week Five: The Legacy of the Renaissance: Sprezzatura [I]

1. Monday, 20 February: Renaissance Masters:
   - Sprezzatura, [Castiglione, Ch. 27, pp. 201-208]
   - *Della Casa, Giovanni [“The Perfect Gentleman,” pp. 340-347]

2. Wednesday, 22 February: Baldassare Castiglione and the notion of the Perfect Gentleman
   - [Prepare for next class]: Sprezzatura, [Niccolò Macchiavelli Ch. 25, pp. 182-189]
   - Sprezzatura, [Galileo, Ch. 33, pp. 239-245]

   - [FH] Moodle: Reflections on “thisweekinitaly.com”

   - Video Screening: La Traviata

VI. Week Six: The Legacy of the Renaissance: Sprezzatura [II]

1. Monday, 27 February: Italian Opera Discussion: [La traviata]
   - [Prepare for next class]: Encyclopedia Britannica: www.search.eb.com/eb/article-215470]
2. Wednesday, 1 March: Giuseppe Verdi
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Video Screening: Life is Beautiful
   ➢ Discussion Questions on Life is Beautiful

3. Friday, 3 March: Discussion: La vita è bella [L’arte di arrangiarsi]
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Sprezzatura [Bernini, Ch. 36, pp. 259-265]

VII. Week Seven: The Legacy of the Renaissance: Bella Figura / Family

1. Monday, 6 March: The culture of spectacle
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Sprezzatura [Ferrari, Ch. 49 and Fashion, Ch. 50, pp. 353 – 363]
   ➢ (HC) Richards [The New Italians, “Il Bel paese,” Ch. 2, pp. 215-228]

2. Wednesday, 8 March: The culture of spectacle (II)
   ➢ (HC) Richards [The New Italians, “Radix Malorum est cupididatis,” Ch. 8, pp. 150-167]

3. Friday, 10 March: The Central Institution
   ➢ *Mangione: [Mount Allegro, Ch. 7, “The Unholy Three,” pp. 117-151]
   ➢ Sprezzatura: [Montessori, Ch. 44, pp. 319-325]

Spring Break: Friday, 10 March – Sunday, 19 March 2016

VIII. Week Eight: “Family Matters”

1. Monday, 20 March: Review Exercise
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: (HC) Richards [The New Italians, “Radix Malorum est cupididatis,” Ch. 8, pp. 150-167]

2. Wednesday, 22 March: The Heart of the Mater: Understanding “Mammoni/Momma’s Boys”
   ➢ Study for Exam 2

3. Friday, 24 March: Exam 2
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: (HC) Richards: [The New Italians, “Regionalism and Pasta Sauce,” Ch. 5, pp. 123-149
   ➢ (HC) Hearder [A Short History, “Risorgimento,” Ch. 7 pp. 198-224.]

IX. Week Nine: Strong Regional Identification: North v. South

1. Monday, 27 March: Campanilismo / “Bell Towerism”
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: (HC) Barzini [The Italians, Ch. 13, “The Problema del Mezzogiorno”, pp. 234-251
   ➢ *Quasimodo [Poem: “Lament for the South,” pp. 264-267]
   ➢ (HC) Dickie [Italian Cultural Studies, pp. 27-33]
2. Wednesday, 29 March: La questione meridionale / “The Southern Question”
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: The Monster of Florence.

3. Friday, 31 March: A Serial Killer Terrorizes Florence. Reading Quiz #2
   ➢ Video Screening: The Monster (Roberto Benigni) [Digitalized on Moodle]
   ➢ Discussion Questions for “Il mostro”

X. Week Ten: The mafia and the Culture of omertà

1. Monday, 3 April: Discussion of The Monster.
   ➢ *Barzini [The Italians, Ch. 14, “Sicily and the Mafia,” pp. 252-275]

2. Wednesday, 5 April: An Honorable Society? [BBC]
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Video Screening: Excellent Cadavers
   ➢ *Stille [Excellent Cadavers, “Prologue,” pp. 3-13; Ch. 1, pp. 14-32]

3. Friday, 7 April: Discussion of Excellent Cadavers
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: *Lo Pinto [Italian Cooking, “Nonni’s Kitchen,” pp. 1-30]

XI. Week Eleven: Food Culture

1. Monday, 10 April: The Sacrality of Italian Food
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Video Screening: The Story of Boys and Girls
   ➢ *Discussion Questions on The Story of Boys and Girls

2. Wednesday, 12 April: Discussion: La Storia di Ragazzi e Ragazze
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Sprezzatura, [Dante, Ch. 14, pp. 94-104]
   ➢ *Divine Comedy [Selections]
   ➢ *Guinicelli [“Of the Gentle Heart,” and others, pp. 28-29; pp. 28-32]
   ➢ Calvalcanti [“If I were Fire,” p. 70; “Fresh New Rose,” pp. 56-58]

3. Friday, 14 April: Discussion: No Class

XII. Week Twelve: The “Tre Colonne”: Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca

1. Monday, 17 April: Dante’s amazing Comedy
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Sprezzatura, [Boccaccio, Ch. 17, pp. 120-128]
   ➢ Sprezzatura, [Petrarch, Ch. 18, pp. 120-128]

2. Wednesday, 19 April: Boccaccio writes dirty and Petrarch writes sublime
   ➢ Study for Exam 3

3. Friday, 21 April: Exam 3
   ➢ [Prepare for next class]: Severgnini, Beppe. Ciao, America
   ➢ Discussion questions on Moodle [Dropbox]
XIII. Week Thirteen: Everyday Life

   **Reading Quiz #3.**  
   ✔ [Prepare for next class]: Video Screening: *Johnny Stecchino*  
   ✔ Discussion questions on Moodle [Dropbox]  
   ✔ Richards: “Everyone is in on the take”, Ch#, pp. ]

2. Wednesday, 26 April: Discussion: *Johnny Stecchino*. Guest speaker: Mrs. Brockavich  

3. Friday, 28 April: **Power Point Pair Presentations**  
   ✔ A.  
   ✔ B.  
   ✔ C. 

XIV. Week Fourteen: Student Pair Presentations

1. Monday, 1 May: **Power Point Pair Presentations**  
   ✔ A.  
   ✔ B.  
   ✔ C.  

2. Wednesday, 3 May: Presentations  
   ✔ A.  
   ✔ B.  
   ✔ C.  

3. Friday, 5 May: Wrap-up. Evaluations.  

   **Final Exam: This Week in Italy Paper. Due date and time of exam.**