



COURSE OPEN TO ALL INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
ATTENDING THE UNIVERSITY OF TRENTO  
A.Y. 2017/2018

**“Italy for Beginners. An Introduction to Italian Culture”**  
(30 hours – 6 ECTS)

**SYLLABUS**

1. Introduction.

Lecturer’s introduction and brief presentation of the course. Reciprocal introduction of the international students attending the course, who will speak about their different origins.

2. Historical overview about Italy.

Introduction to the main Italian historical events from the Roman time to the 21st century. Overview of the contemporary time with a special focus on the Italian political structure (First and Second Republic, bicameralism, etc.).

Screening of scenes from the movie *La grande Guerra* (Mario Monicelli, 1959).

3. Historical overview about Italy (second part)

Overview of the contemporary time with a special focus on the Italian political structure (First and Second Republic, bicameralism, etc.).

Reading of passages from *The Path to the Nest of Spiders* by Italo Calvino.

4. Travel around Italy

Overview of Italian geography observing Italy from GoogleMaps: main cities, administrative organization (regions, provinces), mountains, level grounds, coasts, lakes and rivers.

5. Geographic and linguistic elements: North, Centre, South.

Introduction to the various dialects and to the different forms of Italian language according to the region. Introduction of the linguistic issue: the delay with which Italian language became a spoken language.

6. Fundamentals of Italian Literature. The Novel of the 20th Century (first part)

We will continue our itinerary throughout Italian contemporary literature, this time exploring the 20<sup>th</sup>-novel. A general introduction will be followed by reading of passages taken by two of the novels mentioned in the Bibliography (Calvino, Morante).

7. Fundamentals of Italian Literature. The Novel of the 20th Century (second part)

We will continue our itinerary throughout Italian contemporary literature, this time exploring the 20<sup>th</sup>-novel. A general introduction will be followed by reading of passages taken by two of the novels mentioned in the Bibliography (Parise, Tomasi di Lampedusa).

8. Culture and popular culture.

Some references to the traditional popular heritage (proverbs, myths which have survived only in rural areas). Then the course will focus on Italian songwriting and Italian television from the ‘50s to the present, that is a mass culture no longer local.



9. Italians seen from the outside: between truth and stereotype.

Starting with the reference to the so called “commedia all’italiana”, we will try to deconstruct the most common stereotypes about Italy. We will also explore the role of the Catholic religion and the structure of the "typical" family (with reference to its dissolution, the de facto couples and the onward establishment of the homosexual family).

Screening of scenes from the movie *Divorzio all’italiana* (Pietro Germi, 1961).

10. Italians seen from Italy (*Gomorra* and surroundings).

Screening of a scene from the *Gomorra* movie by Matteo Garrone. Some references will be made to the Sky TV series with the same name. At that point an historical connection with the Southern question will be made.

11. Italian art and tradition, yesterday and today

The course will explain through historical references why Italy is one of the countries with more works of art in the world. The most important will be mentioned. Thanks to online resources we will then illustrate data and statistics showing the imbalance between cultural resources and their exploitation.

The second part of the lesson will be devoted to the cult of food, an example of popular tradition which has completely changed its status within Italian culture and self-representation (from folk festivals to the spread of slow food, farm-to-table etc.).

12. What’s *Made in Italy*?

Brief history of the success abroad of the "made in Italy" concept and of the ambiguity of the Italians’ self-perception. Showing of scenes from *La Dolce Vita* by Federico Fellini (1960) and then *The Great Beauty* by Paolo Sorrentino (2013).

In the second part of the lecture, a bit of history of football in Italy and its social role of bringing together during the 20th century will be the main topic. A few words on the ultras and sport cheer, as well as on the other popular sports in Italy (cycling, swimming, rugby).

13. Fortress Europe.

Barriers, walls, immigration: some data on the major migration flows towards Italy from the ‘90s to the present and on the resulting social tension.

14. Seminars.

Working in small groups, the students will expose their presentations on a chosen topic.

15. Seminars.

Working in small groups, the students will expose their presentations on a chosen topic.

Bibliography:

- John Foot, *Modern Italy*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.

-Peter Burke, Claire Dorey, Ellen Bianchini, *History of Italian Art*, a cura di, Polity, 1995 (un saggio a scelta).

- One among the following novels: Italo Calvino, *The Path to the Nest of Spiders*, Harper Perennial, 2000; Elsa Morante, *Arturo’s Island*, Zoland Books, 1998; Goffredo Parise *Abecedary*, Marlboro Press, 1998; Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*.

- (for non attending students only) Robert S. C. Gordon, *An Introduction to Twentieth Century Italian Literature: a Difficult Modernity*, Bristol Classical, 2005.