

# AP Italian Language and Culture

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## Course Overview and Learning Objectives

This class will be conducted exclusively in Italian; the course focuses on the meaningful study of six topical and cultural themes organized around essential questions and authentic materials. These thematic units serve as springboards for practice of interpersonal, interpretive and presentational skills within a variety of contextualized activities. The course guides the students to explore culture and events in both contemporary and historical settings, and to examine products and practices of the target culture with regard to their perspectives.

## Skills Assessment

### Spoken Interpretive/Interpersonal/Presentational Communication

Thematic vocabulary is presented and studied. Students watch a selected program on <Rai.it>, and discuss its content in pairs or in small groups. They are asked to summarize it, respond by expressing their own opinion and presenting their ideas to the class for an open discussion or debate. While listening, they are also asked to take notes.

In addition to watching authentic Italian news broadcasts and programs related to each theme studied, guests speakers are invited, and field trips to local events at Italian cultural institutions are organized. Museum tours at the Met conducted in Italian are also scheduled. At these social and cultural gatherings, students are encouraged to interact exclusively in the target language with heritage speakers, and later report back to class their personal observations on the cross-cultural communicative strategies employed, use of registers and the topics discussed.

Students are assigned both individual and group oral presentations in which they are required to use both the formal and the informal register. Presentations are student-centered. Those who are not presenting are required to take notes and be prepared to ask questions to their peers and therefore actively interact with them.

Class discussions are both structured (debates), and semi-structured (open conversations conducted in pairs or in small groups).

Students will watch selected Italian programs and films, listen to music and make their own recordings using iMovie . The longer recordings will provide the teacher the opportunity to analyze and evaluate more closely students' linguistic

competence, fluency, and accuracy, and give them individualized feedback.

### **Written Interpersonal/Interpretive/Presentational Communication**

Readings include newspaper and magazine articles available on the Internet, authentic literary texts (poems, novels, and short stories), or reading selections from their textbook. They practice personal, interpersonal, and presentational writing by keeping a journal or a blog, synthesizing, analyzing, and discussing articles, videos, films, songs, podcasts, or literary texts. Furthermore, students write compositions both in class and at home based on the current theme. They are required to use both the formal and informal register, and check the grammar and vocabulary for appropriate use and usage. Students do a peer review of their home compositions using process writing. The instructor collects their first draft, and asks them to write their final draft taking into consideration both their peers' and the teacher's feedback. Grammar is constantly reviewed and integrated in each thematic activity. Students take periodic (and graded) review grammar quizzes.

## **Resources and Course Materials**

### **I. Primary sources**

#### **Texts:**

Ammaniti, Niccolò. *Io e Te*, Einaudi, 2010.

Ammaniti, Niccolò. *Io non ho paura*, Einaudi, 2001.

Carofiglio, Gianrico. *Testimone inconsapevole*, Sellerio, 2004.

De Luca, Erri. "Naufragi", from *Opera sull'Acqua e Altre Poesie*, Einaudi, 2002.

Lakhous, Amara. *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a piazza Vittorio*, Dati, 2006.

Pavese, Cesare. *Lavorare Stanca*, Einaudi, 1943.

Saviano, Roberto. *Gomorra*, Mondadori, 2006.

Sereni, Clara. *Casalinghitudine*, Einaudi, 1987.

**Grammar textbook:** Tognozzi/Cavatorta. *Ponti: italiano terzo millennio*, Heinle Cengage Learning, 2009.

#### **Films:**

*Tutta Colpa della Musica*, dir.by Ricky Tognazzi, 2011

*Terraferma*, dir. by Emanuele Crialese, 2011

*Caterina va in città*, dir. by Paolo Virzì, 2007.

*Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti*, dir. by Marco Tulio Giordana, 2005.

*Io non ho paura*, dir. by Gabriele Salvatores, 2003.

*Ricordati di me*, dir. by Gabriele Muccino, 2003.

*Bianco e Nero*, dir. by Cristina Comencini, 2008.

*Gomorra*, dir. by Matteo Garrone, 2008.

*L'America*, dir. by Gianni Amelio, 1994.

*La Famiglia*, dir. by Ettore Scola, 1987.

*La cena per farli conoscere*, dir. by Pupi Avati, 2007.

*Pranzo di ferragosto*, dir. by Gianni Di Gregorio, 2008.

*La prima cosa bella*, dir. by Paolo Virzì, 2010.

The course provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their ability in Interpretive Communication to understand and synthesize information from a variety of authentic written and print resources.

**Web sites:**

Rai.it  
Italica.it  
Medita.it  
Ballarò.it  
Servizio Pubblico.it  
Report.it  
Anno Zero.it  
Che Tempo Che Fa.it

**Didactic Web sites:**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/italian/>  
<http://wordreference.com/>

**II. Secondary sources****Texts :**

Borra, Antonello, Cristina Pausini. *Italian Through Film, The Classics*. Yale University Press, 2007.

Perna, Concetta, *Non soltanto un baule*. Ed. Farinelli, 2005.

**Audiovisuals:**

Audio CD accompanying *Magari*, by A. De Giuli, C. Guastalla, C.M. Naddeo, Alma Ed., Firenze, 2008.

Videos accompanying *Rete!*, *Corso multimediale d'italiano\_per stranieri\_*, by Marco Mezzadri and P.E. Balboni, Ed. Guerra, 2011.

# Course Planner

## First Semester (Mid August-Mid December)

### Unit 1: Multiculturalism, National and Individual Identity.

**Theme:** Personal and Public Identities

#### Essential Questions:

Is there really a difference between a cultural generalization and a stereotype?

What is the difference between integration and assimilation?

How do migratory phenomena affect individual cultural identity?

#### Learning Objectives

Analyzing Italian society in relationship to its demographic changes and multilingualism. Discussing tolerance, integration and assimilation in a multicultural society and comparing it with students' own cultural backgrounds.

#### Activities

Watching a video on G2, the generation of children of immigrants; brainstorming about the recent changes in Italian demographics and its implications; making comparisons between Italy and the US both in terms of cultural and linguistic changes.

Watching films made by immigrant citizens living in Italy, or about immigration and cultural assimilation: *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti*, *L'America*, *Bianco e Nero*, followed by a written summary of the main theme and sub-themes, a film critique, and a group discussion.

Listening to songs, reading newspaper and magazine articles, such as Repubblica.it, LaStampa.it, IlCorrieredellaSera.it, Panorama.it, L'Espresso.it, and literary texts (i.e., Amara Lakhous, *Scontro di Civiltà per un ascensore a piazza Vittorio*; Gianrico Carofiglio, *Testimone inconsapevole*; "Naufragi" by Erri De Luca) and having students analyze, summarize, and comment. Each activity is preceded by a brainstorming session in which students are asked to share their opinions on the topic. After each activity, students are asked to summarize the main ideas in small groups, express their opinions, and compare Italy to the US.

## **Unit 2: Family Structures; Friendship and Love, Childhood and Adolescence; Customs and Ceremonies.**

**Theme:** Families & Communities, Contemporary Life, Beauty and Aesthetics

### **Essential Questions:**

Why do some friends stick by you even during the worst of times while others are quick at fleeing at the first sign of trouble?

What is the function of the family in our world?

What are the preoccupations, needs, and goals of young people?

### **Learning Objectives**

Understanding the contemporary Italian family structure, and how it has changed and evolved since the 70s; analyzing and discussing “mammismo” in terms of the current Italian economic uncertainties and the cultural and social concept of family bonding. Understanding the role of the family in today’s Italian society, and comparing it with that of the students. Understanding customs and ceremonies connected to the family, the role of Catholicism in Italian culture, and emerging family models.

### **Activities**

Students brainstorm by discussing and comparing Italian family structure to theirs. Students read and discuss holidays and celebrations by watching news, reading blogs, viewing films (*La famiglia*, by Ettore Scola, *Pranzo di ferragosto*, by Gianni de Gregorio, in comparison with *Caterina va in città* e *La prima cosa bella* by Paolo Virzì.)

Students read and discuss in small groups *Io e Te*, a short novel by Niccolò Ammaniti, which focuses on the themes of family relationships, adolescence, discomfort, separation, friendship, drug abuse, and death.

Other activities include writing a book review; writing an essay based on the themes developed in *Io e Te*; interviewing and writing a script of an Italian family living in their community, or found through a national association and comparing it with their own and to the family models portrayed in the films and texts viewed and analyzed. Reporting in small groups using an outline and opening the discussion to a Q&A by inviting an Italian guest in to class.

Students are assigned a research project on Giorgio Morandi, the Italian painter who lived all his life with his two sisters and his mother. A group project will be assigned in which students will read about the artist’s biography using Italian web sites and books, view his works and study both the literary and artistic influences on the artist. A comparison between Morandi, Giorgio de Chirico and other

contemporary artists whom the artist met will be strongly encouraged.

Field trip to a museum where Morandi's works are in view. A guided tour in Italian is scheduled. Students interact in Italian with the docent, and integrate what they have learned from this visit both in their essay and their PowerPoint presentation.

Students will read newspaper articles about "mammismo" and the central role family still plays in Italian society. They make comparisons with their own life and that of the artist Giorgio Morandi.

Discussions on how the structure of the Italian family has deeply changed will follow the reading of articles from current newspapers, ISTAT, and viewing programs from the RAI on alternative emerging family models, and the position of the Catholic Church towards these changes.

Whenever possible, native speakers will be invited to discuss with the students these changes in the Italian society. Examples of topics: how has the Italian family structure changed from a rural to an urban and industrial environment?

**Unit 3: The global economic crisis and its impact on the individual, the role of technology.**

**Theme:** Global Challenges, Science and Technology, Contemporary Life

**Essential Questions:**

What is the price of progress?

Why do people work?

How does technology impact our life?

**Learning Objectives**

Discussing what chances of overcoming the present global challenges Italy has, and what constitutes the core of "il Sistema Italia."

Learning about Italy's pro capita use and importing of electronic gadgets; the country with the highest percentage of cellular phones in Europe. Discuss the trend of the new generations in terms of technology.

Discovering the contributions made by Italian scientists, engineers, and architects.

Discussing the quality of life in our contemporary society. Students compare their quality of life with that of their Italian peers using social network.

## Activities

Students brainstorm about the major global challenges Italy (and the rest of the world) is facing. Students will conduct research on a global challenge of their choice using exclusively Italian Internet resources. They will then use what they have learned to prepare an oral presentation, a poster, and graphs. They must also compare the data between Italy, the EU, and the US.

Students interview an Italian person working in a government agency (i.e., the Italian Embassy) or for a private company exploring the interaction between work and technology, and report the findings in a class presentation or discussion.

Students conduct research online and present their findings and their own opinions in small groups.

Students research the technological advances Italy has made since WWII, and compare them to the US. They then discuss the impact of technology in their life and how technology can increase or lessen their chances of building their future.

Students debate advantages and disadvantages of technology in education, and in their daily life. Connect via Moodle to Italian high students, and compare the level of technological advancement in the respective school systems.

Students listen to an interview with Rita Levi Montalcini (on YouTube), Nobel Prize winner. Read her biography on <[www.Italica.rai.it](http://www.Italica.rai.it)>, and discuss her achievements as a young expatriate. Working in pairs, or small groups, students research other Italian or Italian American scientists who have made a special contribution to our society. They explore the theme of racial persecution and anti-Semitism under fascism. Students express their opinions and analyze the development of a cultural, linguistic, and personal identity.

Students watch a video on “il lavoro precario” and reading an article about “la fuga dei cervelli”<[http://www.repubblica.it/2009/11/sezioni/scuola\\_e\\_universita/servizi/celli-lettera/celli-lettera/celli-lettera.html](http://www.repubblica.it/2009/11/sezioni/scuola_e_universita/servizi/celli-lettera/celli-lettera/celli-lettera.html)>

Students read and discuss the importance of the Erasmus program for Italian students, and compare this program to similar opportunities available to American students. They also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each (cost, length of time, traveling, effectiveness in finding a job).

Students discuss “la fuga dei cervelli” (brain drain) in Italy, occurring especially among graduate students who cannot find a job. Students draw comparisons to similar phenomena in the US. The exchange of different points of view culminates in writing an essay in class, without the use of a dictionary.

## Second Semester (January-May)

### Unit 4: Music, Film, Architecture, and Art.

**Theme:** Beauty and Aesthetics

#### Essential Questions:

- What role does beauty play in our life?
- How has the definition and perception of beauty changed over time and across cultures?
- Why does music transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries?

#### Learning Objectives

Learning about Italian cultural and artistic heritage and its influence on American culture and in the world. Exploring music, architecture, and film.

#### Activities

Students visit a local museum that has an Italian collection or the teacher could contact the museum's education department for a videoconference with an Italian speaking docent who can provide highlights of the Italian collection, featuring Leonardo da Vinci's "Ginerva Benci." Students listen actively and ask questions. Later, they prepare both a written and oral presentation of what they have learned.

Students are assigned a group research project on an Italian artist, choosing from a visual artist, an architect, a musician, and a film director. Each week the focus will be on a particular artist and his or her works. Students prepare Power Point presentations. Biographies of the artists will be presented and discussed in class.

Students watch "Passpartout" by Philip Daverio on Rai.it., or Italice.rai.it. Note taking, summaries, and presentations of the content will follow. Observations on linguistic differences between the speakers will be noted, and different regional dialects examined and discussed.

Film: students prepare PowerPoint presentations on the history of Italian film. Discussions and oral presentations about major Italian cinematic genres and thematics (1947-present), focusing on neorealism, Italian spaghetti westerns, *commedia all'italiana*, and individual directors.

The novel *Io non ho paura* by Niccolò Ammaniti is assigned, and the film on which

it was based will be viewed. Students will draw a comparison between the novel and the film. Reviews will be read, and once again comparisons and contrasts will be elicited. Students will also discuss stylistic and other differences and similarities between Ammaniti's previous short novel that they have read and this one. They will express their preferences, and discuss in small groups the main themes presented in both books, focusing on the role of the family, adolescence, the Camorra, the "questione meridionale" and its economic and political roots, and will branch out to a larger, worldwide discussion of the "Southern regions" of the globe; how they view diversity, marginalization, poverty, violence, and isolation. Students will read an excerpt of Antonio Gramsci's "La questione meridionale" and discuss the economic and social reality of Southern Italy today. Additional readings and films: excerpts from *Gomorra*, written by Roberto Saviano, and viewing the homonymous film by Matteo Garrone.

Students compare the film *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* to *Io non ho paura*. The protagonist is a child in both films. Students compare and contrast the two films in terms of their content, and their symbolic meaning. A blog is assigned. Students start a thread in which they express their opinions and analyze the main themes in both films.

Students do a research project on the history of Italian music. They present either a musician or a singer using PowerPoint. They will also discuss their personal preferences, and the role music plays in their life.

## **Unit 5: Science and Technology.**

**Theme:** Science and Technology; Contemporary Life

**Essential Questions:**

- What is healthful living?
  
- How do you manage stress?
  
- What role does food play in your life?

### **Learning Objectives**

Learning about Italian lifestyle: how do Italians spend their free time? How do they relax? Which pastimes do they like? How important is exercising and eating a balanced diet for them? How much time do Italians devote to eating and exercising versus doing cultural activities?

What is the "Slow Food" movement?

How important are certain typical Italian products for the Italian economy?

How has the economic crisis Italy is facing affected the way Italians eat or try to keep a healthy lifestyle?

**Activities** Students read Clara Sereni's *Casalinghitudine* and discuss the culinary metaphors the author uses in her book to present the main themes of the short stories in the book. They keep a journal about their eating habits, and the meaning

food has in their lives, while commenting on the text.

Students watch: Pupi Avati's *Una Cena per fargli conoscere*. Compare this film to *La famiglia*, previously watched, and compare/contrast the different settings and lifestyles represented. Compare this film to *Caterina va in città*. Discuss in small groups and report to the class their observations on the family rituals represented in these films and the differences between the Italian and American experience and points of view.

Students do a research project on the Web on the "Slow Food" movement and discuss their findings in small groups. They write a letter to Carlo Petrini, the founder of the "Slow Food" movement in Italy, addressing the major issues related to food, healthy eating and living, quality of life, and making comparisons between the Italian and the American cultures.

Students produce an advertising campaign in favor of "Slow Food" while examining the specific language used in marketing.

Students read articles on how stress impacts our life, its causes, and discuss their findings, comparing. They research online how technology can either relieve or increase stress.

Students conduct a series of three formal oral and written interviews with representatives of the Italian community and present their findings to the class.

Students do a PowerPoint presentation on Italian products "DOC" exported all over the world, highlighting the importance of protecting the "made in Italy" label for economic reasons.

## **Unit 6: Education and Career.**

**Theme:** Contemporary Life

**Essential questions:**

- How does education affect your future?

- What are the expectations young people have regarding their future?
- How do you define success in life?

### Learning Objectives

Students will learn about the structure of the Italian school system, in comparison to their own, and the difficult reality of facing the job market both in Italy and the US, in the current global economic crisis.

### Activities

Guest speakers will be invited to discuss their educational background and their present employment. Guests can be both Italian students from the same high school or from a local college.

Students watch TV talk shows in Italian, such as “Ballarò” and “Servizio Pubblico” to gain deeper understanding of the economic challenges young people are facing in Italy at the moment.

Students read articles on the “riforma della scuola”, and the Italian school system. Students discuss in small groups the American and the Italian school systems, and finally write an essay on how education can be improved in this country. Comparisons are drawn between this context and the previously discussed topics of the structure of the family, “i mammoni”, and immigration.

Students write a formal résumé. They then work with a partner to prepare a mock formal job interview, which they will record as a video. Later, students could imagine their life on the job and write an interactive blog on their job experience.

Students watch *Ricordati di me* by Gabriele Muccino and discuss the family model represented in the film, the existential crisis of the young protagonist in the film, and the professional aspirations of his sister and their mother. Discuss the role of women in current Italian society from the Italian, the European and the American perspectives. Students do a research project on the presence of women both in the work force and in education and draw comparisons. In a debate, students are asked to present their different points of view, and to argue them.

Working in small groups, students compare the themes of *Caterina va in città* with those presented in *Ricordati di me*, and express their opinions on the Italian family models depicted in the two films, and whether or not they believe they are realistic. To conclude this activity, a longer essay is assigned on this topic.