**AP® Italian Language and Culture**  
**Syllabus 1**

**Course Overview**

The AP® Italian Language and Culture course is designed to refine students’ communicative skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking the Italian language. It presents the culture of the Italian people through the study of literary works and extracts, journalistic selections, media, and cinematic productions. I use Italian almost exclusively in class, and students are expected to be able to convey ideas, judgments, and opinions in the target language as well. Students are also expected to be able to filter their perceptions through the cultural lens of the Italian people. The primary textbook for language and grammar is *Parliamo italiano* by Branciforte and Grassi (Houghton Mifflin, 1998), but additional texts are used for literary excerpts (for example, *Pinocchio, Don Camillo*, books by Giovanni Guareschi, opera libretti, and *La Divina Commedia*). [C3] [C4] [C6, C10]

**Course Planner**

This course is planned on a monthly basis. Units of study take three to four weeks with additional time for assessment. Selected literary works may change from year to year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Grammar Units (Parliamo italiano)</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>ID, school, city, geography</td>
<td><em>Le avventure di Pinocchio</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>Home, family</td>
<td><em>Pinocchio</em> (cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>5–6</td>
<td>Eating, commerce</td>
<td><em>Andreuccio da Perugia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Current events, politics</td>
<td><em>Lamerica</em> (film)</td>
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<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Professions, transport</td>
<td><em>Don Camillo</em> unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>The arts, music</td>
<td><em>Il barbiere di Siviglia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Media, arts</td>
<td>(Create a video)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Current events, folklore</td>
<td><em>Fables</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Politics, relationships</td>
<td><em>Cinema Paradiso</em> (film)</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td></td>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
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**Teaching Strategies**

I use a variety of approaches to address the particular learning needs of the students. Included among the strategies are direct instruction, directed research, small group work, cooperative learning, modeling, observation and conclusion, and the creation of individual and group projects. Prompt feedback on students’ frequent formal and informal writing assignments is also an important component of my instructional repertoire. Students use texts, media, and the Internet as resources. Students are always encouraged to compare and contrast works under study with each other and with their own personal experiences. Graphic organizers are used to give students succinct presentations of new or difficult concepts. [C6, C8]
Student Evaluation

Students are evaluated frequently through short quizzes on discrete grammar points, formal and informal written assignments, formal speaking evaluations (oral presentations, prepared role-plays), informal speaking evaluations (class participation, observed behaviors in small-group activities), projects, unit exams, a midterm examination, and a final exam. The exams are designed to measure student mastery of listening, reading, writing, and structure. [C7, C8, C11]

Teacher Resources

I use several texts as references, including:

*Amici*, vols. 1 and 2, Mallozzi et al. (MVM Publishers, 2002)

*Attraverso i secoli*, Vittorini (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1957)

*Buongiorno Italia* (video series by BBC Broadcasting, 2005)


*La Divina Commeda*, Dante

*La Divina Commeda a cura di Dino Provenzal* (Edizioni Scolastiche Mondadori, 1969)


*Illustrations to Dante’s Inferno*, Nassar (Farleigh Dickinson University Press [Associated University Presses Inc.], 1994)

*Italian Heritage*, Cantarella (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1959)

*Italian: Two and Three Years*, Tursi and Cincinnati (AMSCO, 1978)

*Italian Verb Drills*, Nanni-Tate (Passport Books, 1997)

*L’italiano per gli affari*, Cherubini (Bonacci editore, 1992)


*The New College Italian and English Dictionary*, (AMSCO, 1976)


*Nuove letture di cultura italiana*, Lawson (National Textbook Company, 1990)

*Oggi in Italia*, 7th ed., Merlonghi al. (Houghton Mifflin, 2005)


*Storia della letteratura italiana con antologia degli scrittori e dei critici*, four volumes, Salinari e Ricci (Laterza, 1970)

*Storie della storia d’Italia*, Peccianti (Marietti-Manzuli, 1988)

*Storia dell’arte italiana, three volumes*, Argan (Sansoni, 1970)

*Vocabolario della lingua italiana*, Zingarelli (Zanichelli, 2001)

www.Corriere.it—Web site for Corriere della sera

www.repubblica.it—Web site for La Repubblica
Student Activities

The following are some examples of activities designed to achieve the goals set forth in this syllabus.

Unit on Pinocchio

Students use this classic of children's literature as a point of departure for the review of basic topics of communication such as socialization, family, home, meals, and leisure activities. The grammar focuses on present and past tenses and a variety of basic concepts such as noun–adjective agreement, possessives, and pronouns. Students practice speaking through oral reading, role-play, and class discussion of the work. Students write constantly in this unit as they identify and explain a series of teacher-created cartoons representing various episodes in the book. Students also write reflections on their own experiences growing up and approaching maturity. [C2, C8, C9]

Upon completing the reading, students hear native speakers when they view the Italian video version of the story. Comprehension is checked through comparing their personal interpretation of the book with what the director created in the film. [C2, C10]

Unit on Andreuccio da Perugia

Though this story is much shorter than Pinocchio, it is linguistically more challenging. The story revolves around a series of farcical events that almost get the protagonist killed on more than one occasion. The passato remoto is reintroduced here, and the comparison of past tenses is reinforced. Students explain the causality and consequences of the narrative by putting events in the appropriate order as they discuss and synthesize the story. [C2]

Unit on Lamerica

This unit takes students on an exploration of contemporary political realities. [C3] Though set in the aftermath of the Albanian overthrow of the communist government in the early 1990s, the story is universal in its display of greed, graft, and the effects of poverty. There is an introduction to the pre- and post-World War II policies of Italy and a comparison with events of the present day. The video is watched in 20- to 30-minute blocks so that students can properly "digest" the language and the images that they see. Articles taken from Italian Web sites on contemporary "hot spots" are read, discussed, and compared with events viewed in the film. The subjunctive is studied in this unit as they identify and explain a series of teacher-created articles taken from Italian Web sites on contemporary "hot spots." Students also write reflections on their own experiences growing up and approaching maturity. [C3, C6, C9] [C8]

Unit on Don Camillo Stories

The selected stories from this work by Giovanni Guareschi again take students to a time still reeling from the aftermath of war. The characters in the stories are normal citizens facing easily identifiable problems and conflicts. Several articles taken from online Italian periodicals are selected for class use. Students are divided into small groups to read, synthesize, and compare an assigned article with events from the literary work. Each group takes turns in presenting their conclusions to the rest of the class. [C3] [C10] [C2]

C2—The course prepares students to demonstrate their level of Italian proficiency across the three communicative modes—interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational—and as articulated in Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (Standards). (For Standards descriptions, see the Standards Executive Summary.)

C8—The course provides instruction and frequent opportunities to organize and write interpersonal and presentational texts in Italian.

C9—The course frequently integrates Italian cultural topics, including geography, contemporary life, arts and sciences, social customs and traditions, and contributions of Italians and Italian Americans to the world.

C3—In addition to communication, the course also addresses the Standards' other four goals: cultural competence, connections to other school disciplines, comparisons between Italian language and culture and those of the learners, and the use of the language within the broader communities beyond the traditional school environment.

C6—Instructional materials include a variety of written texts, such as newspapers and magazine articles, literary texts, and other authentic writings, that develop students' interpretive reading abilities at the Intermediate High level.

C10—The course provides students with frequent opportunities to interpret and utilize a variety of formal and informal registers across skills.
Unit on the Opera

This unit attempts to bridge several genres of literature and art. Beginning with an introduction to the *Commedia dell’arte* and stock characters (*maschere*), students explore the lineage of modern-day clowns and even sitcom characters. Students read selections from Goldoni’s work and analyze the characters and plots, always drawing parallels to more familiar contemporary examples. If the opera to be studied is *I Pagliacci*, it lends itself to go to yet another literary genre, *il verismo*, and eventually to cinematic *neorealismo*, which finds modern proponents even today in the work of Gianni Amelio. If, on the other hand, the opera to be studied is *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, the direction of study turns more to the comedy of manners and shifts in theatrical “status.” Students love this sweep of literary, theatrical, and cinematic art. There are obvious connections to contemporary culture, and students are eager to communicate their opinions and observations. [C10] [C2, C3]

Unit on Fables

Students learn about the humor, customs, and mores of Italy through its fables. Students look for the commonalities universally found in any culture’s fables (i.e., entertainment, instructive lessons, an unheeded warning, suffering, and redemption). This unit lends itself to the study of contrary-to-fact construction and the relationship of the imperfect subjunctive to the conditional in expressing sophisticated opinions with complex grammatical structures (e.g., if the girl had listened to her mother, she wouldn’t have grown a buffalo head on her shoulders). The ridiculous situations in these tales make this challenging grammar fun to use. Students find ridiculous situations in the media and create fables around them.

Unit on Cinema Paradiso

Of all the videos or literary works students study, this is their favorite. They get to watch a boy grow up and hit every familiar obstacle along the way. Since the situations are familiar, the language is much more accessible and understandable to high school students. They readily see how outside influences often take the control of our lives out of our hands. This gives a strong follow-up to the previous lesson. Students hear the contemporary language of the film and model their speech after it. They use the affectionate bond between the protagonist and his surrogate father as a point of departure to talk about people who have been significant influences in their own lives. They use the portrait of life in a small town as a departure point for talking about life in their own town. The heartbreak of the terminated relationship of the protagonist and his lady love rings true to anyone who has experienced a similar fate. This film is an excellent source for observing life in Italy and what the soul of the Italian people is like.

Unit on Architecture

Architecture is a tangible expression of the aesthetics, economics, and history of a particular era. America, having had to forge a new culture from the collective patrimony of all its citizens, has borrowed freely from the mother cultures of its various peoples. One such manifestation is in its buildings. Architecture is therefore a way of connecting a distant past in a faraway place to familiar surroundings. In this unit, students learn some general characteristics of the various epics of Italian history and how they were reflected in Italy’s buildings. Students then
hunt for buildings in their community that copy some of those characteristics. In written, oral, or video presentations, they demonstrate how the local architecture is a reflection of common conditions similar to those of the original works in their native lands. The wonderful thing about this unit is that, through study of the target language and culture, it awakens students’ sensibilities to the endangered architectural treasures in their own community. [C3, C9]

C3—In addition to communication, the course also addresses the Standards’ other four goals: cultural competence, connections to other school disciplines, comparisons between Italian language and culture and those of the learners, and the use of the language within the broader communities beyond the traditional school environment.

C9—The course frequently integrates Italian cultural topics, including geography, contemporary life, arts and sciences, social customs and traditions, and contributions of Italians and Italian Americans to the world.