AP® Italian Language and Culture
Syllabus 4

Course Overview

In this course, students learn about Italian cultural trends and numerous aspects of Italian society while continuing to develop and refine their ability to speak, read, listen, write in Italian. Conducted completely in Italian, this course includes a broad selection of materials from various written and visual resources.

More specifically, students learn to (1) read, comprehend, and discuss authentic Italian texts (literary and others) of greater length, variety, and difficulty; (2) write with better style, greater ease, and more grammatical accuracy; (3) describe and critique important characteristics of Italian culture such as family, education, cinema, health care, music, crime, politics, and mass media; (4) compare these aspects of Italian culture and society with their own; and (5) communicate with greater fluency, broader vocabulary, better pronunciation, and more grammatical precision in cultural discussions, function-based or role-play activities, and more formal oral presentations.

Course Requirements

Students must speak in Italian only. Other requirements are:

- preparation of daily homework assignments (reading, writing, and grammar exercises) [CR2, CR8, CR10]
- regular oral/aural participation in class (comments, observations, analysis, and discussions) [CR2, CR10]
- two oral presentations (written outline in Italian to be handed in) [CR10]
- three exams and a final exam (written and oral) [CR10, CR11]
- a writing portfolio (see description below)

CR4—The Teacher uses Italian almost exclusively in class and encourages students to do likewise.

CR3—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.

CR9—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.

CR10—The course provides students with frequent opportunities to interpret and utilize a variety of formal and informal registers across skills.

CR11—Assessments are frequent, varied, and explicitly linked to the Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational modes. Prior to assigning an assessment task, teachers share with their students the criteria against which their performances will be evaluated.
# Course Planner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Content Material Topics</th>
<th>Grammar Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parlare di sé</td>
<td>Aggettivi; Concordanze</td>
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</table>
| 2    | Geografia italiana e europea | Presente indicativo e futuro  
                  | Presente del congiuntivo |
| 3    | I bambini               | Passato prossimo/imperfetto  
                  | Passato del congiuntivo |
| 4    | Il sistema scolastico   | Imperfetto del congiuntivo |
| 5    | Stereotipi e luoghi comuni | Condizionale presente  
                  | Caso ipotetico con se |
| 6    | La mafia                | Trapassato indicativo e congiuntivo |
| 7    | Il sistema politico     | Condizionale passato e il caso ipotetico con se |
| 8    | Ripasso Generale        | Esami orali |
| 9    | Televisione             | Piacere e pronomi |
| 10   | Giornali and pubblicità | Si impersonale  
                  | Si passivante |
| 11   | Cinema                  | Passato remoto |
| 12   | Musica leggera & San Remo | Gerundio vs. Infinito  
                  | Tempi progressivi |
| 13   | La famiglia (i giovani, la donna, il lavoro) | Voce passiva |
| 14   | La solitudine   
                  | La vecchiaia | Discorso indiretto |
| 15   | Natale e il presepe     | Ripasso generale |

# Teaching Strategies

With different emphases and variations, communication in the field of second language learning is commonly understood as the expression, understanding, and negotiation of meaning. To make the course a highly interactive and truly communicative experience wherein student participation is central and maximized on a daily basis, I ensure a student-
centered approach to nearly every aspect of each lesson, from homework correction to the presentation of new material, to discussions and analyses of studied material, to the practice of strategies in communication.

For each lesson, my planning takes into consideration the following questions, among others: Who will do the talking? Where will I be standing? What visuals or ancillaries can make this more conceptually immediate for the learners? Will students be creative with the language or will their responses be short, mechanical, and predictable? Will they create questions as well as answers? Will they be compelled to listen actively and engage when others are speaking, or does this activity allow for passivity, distraction, even dozing?

At least 50 percent of the time, each lesson focuses on student-centered and interactive activities through pairs or small groups (from correcting homework to preparing a dialogue, or preparing an outline response to the cultural questions at hand) or in two-sided debates, skits, interviews, surveys, or class presentations.

Depending on the context of the lesson, students are required to jot down vocabulary they do not understand, or write two or three questions to present to the speaker. Though the speaker cannot answer all of these questions, I generally collect the questions and give credit to students for participating. The same technique is useful for those observing other groups’ skits or listening to other groups’ arguments in whole-class debates. [CR2, CR7, CR8, CR10, CR11]

**Course packet.** One of the most stimulating and creative aspects of this course, but potentially one of the most time consuming, is choosing an appropriate primary text or assembling an appropriate course packet. While AP Italian Language and Culture can run very successfully with a primary text, such as the many excellent intermediate-level textbooks available, a course packet that gathers and explores the depth and breadth of arguments (cultural content and grammar) is equally effective. Moreover, the course packet allows me much more freedom in course design, since I establish the topics and their order of presentation. The packet I use throughout the year includes current and authentic newspaper, magazine, and Internet-based articles. [CR6]

**Considerations.** Typically, by the time students reach the AP Italian Language and Italian course, their proficiency levels can vary according to their previous experience, time spent studying abroad, and motivation. It is therefore advisable to choose materials that address the mid- to high-level range of ability in these classes and to provide opportunities for additional practice and/or tutorials for those needing more help.

My course packet, which covers cultural and grammatical topics with the breadth and depth desired for this course, includes select texts, films, Web sites, music, and the like. Though it takes several weeks to compile the course packet, it can be reused with the addition of occasional updates or new materials and activities (a new film or song).

**Student Activities**

**Cultural presentations.** Each student is required to choose a topic from the syllabus and to sign up to deliver a mini presentation in class on this subject. Students receive guidelines and a scoring rubric for their work that include a basic structure for the presentation (introduction, three main aspects pertaining to that topic, and conclusion). At least one visual aid is required, and students can use the one-page outline they prepare to distribute in class. They turn in the longer version of their research notes to me. [CR2, CR8, CR10, CR11]
Films. Once a week a significant portion of class time is devoted to role-play creation and performance. These situazioni aim to incorporate both the cultural topic and the grammar topic for that week. One example for week 7 (Il sistema politico and il condizionale passato e il caso ipotetico con se) might be to have the students hold a mock press conference, with them playing the roles of different hopeful political candidates and roving reporters. The situation card might read as follows:

You are a candidate of the_________party for the upcoming national elections. Choose three areas in which the current prime minister has not achieved satisfactory results in your view, and state what you would have done differently in each area. Be prepared to respond to similar questions from several reporters in the audience. State what you would have done, had you been prime minister, and/or state what you promise to do to improve things (education, transportation, immigration) in the future. [CR2, CR3, CR7, CR10]

Listening and viewing activities. In addition to out-of-class listening and viewing assignments (see Lab Component below) students work with audio and video materials in class once a week. These materials include music videos, taped SCOLA news broadcasts, television advertisements, and segments of programs from RAI International. All such assignments include pre- and post-viewing activities. [CR2, CR3, CR5, CR10]

Current events. Each week two students are responsible for consulting a print or electronic newspaper or news magazine and reporting one or two Italian events of interest to the class. This task involves reading, understanding, and summarizing in simplified terms the two or three main points of a given article. [CR2, CR9, CR10]

Writing portfolio. Student writing portfolios contain all written work from the semester, particularly weekly paragraph-length reflections and responses to cultural questions, plus five formal writing assignments of 250 to 600 words in length and the rewritten or revised version of each. Students know that all of their writing assignments and rewrites will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Content** 40%
  - (thesis, examples, original ideas)

- **Form** 40%
  - (grammar, accuracy, and overall sophistication in language and expression)

- **Clarity and coherency** 20%
  - (organization, style, expression) [CR2, CR8, CR11]

Lab Component

Films. Students attend four required film viewings outside of class time (although many students attend more, citing the wealth of language and cultural perspectives to be gained). The films are part of a given cultural unit (Porte aperte—Mafia; Stanno tutti bene, or La famiglia—La famiglia, la vecchiaia). [CR3, CR5]

Films may be selected from a broad range of classic or more contemporary Italian films, depending on the main theme or subject. What remains common in the treatment of each film is that all have previewing vocabulary and discussion activities, and all films allow for a variety of postviewing activities, which may include role-plays for which students create new
endings, group analyses using appropriate film vocabulary, comparative discussions with North American cultural norms, [CR3] and so forth.

**Progetto Italica.** This online Italian language and culture courseware was created by University of Notre Dame faculty in conjunction with RAI (see below). The site is used both in and out of class for a variety of listening activities and cultural readings, and discussions. Most popular with the students are the songs. A comprehensive online grammar resource (*Libro di grammatica*) features numerous self-correcting exercises that students can use for independent study and to review forms.

### Student Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily class preparation (homework)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation (discussion and activities)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three exams (grammar and content)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam (written and oral)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final writing portfolio</td>
<td>20%</td>
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### Course Materials

#### Readings

Literature, films, music, newspapers and magazines, ads, letters, and Web sites are among the authentic reading materials used in the course. While we read some books in their entirety (e.g., most level 1 or level 2 books, such as *Andreuccio da Perugia, Easy Reader Level I*), most textual materials are excerpts that have been preselected from the many excellent texts and readers on the market.

#### Films

The course includes four films that integrate well with the cultural topics, such as children (*Ciao professore, Ladro dei bambini*), immigration/emigration (*Pane e cioccolato, L’America*), women in Italy (*Travolto in un insolito destino nell’azzurro mare d’agosto, La lunga vita di Marianna Ucrìa*), and the literary readings and film scripts chosen. I use Begotti’s *Quaderni di cinema italiano per stranieri* when the class is studying films. This series of exercise booklets covers such films as *Le notti di Cabiria, Il gattopardo*, and *Nuovo cinema paradiso*.

#### Language Courseware

Progetto Italica Language and Culture (www.nd.edu/~italica)

This online Italian language and culture courseware can be used by students both in and out of class for a variety of listening activities, cultural readings, and discussions. It includes 46 video courseware units (which can be viewed by clicking on the Lesson Menu link) and a comprehensive online grammar (*Libro di grammatica*) that features numerous self-correcting exercises, which students can use for independent study.

#### Daily Newspapers

*La Repubblica* (www.repubblica.it)
**General Information**
Mediasoft Interactive (www.mediasoft.it/italy)
   This URL links to a free, interactive resource that provides geographic and other general information about Italy.

**Bibliography**

**Texts for Methodology, Lesson Plans, and Course Packet Preparation**


