Field of Study Course Proposal  
Italian 321

A. Cover Application

1. Proposed field of study: FSLT

2. Course number: Italian 321

3. Course title: Italian Literature in Context

4. Catalog description: Introduction to Italian literature through analysis of selected works in their historical, aesthetic, sociopolitical, and other cultural contexts.

5. Prerequisites: Italian 301

6. Hours of credit: 4 hours (1 unit)

7. Estimate of student enrollment: 15

8. By whom and when the course will be offered: offered by various Italian faculty; offered once every academic year

9. Staffing implications: none

10. Adequacy of library, technology, and other resources: adequate

11. Relation to existing courses and curricula: Will fulfill the FSLT requirement and will fulfill a course requirement for the Italian Studies Majors.

12. Contact person: Lidia Radi & Anthony Russell

B. Explanation of Field of Study fulfillment

How the course fulfills FSLT:

Italian 321 serves as a gateway course required for majors as a way of introducing students to Italian literature and culture in preparation for 400-level courses. Students will read, discuss, and analyze a selection of texts focusing on significant moments in the history of Italian culture. Certain themes or concerns may be emphasized during the course as a way of suggesting continuities between disparate moments in time. For example, students may focus on the question of Italian “identity” as it is investigated and constructed (implicitly or explicitly) in the arch of time spanning the works of writers such as Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and 20th Century works by writers and filmmakers such as Pirandello, Leonardo Sciascia, and Fellini. Other themes of interest might include the way love is imagined, from Dante’s beatification of the beloved, to D’Annunzio’s decadentist sensuality, to love in the context of modern bourgeois capitalism (Calvino).

The course will also introduce students to some of the important issues surrounding the investigation and interpretation of literary texts. Students will, for example, examine the particular ways in which poetic texts create meaning by studying the uses and functions of prosody. They will investigate some of the main elements of narrative form and explore the various ways in which plot conventions are manipulated. In their engagement with both poetry and prose students will also trace the ways in which patterns of imagery
help to create or complicate the meanings of a text. Students will also address questions raised by the problems of authorship, intentionality, and audience, and they will be asked to think about the ways in which texts emerge both from the specific historical and political circumstances of their making, and in relation to a canonical literary tradition which they may either confirm or oppose. In the course of these investigations, students will be made aware of some of the interpretive approaches to literary texts that have become available to scholars in the last sixty years or so.

**Proposed syllabus:**

This course focuses on some of the more important writers in the Italian literary tradition, with an emphasis on the historical and cultural contexts in which these works arose. Some recurring themes or problems will be traced among these works, including but not limited to the tensions between regional and “Italian” identity, and the transition to modernity and nationhood.

**Examples of possible required texts:**

- Selections from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*
- Selections from Petrarch’s *Rime Sparse*
- Selections from Boccaccio’s *Decameron*
- Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*
- Vasari, *Life of Michelangelo*
- Michelangelo, selected poems
- Veronica Franco, selected poems
- Carlo Goldoni, *La Locandiera* (play)
- Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Don Giovanni* (opera)
- Ugo Foscolo, selected poems
- Giacomo Leopardi, selected poems
- Alessandro Manzoni, selections from *I Promessi Sposi* (novel)
- Giovanni Verga, selections from *Novelle* (short stories)
- Pietro Mascagni, *La Cavalleria Rusticana* (opera)
- Giacomo Puccini, *La Bohème* (opera)
- Gabriele D’Annunzio, selection from *Novelle* (short stories)
- Giovanni Pascoli, *Italy*
- Luigi Pirandello, *Così è se vi pare* (play)
- Eugenio Montale, selected poems
- Alberto Moravia, *Temporale e Fulmine* (short story)
- Leonardo Sciascia, *Il lungo viaggio; Un caso di coscienza* (short stories)
- Italo Clavino, *Marcovaldo al Supermarket; I figli di Babbo Natale; L’avventura di un poeta* (short stories)
- Natalia Ginzburg, *Fragola e panna* (play)
- Roberto Rossellini, *Roma città aperta* (film)
- Vittorio De Sica, *Ladri di Biciclette* (film)
- Federico Fellini, *Amarcord* (film)

**Course Requirements:**

1. Regular attendance
2. Two-three papers in Italian
3. Midterm exam
4. Final exam
5. Occasional short writing assignments or quizzes
6. Two-three short oral presentations.
7. Preparing reading questions for class

**Final possible grade breakdown:**
Papers: 30%
Midterm: 15%
Final exam/paper: 25%
Oral presentations, quizzes, writing assignments: 15%
Class participation: 15%