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HIST/SOC/ENG 360: The Italian American Experience: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Elgin K. Eckert

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Class Hours: TBA.

Office Hours: TBA

Course Type: Standard Course

Lab Fee: 10 €

Course Description

This course will focus on the history of Italian immigration to the US and on the contribution of Italians to the formation of a collective American cultural identity. It will examine the history of Italian American immigration to the US and the experience and depiction of Italian identity (as well as its related themes of ethnic identity and cultural conflict) in American society, especially after the turn of the Twentieth century. Students will analyze the historical reasons of why Italians left their homeland and look at the conditions of their voyages and first arrival in the United States. The course will then go on to examine the conditions, treatment, and cultural experiences of the immigrants in their new home, and to consider which changes old-world traditions (familial, sexual, political, social) underwent.

Course purpose:

This course will introduce students to Italian American history and investigate how the specific experiences of this immigrant group have contributed to forming a “larger” American identity. It will provide students with interdisciplinary tools for investigating cultural history, which provide a foundation for the continued study in various fields. The course will get students to apply knowledge gained about one particular cultural and historical experience to similar experiences throughout history and in the contemporary world.

Expected Learning Outcomes

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After taking this course, the student(s) will be able to:

Learning Outcomes

Assessment Measures

Course requirements that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Describe the major events and individuals associated with Italian American history and explain their significance● Explain the theory of push and pull factors in immigration, illustrate how the theory applies to the Italian American experience● Explain the historical method and utilize its core principles to examine historical events● Give examples of, differentiate, and appraise primary, secondary and tertiary sources in historiography● Relate the Italian American experience to other immigration experiences throughout history | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● student reports, midterm, final exam● informal assessment activities*● class discussions● informal assessment activities● class discussions, midterm and final exams● class discussions, midterm and final exams, informal assessment activities● reaction paper, essay question on final exam |
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*informal assessment activities will include non-graded quizzes, one-minute papers, “muddiest point” activities, application cards, and polling exercises

Course Materials

Textbook

Connell, William J., and Stanislao G. Pugliese. *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*. Routledge, 2018.

Films

Francis Ford Coppola *The Godfather* (1972) – evening screening

Stanley Tucci and Campbell Scott *Big Night* (1996)

Roberto De Niro and Chazz Palminteri *A Bronx Tale* (1993)

Literature:

Puzo, Mario *The Fortunate Pilgrim*

Documentary:

The Italian Americans (Documentary)

Art/Photography:

Selected works by Osvaldo Louis Guglielmi, Ralph Fasanella, Joseph Stella, Lewis Hine, Jacop Riis

Assessment

Preparation and Participation	10%
5 Quizzes based on Secondary Readings (lowest grade dropped)	20%
2 Reading Slips	5%
2 Student-led Class Discussions	5%

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3 Group Student Reports	15%
Midterm Examination	15%
Paper	15%
Final Examination	15%

Grading

Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	
B	83% - 86%	Superior
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	
C	73% - 76%	Satisfactory
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	
D	63% - 66%	Low Pass
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Course Requirements

Preparation and Participation (10%)

Students are expected to do all reading assignments before the assigned date in order to contribute to classroom discussions. Film screenings and Documentaries are an integral part of this course and must be treated as such (please see [An Important Note on Film and Documentary Screenings](#) below). It is not acceptable to walk out of film/documentary screenings for any reason, use electronic devices, or fall asleep. Any student not paying complete attention to the film screening component of the course will get 3 points deducted from their **Participation** grade for each instance.

5 Quizzes based on Secondary Readings (20%)

Students will take 5 quizzes based on the secondary readings. **The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.**

2 Reading Slips (5%)

Students will complete 2 reading slips on secondary readings.

2 Student-led class discussions (10%)

Students will lead class discussion and be graded on their preparation and participation during those discussions. Students absent during one of those discussions may substitute the lowest-grade quiz that would normally be dropped.

3 Group Student Reports (15%)

Students will present determined topics to their class in groups.

Midterm Examination (15%)

The in-class midterm exam will be based on the historical issues studies in class. It will be composed of identifications, multiple choice, and short answer questions as well as a short essay.

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Research Paper (15%)

Students in this course will write a short 4-6-page paper comparing the representation of Italian American neighbourhoods in *The Godfather* and *A Bronx Tale* making reference to the chapters about Little Italies in the textbook.

Final Examination (15%)

The in-class final exam will focus consist of two parts: a student-led discussion of Mario Puzo's novel *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and a short written exam covering the second half of the course.

An Important Note on Film Screenings

You must treat each film screening as you would a reading. You are expected to be an active viewer, looking for historical, political, economic, social, cultural, narrative, and aesthetic meaning. You must take notes on every film you see. It is not acceptable to walk out of film screenings for any reason, use electronic devices, or fall asleep. Any student not paying complete attention to the film screening component of the course will get 3 point deducted from their **Participation** grade for each instance (see Preparation and Participation above). Any student who sends an e-mail with the subject line "I promise not to use my cell phone during screenings" to the instructor will receive a 3 point augmentation of their final participation grade.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is **mandatory**. Students are allowed **two "free" absences**, which do not need to be justified. **It is the students' responsibility to keep them in case of real necessity (sickness or any other unforeseen inconvenience that may prevent students from being in class)**. Each additional absence, unless for a very serious reason, will lower the students' grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. It is also the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. **Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason.** Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Key Dates:

TBD	Quiz
TBD	Student-led class discussions
TBD	Quiz
TBD	Screening of <i>The Godfather</i> at <i>Postmodernissimo</i> Theater
TBD	Student-led class discussions
TBD	Student Reports
TBD	Midterm
TBD	Quiz
	Optional Screening of <i>The Godfather II</i> at the Umbra Institute
TBD	Student Reports
TBD	Quiz
TBD	Student Reports
TBD	Quiz
TBD	Final Exam

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In case of “free” absences taken on any of the days in which discussions or assignments are scheduled, the following rules apply:

Quizzes: students missing one quiz will have that quiz grade counted as lowest grade which will be dropped. Students missing one additional quiz may make up that quiz by handing in **3** reading slips on any of the **optional** readings for a maximum of 9 out of 10 points. Any other quiz beyond two missed will result in a 0.

Student-led class discussions: missing one of those dates will substitute the lowest-grade quiz (which would normally be dropped) for that grade. Missing the second student-led class discussion will result in a 0 for that part of the grade.

Student Reports: students missing the March 2 assignment may substitute a 3-page paper, students missing Mar. 30th and Apr. 20th will hand in a reading slip for each one of the readings

Midterm or Final Exam: no credit given

Film Screening: Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important for student performance in class and the evening screening of *The Godfather* counts as a field trip. Missing a mandatory field trip, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to the professor and Umbra Academic Director in a timely manner, will lower students’ final grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Academic Integrity

All forms of **cheating** (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and **plagiarism** (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate **respect** for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that **cell phones** must be turned off before the beginning of each class. **Computers and other electronic devices** cannot be used during class lectures and discussions except with prior permission of the instructor.

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All readings, unless otherwise specified, are from the textbook Connell, William J., and Stanislao G. Pugliese. *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*. Routledge, 2018.

Readings must be completed **prior** to the class for which they were assigned.

WEEK 1

Introduction to the Course
Historical Overview of Italian immigration to the United States

Exploratory voyages to the Americas
Early Italian settlers in North America

Optional Reading:

Italians in the Early Atlantic World, 17-41
From the Pilgrim Fathers to the Founding Fathers, 42-53
When they were few, Italians in America, 1800-1850, 54-68

WEEK 2

Italian Unification and why Italians emigrated
Garibaldi in the US
How to read Primary Sources

Primary Sources:

The Hero and the Saint (Harper's Weekly 1860)
The Papacy and Italy (NYT, 1860)

Reading: **Quiz 1**

Why Italians Left Italy, 117-131

Optional Reading:

America's Garibaldi, 69-90

Transitioning from Emigrant to Immigrant
The Voyage
Arrival on Ellis Island

Reading: **R**_{EADING} **S**_{LIP}

The Silence of the Atlantians, 132-151 (important endnotes – please read!)

Primary Sources

Video Footage Landing at Ellis Island (1903)
Landed on Ellis Island (NYT 1.1.1892)
The Oral History of Lawrence Meinwald From Poland

WEEK 3

Little Italies of the Early 1900s
Student-led Discussion of Readings

Reading:

The Little Italies of the Early 1900s, 152-162

Interpreting Little Italies, 163-178

On the Question of Race of Italian Immigrants
Race and Discrimination
The Murder of David Hennessy in New Orleans

Primary Documents

The Slums of Europe Political Cartoon

Reading: **Quiz 2**

Italian Americans and Race during the Era of Mass Immigration, pp. 212-222

Discrimination, Prejudice and Italian American History, pp. 223-237

Primary Sources:

David Hennessy Murder (NYT 1890)

Chief Hennessy Avenged (NYT 1891)

Demons loose in New Orleans

WEEK 4

No class meeting

**EVENING SCREENING OF *THE GODFATHER* AT
POSTMODERNISSIMO CINEMA**

Discussion of *The Godfather* and stereotypes about Italian Americans
Italian American author Mario Puzo
Literature and Cinema as “historical narrative”

In-class reading: Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*, chapter 1

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WEEK 5

Food – Italian cuisine and Italian American cuisine

Cook-off of American and Italian American typical dishes:

bruschetta vs. garlic bread

pasta cacio e pepe vs. Fettuccini Alfredo

Reading: **R**_{EADING} **S**_{LIP}

Culture and Identity on the Table, pp. 179-192

The Labor Movement of the Early 20th Century

The Photography of Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine

Primary Documents

A. Mitchell Palmer out for a Stroll Political Cartoon

Photos by Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis

Reading:

Italian Americans and the Labor Movement, pp. 268-285

WEEK 6

Student-led Discussion on the Sacco and Vanzetti case

Reading:

The Sacco and Vanzetti Case and the Psychology of Political Violence, pp. 186-304

Primary Document (handout)

Felix Frankfurter “The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti” in *The Atlantic*, March 1927.

Religion in Italian American Communities

Political Philosophies: Capitalism, Communism, Socialism, Anarchism

Reading:

Italian Americans and their Religious Experience, 193-211

WEEK 7

Student Reports: Italian American Artists

Ralph Fasanella

Joseph Stella

Oswaldo Louis Guglielmi

WRITTEN MIDTERM EXAM

SEMESTER BREAK

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WEEK 8

Italian American Economic Power
World War I

Reading:

Italian Emigration, Remittances and the Rise of Made in Italy, 337-348

Optional Reading:

The Bumpy Road Toward Political Incorporation, 319-336

Fascism and Italian American Reaction to Fascism
World War II and Italy
World War II and Italian Americans
Internment Camps of Italian Americans

Primary Sources:

Don't Speak the Enemy's Language
Notice Nr. 33 Prohibited Area
Notice to Aliens of Enemy Nationalities
Rosy the Riveterer

Reading: **Q_{UIZ} 3**

World War II changed Everything, 370-384

Optional Reading:

Fascism and Anti-Fascism in Italian America, 349-367

THURSDAY, MARCH 19th OPTIONAL EVENING SCREENING OF *THE GODFATHER II*

WEEK 9

Screening: *A Bronx Tale*

Final Paper topic handed out

Reading:

Interpreting Little Italies, 163-178 (re-read)

Reading (In preparation for Student Reports on March 30th):

Groovin': A Riff on Italian Americans in Popular Music and Jazz, 415-432

Italian Americans and Cinema, 433-450

Screening: *A Bronx Tale* (cont.)

Discussion of *A Bronx Tale*: Neighborhoods and Racism

Comparison between Italian communities in *The Godfather* and *A Bronx Tale*

Reading (In preparation for Student Reports on Mar. 30th):

Italian Americans and Television, 451-463

Italian Americans in Sport, 464-478

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WEEK 10

Student Reports: Italian Americans in Music, Cinema, TV, Sports

Organized Crime I: 1880-1936
Early Italian American Criminality: New Orleans and The Black Hand
Joe Petrosino
The Prohibition and Emergence of the Mafia in the United States
Al Capone

Primary Sources:

Political Cartoon “Doing the Slums”
Political Cartoon “Five Points Gang”
Black Hand Letter
Wanted Poster: Black Hand
1906 film The Black Hand
Al Capone Mug Shot
Al Capone arrest record
Al Capone death certificate

Reading: (handout)

Dickie, John. “Joe Petrosino” in *Cosa Nostra: a History of the Sicilian Mafia*. Hodder, 2007.

WEEK 11

Organized Crime II: 1931-1946
Lucky Luciano creates the Commission
Lucky Luciano and the Mafia during WWII
Lucky Luciano’s Exile

Reading:

Organized Crime and Italian Americans, 479-491

Organized Crime III: 1950-today
The Kefauver Hearings
Joe Valachi
The Apalachin Meeting
The RICO Act
The US Mafia from the 70’s until today

Reading: (handouts) **Quiz 4**

Raab, Selwyn. *Wake up, America* in *Five Families: the Rise, Decline, and Resurgence of America’s Most Powerful Mafia Empires*. St Martins Griffin, 2016.
---. *Heroin and Apalachin* in cit.

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WEEK 12

Screening of *Big night*

Reading:

Italian American Femininities, 539-551

Italian American Masculinities, 552-564

Screening of *Big night*

Reading:

The Italian American Family and Transnational Circuits, 403-414

Fuori per sempre: Gay and Lesbian Italian Americans Come out, 565-580

WEEK 13

Student Reports on topics in Italian American Studies: Family, Femininities, Masculinities, Gays and Lesbians

Immigration from Italy since the 1990s

Recent Immigration to Italy

Final Considerations

Reading: **Quiz 5**

Immigration from Italy since the 1990s, 581-595

The Orphanage, 616-629

The Future of Our Past, 630-634

WEEK OF FINAL EXAMS AND SPECIAL ACADEMIC EVENTS

The Final Exam and Special Academic Events Calendar will be provided later in the semester.

Final Exam: Student-led Discussion of Mario Puzo's novel *A Fortunate Pilgrim* and short Final Written Exam

Paper due on date of Final Exam

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Bibliography

Connell, William J., and Stanislao G. Pugliese. *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*. Routledge, 2018.
LaGumina, Salvatore J., Frank J. Cavaoli, Salvatore Primeggia, and Joseph A. Varacalli. *Italian American*

Experience. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013.

Laurino, Maria. *The Italian Americans: a history*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015.

Jerre Mangione - Ben Morreale, *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience*, New York, Harper Perennial, 1992

Morreale, Ben, and Robert Carola. *Italian Americans: the immigrant experience*. New York: Beaux Arts Editions, 2013.

Puzo, Mario. *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. New York: Balantine Boks, 2004.

Ruberto, Laura E., and Joseph Sciorra. *New Italian Migrations to the United States*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017.

Tonelli, Bill. *The Italian American reader: a collection of outstanding fiction, memoirs, journalism, essays and poetry*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.