



PSCI/HIST/ITAL 370
Contemporary Italy: The Politics of Culture
Course Syllabus
Fall Semester 2026

Instructor: Luca Gatti, PhD

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: TBD

Office Hours: by appointment after a class or via Zoom (see Moodle site)

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Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: TBD

Course Description

This course provides a panoramic view of Italian culture, the politics of that culture, as well as the recent history of Perugia, where students will live. After an introduction about the history of the city, the first part of the course will cover the Risorgimento in which we'll discover Perugia's important role; the movement towards national unity, and the impact of the First World War and Fascism. The second part of the course will focus on the postwar Republican era.

The aim of this course is to offer students a complete introduction to Italian culture and a familiarization with the town where they live, and to showcase themes of contemporary Italian history. The course pursues these goals through lectures, readings, site trips, films, discussions and, importantly, walking tours. Some general texts offer a background on the historical development of the country while other readings will offer a choice of interpretations of some key historiographical themes.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *identify* the most important moment of the contemporary Italian culture and what it means to live in an ancient Italian city today;
- *summarize* knowledge and connection between the most important cultural and political events that connect Perugia, Italy, and Europe;
- *distinguish* between primary and secondary sources;
- *describe*, using specific examples, how material culture like monuments, buildings, or urban design can communicate political or ideological concepts;
- *analyze* the events that changed and characterized Italy in the last decades;
- *integrate* primary and secondary sources for a discussion on the environmental, sociocultural and economic factors of Italy.

Course Materials

Readings

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Assessment

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Attendance | 10% |
| Biweekly Moodle Quizzes | 15% |
| Midterm Exam | 25% |
| Course Journal Entries | 20% |
| Final Exam | 30% |

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

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

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences per course without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Quizzes (15%)

Students will be assigned one short quiz every week, which will be due before class time and will not be reopened. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed. Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive. There will be a combination of *technical*, *methodological*, and *content questions*. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the readings. The technical questions will help students learn the class policies and administrative procedures. The methodological questions will test on skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author's argument and assessing sources.

Midterm Exam (25%)

It consists of 12 essay questions, of which students answer 8. It will be closed-book and closed-notes. The exam focuses on in-class lectures and the reading materials presented during the course. It takes approximately 90 minutes to complete. Exams are evaluated on the basis of specificity, detail, accuracy, knowledge, logic, insight, and clarity.

Course Journal (20%)

Students need a notebook which they will use as a personal space through which to reflect on course material and ideas. In-class assignments (e.g. summaries of assigned readings, analyses of primary sources, mental maps, reflections, predictive exercises) will be regularly scheduled and graded. Each of the two checks is worth 10% of your grade, for a total of 20%.

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will cover all material from the course. It will be closed-book and closed-notes and will consist of essay questions. A review guide will be distributed to students a week before the exam. The time and date of the exam cannot be changed for any reason.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero.

As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused “sick days” and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student’s academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student’s final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students’ grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute’s Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

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.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

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.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

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. Students are not allowed to use their cell phones, ear buds, or laptops while in class or during co-curricular events and activities, unless otherwise specified in the course syllabus or expressly permitted by the instructor for special learning. This policy also applies to earbuds and headsets. Students who do not respect these rules will be subject to disciplinary warnings and probation, be given an unexcused absence from class, and other disciplinary action including dismissal from the course.

Moodle

Please note that Moodle, not this syllabus, is the ultimate reference for due dates, assignment prompts, and course announcements. It is *the student's responsibility* to check the site regularly to be aware of announcements as well as to see and record all due dates for assignments.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION TO PERUGIA, AN ANCIENT CITY IN CONTEMPORARY ITALY

- The course will begin with an explanation of the syllabus and a detailed explanation of the structure of the semester's work.
- Analysis of *Sensational Umbria* (2015), a photography exhibition by Steve McCurry.
- Towns and “borghi” in the contemporary era.
- The Rocca Paolina, a Renaissance fortress in Perugia.

Co-curricular activity:

Walking and discovering Perugia: The Rocca Paolina

Readings for the week:

- Maria Rita Zappelli, *Home Street Home: Perugia's History Told Through Its Streets*, ed. Zachary Nowak, trans. Deborah Rim Moiso and Alan Whykes (Morlacchi Editore, 2013), pp. 12-23.
- Carmen Bizzarri and Roberto Micera, “The Valorization of Italian ‘Borghi’ as a Tool for the Tourism Development of Rural Areas,” *Sustainability* 13, no. 12 (2021).
- Lisa Abend, “Bans, Fees, Taxes. Can Anything Stop Overtourism?,” *Travel*, *New York Times*, January 28, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/28/travel/overtourism-bans-fees-barcelona-greece.html>.

WEEK 2

THE RISORGIMENTO: UNIFICATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

- Il Risorgimento (1815–1870): Italy divided into multiple states on the path toward unification. These included the Kingdom of Sardinia, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the Papal States, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Duchies of Parma and Modena, the Kingdom of Lombardy–Venetia under Austrian control, and smaller duchies such as Lucca and Massa-Carrara.
- How the legacy and significance of Italian unification, more than a century and a half later, remain open to interpretation and debate.

Co-curricular activity:

Walking tour exploring the Risorgimento heritage of the town, including the Società Operaia di Mutuo Soccorso

WEEK 3

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND FASCISM — ECHOES IN STONE

- *Il Novecento* (20th century): unified Italy, the early 1900s, and the First World War.
- Futurism.

Co-curricular activity:

Guided walking tour exploring Fascist-era architecture and urban traces in Perugia.

Readings for the week:

- “Supermanism and Culture of the Body in Italy: The Case of Futurism,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 16, no. 1 (1999): 159–65.
- Luca Gatti, *Trentasei*, Chapter VI-XII, Bertoni Editore

WEEK 4

ITALIAN CINEMA: SOCIETY & POLITICS IN TENSION

- Freedom and the post–Second World War era: reconstruction in Italy and the Marshall Plan in Europe
- The emergence of Neorealism.
- Cinecittà—‘Hollywood on the Tiber’—from Neorealism to Spaghetti Westerns.
- Politics of Culture: Examining the cultural and political dimensions of Italian cinema

Co-curricular activity:

Exploration of Italian cinema at PostModernissimo, including a screening of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966).

Readings for the week:

- Rachel Johnson, *Film Festivals, Ideology and Italian Art Cinema: Politics, Histories and Cultural Value*

WEEK 5

ITALY AND EUROPE

- Italy today: the European Union and Italian institutions.
- Rome and Brussels: Before and after the EU.
- The Erasmus programme as an EU project. Meeting with ESN representatives.

Readings for the week:

- European Commission, “Annual Reports, Factsheets and Statistics - Erasmus+,” Erasmus+: EU Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, November 13, 2025, <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/statistics-and-factsheets>.
- Sadaf Tahir, “Role of Erasmus in Promoting European Identity and European Values,” *Studia Politologica* 34, no. 425 (2025): 47–58.
- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett, “Thanks to the Erasmus Programme, My Small World Grew Big,” Opinion, *The Guardian*, January 9, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/09/erasmus-programme-year-studying-europe>
- *L'auberge Espagnole [The Spanish Apartment]*, directed by Cédric Klapisch (BiM Distribuzione, 2002), 121 min.

WEEK 6

MIDTERM EXAM

- Guest Lecture: Meeting with ESN representatives.
- Midterm Exam

WEEK 7

ITALIAN MUSIC

- Italian music and its history, from the Sanremo Festival to Umbria Jazz.

Co-curricular activity:

Walking tour exploring the influence of American music, including a visit to Musica Musica record store.

WEEK 8

MADE IN ITALY

- Understanding ‘Made in Italy’ as a brand: cultural identity, production, and global perception

Readings for the week:

- Marianna Giusti, “Everything I, an Italian, Thought I Knew about Italian Food Is Wrong,” *Financial Times*, March 23, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/6ac009d5-dbfd-4a86-839e-28bb44b2b64c>.

Co-curricular activities:

Aperitivo experience

WEEK 9

THE ECONOMIC BOOM

- The Italian economic boom and La Dolce Vita.
- The origins and meaning of ‘Made in Italy’.

WEEK 10

SOLOMEO VISION AND FIELD TRIP TO CUCINELLI’S FACTORY

- Brunello Cucinelli and the Solomeo vision.

Co-curricular activities:

- Visit the Brunello Cucinelli’s factory

Readings for the week:

- Brunello Cucinelli, *The Dream of Solomeo*, Feltrinelli, 2018, pp 61-83.
- David LaRocca, “Brunello Cucinelli: A Humanistic Approach to Luxury, Philanthropy, and Stewardship.” *Journal of Religion & Business Ethics* 3, no. 2 (2015): 1–26.

WEEK 11

ITALIAN CUISINE

- The history of Italian cuisine: The country, food culture, and meals through the centuries.
- The Italian menu tradition.

Readings for the week:

- Zachary Nowak, *Food Cultures of Italy: Cuisine, Customs, and Issues* (Bloomsbury, 2026), read “Introduction”, pp. x-xiv.
- Fabio Parasecoli, *Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy* (London: Reaktion), read “Now and the Future”, pp. 198-222.

Co-curricular activities:

Cooking class at the Umbra Institute kitchen.

WEEK 12

Meeting 2: CALCIO, THE ITALIAN PASSION

- Italian soccer: Origins and early history.
- Introduction to Perugia Calcio

Co-curricular activities:

- Guided visit to the A.C. Perugia museum.

Readings for the week:

- Elia Fiorenza, “Italian Football as a Vehicle of Identity: From Urban Elites to Mass Culture,” *Scientific Journal of Sport and Performance* 4, no. 4 (2025): 598–611.

WEEK 13

FINAL EXAM