

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, and write in Italian. Conducted completely in Italian, this course includes a broad selection [C3, C9] of materials from various written and visual resources. [C4, C10] 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 only in Italian. [C4] Other requirements are:

- preparation of daily homework assignments (reading, writing, and grammar exercises) [C2, C8, C10]
- regular oral/aural participation in class (comments, observations, analysis, and discussions) [C2, C10]
- two oral presentations (written outline in Italian to be handed in) [C10]

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.

C4—The teacher uses Italian almost exclusively in class and encourages students to do likewise.

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

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.

- three exams and a final exam (written and oral) [C10, C11]
- a writing portfolio (see description below)

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

Course Planner

To begin the school year on a solid mathematical footing, all students enrolled for the following year are given a programmed elementary calculus book, *Quick Calculus: A Self-Teaching Guide* by Daniel Kleppner and Norman Ramsey, and assignments to be completed over the summer. The book helps students initially learn or review the basic differentiation and integration skills needed for the course. Quizzes on the material are given the first week of school. [C6]

C11—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.

Schedule

Unit	Content Material Topics	Grammar Topics
1	Parlare di sé	Aggettivi; Concordanze
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

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.

The regular integration of film, music, history, geography, and gender issues throughout the above units aims to foster interdisciplinary connections between Italian language and culture and these subjects go beyond the level of learning basic facts. [C3]

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 where 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 [C2, C7]—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.

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.

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.)

C7—The course provides students with frequent opportunities, in class or in a language laboratory, to practice their Interpersonal and Presentational speaking skills in a variety of settings, types of discourse, topics, and registers.

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. [C2, C8, C10, C11]

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. [C6]

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, websites, 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).

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

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

C11—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.

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.

Guest Lectures. Each year I invite four guest lecturers from other disciplines who are teachers at our school to lecture on art history and world history. Students are provided with questions for discussion. [C3]

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. In order to guarantee a rich variety of topics for these projects, students receive a list of suggestions that contain prominent Italians and Italian-Americans—men and women alike—from fields spanning the sciences (Montalcini, Fermi, Marconi, Montessori) to the arts, not only famous directors, Renaissance artists, and fashion designers, but also architects (Renzo Piano, Gae Aulenti), politicians (Romano Prodi, Emma Bonino), and other designers (Alberto Alessi), etc. [C2, C8, C10, C11]

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.

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Role-plays. 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 of the use of formal register for week 7 would be to have a political debate (mock national or local, meaning university-level student politics or dormitory elections, etc.). Another example, during week 11 or 12, might be an interview with a famous film director or musical artist/producer (real or imaginary). 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. [C2, C3, C7, C10]

One example of the use of informal register for week 1 (*parlare di sè*) might be to have students hold mock interviews with classmates as potential college roommates for the following year.

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. [C2, C3, C5, C10]

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C5—Instructional materials include a variety of authentic, audio and/or video recordings that develop students' listening abilities at the Intermediate High level.

Current events. Each week two students are responsible for consulting a print or electronic newspaper or newsmagazine and reporting on 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. [C2, C9, C10]

Writing portfolio. Student writing portfolios contain all written work from each semester, including 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 coherence**20%
(organization, style, expression) [C2, C8, C11]

*N.B.: Interpersonal and presentational speaking tasks, as well as interpersonal and presentational writing assignments, alternate regularly between formal and informal settings and registers and cover a vast array of functions (describing, explaining, inviting, accepting, declining, deciding, persuading, purchasing, convincing, etc.) and topics (see unit themes).

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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*). [C3, C5]

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 post-viewing 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, [C3] and so forth.

Co-Curricular Activities

Italian Coffee Hour. Each month the Italian Program hosts an Italian coffee hour to which members of Notre Dame, Saint Mary’s College, and the broader community are invited to come and speak in Italian while enjoying coffee and cookies. Sometimes the event has a theme such as “Meet your Major,” and other times we host holiday parties with a talent show component during which students may recite, present artwork, sing, play music, or act. All students of Italian are required to attend at least one coffee hour per semester. Additional points toward the grade point average are awarded to those who attend all four and write a summary, in Italian, of their experiences.

The Italian Theater Project. Each spring, the Italian Program prepares a full-scale theater production for the Notre Dame and Saint Mary’s College communities and the general public. In addition to reading and studying excerpts from the play during fall and spring terms, all students of Italian are required to attend one public performance of the annual play, and class assessments will include material from this experience.

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, and that gives students the opportunity to compare and contrast linguistic structures between English and Italian. [C3]

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C5—Instructional materials include a variety of authentic, audio and/or video recordings that develop students’ listening abilities at the Intermediate High level.

Student Evaluation

Daily class preparation (homework).....	10%
Class participation (discussion and activities)	10%
Oral presentations.....	10%
Three exams (grammar and content).....	30%
Final exam (written and oral).....	20%
Final writing portfolio	20%

Course Materials

Readings

Literature, films, music, newspapers and magazines, ads, letters, and websites are among the authentic reading materials used in the course. While we read some books in their entirety, most textual materials are excerpts that have been preselected from the many excellent texts and readers on the market, including a broad variety of authentic texts of various genres—journalistic, academic, literary, etc. In addition to poems and prose excerpts such as those included in the *Il reale e il possibile* text, they read short stories by Ginzburg and Benni, segments of film scripts by Tornatore or Benigni, songs with political, regional, or poetic content, such as those by De André and Daniele, and plays by Fo or Campanile linked with those produced by the Italian theater workshop each year.

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 Italice 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)

Corriere della sera (www.corriere.it)

L'Unità (www.unita.it)

General Information

Mediasoft Interactive <http://www.mediasoft.it/italy> (www.mediasoft.it/italy)

This URL links to a free, interactive resource that provides geographic and other general information about Italy.

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