ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

82-90 Wall Street, 203.432.0595
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M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair
Millicent Marcus

Director of Graduate Studies
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Lecturer Serena Bassi

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Affiliated Faculty Roberto González Echevarría (Spanish & Portuguese), Gundula Kreuzer (Music), David Quint (English), Gary Tomlinson (Music)

Visiting faculty from other universities are regularly invited to teach courses in the department.

FIELDS OF STUDY

The Italian department brings together several disciplines for the study of the Italian language and its literature. Although the primary emphasis is on a knowledge of the subject throughout the major historical periods, the department welcomes applicants who seek to integrate their interests in Italian with wider methodological concerns and discourses, such as history, rhetoric and critical theories, comparison with other literatures, the figurative arts, religious and philosophical studies, medieval, Renaissance, and modern studies, and the contemporary state of Italian writing. Interdepartmental work is therefore encouraged and students are accordingly given considerable freedom in planning their individual curriculum, once they have acquired a broad general knowledge of the field through course work and supplementary independent study.

SPECIAL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

The department recognizes that good preparation in Italian literature is unusual at the college level and so suggests that applicants begin as soon as possible to acquire a broad general knowledge of the field through outside reading. At the end of the first and second years, students' progress is analyzed in an evaluative colloquium. Applicants who have had little or no experience in Italy are generally urged to do some work abroad during the course of their graduate program. For all students of Italian, a reading knowledge of Latin is essential. This may be acquired during the course of the first year, but applicants are reminded that it is difficult to schedule beginning language courses in addition to a normal graduate program. Students are advised to acquire proficiency in the languages required for the doctoral program before matriculation.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

Candidates must demonstrate a reading knowledge of a second Romance language, Latin, and a non-Romance language (German recommended). The Latin examination must be passed, usually before the beginning of the third term of study, and all language requirements must be fulfilled before the Ph.D. qualifying examination. Students are required to take two years of course work (as a rule sixteen courses), including two graduate-level term courses outside the Italian department. After consultation with the director of graduate studies (DGS), students who join the graduate program with an M.A. in hand may have up to four courses waived. The comprehensive qualifying examination must take place during the third year of residence. It is designed to demonstrate the student’s mastery of the language and acquaintance with the literature. The examination, which is both written and oral, will be devised in consultation with members of the department. In the term following the qualifying examination, the student will discuss, in a session with the departmental faculty, a prospectus describing the subject and aims of the dissertation. Students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. upon completion of all predissertation requirements, including the prospectus. Admission to candidacy normally occurs by the end of the sixth term.

Teaching is considered to be an important component of the doctoral program in Italian. Students will be appointed as teaching fellows in the third and fourth years of study. Guidance in teaching is provided by the faculty of the department and specifically by the director of language instruction.
COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAMS

Italian and Film and Media Studies

The Department of Italian also offers, in conjunction with the Film and Media Studies Program, a combined Ph.D. in Italian and Film and Media Studies. For further details, see Film and Media Studies. Applicants to the combined program must indicate on their application that they are applying both to Film and Media Studies and to Italian. All documentation within the application should include this information.

Italian and Renaissance Studies

The Department of Italian also offers, in conjunction with the Renaissance Studies Program, a combined Ph.D. in Italian and Renaissance Studies. For further details, see Renaissance Studies.

MASTER’S DEGREES

Only candidates for the Ph.D. degree will be admitted to the program, but the department will, upon request, offer the M.A. and the M.Phil. degrees to students who have completed the general Graduate School requirements for those degrees (see Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations).

Program materials are available upon request to the Director of Graduate Studies, Italian Language and Literature, Yale University, PO Box 208311, New Haven CT 06520-8311.

COURSES

ITAL 530a, Dante in Translation  Giuseppe Mazzotta
A critical reading of Dante's Divine Comedy and selections from the minor works, with an attempt to place Dante's work in the intellectual and social context of the late Middle Ages by relating literature to philosophical, theological, and political concerns.

ITAL 577b, Women in the Middle Ages  Christiana Purdy Moudarres
Medieval understandings of womanhood examined through analysis of writings by and/or about women, from antiquity through the Middle Ages. Introduction to the premodern Western canon and assessment of the role that women played in its construction.

ITAL 653b, Baroque Epics  Giuseppe Mazzotta
A study in some detail of two outstanding epics of the Italian Baroque period (Tasso’s Gerusalemme Liberata and Marino’s Adone). The course stresses such issues as the clash between Christians and Muslims, the continuity of the epic tradition, the retrieval of the language of the lyric, the rethinking of baroque arts and sciences, such as perspectivism, new geographical and astronomical theories, encyclopedism, and contemporary aesthetics of music and art. Guiding idea is the examination of the specific ways in which the two poets represent history, theology, and politics in their texts and, along the way, articulate a theory of modernity.

ITAL 668b / CPLT 809b, Translating the Renaissance  Jane Tylus
Would there have been a Renaissance without translation? We approach this question by beginning with the first modern treatise on translation, by the Florentine chancellor Leonardo Bruni, and moving on to consider the role of translation in Florence's and Tuscany's growing cultural and political mastery over the peninsula—and in Italy's cultural domination of Europe. We go on to explore the translation of “medieval” into “early modern” Europe, the translation of visual into verbal material, and the role of gender in the practice of translation. Students engage in their own translation projects as we dedicate the last part of the seminar to the diffusion of the Petrarchan sonnet tradition in early modern Europe.

ITAL 691a or b, Directed Reading  Staff

ITAL 700a, The New Map of the World: Vico’s Poetic Philosophy  Giuseppe Mazzotta
This course examines Vico's thought globally and in the historical context of the late Renaissance and the Baroque. Starting with Vico's Autobiography, working to his University Inaugural Orations, On the Study of Methods of Our Time, the seminar delves into his juridical-political texts and submits the second New Science (1744) to a detailed analysis. Some attention is given to Vico's poetic production and the encomia he wrote. The overarching idea of the seminar is the definition of Vico's new discourse for the modern age. To this end, discussion deals prominently with issues such as Baroque encyclopedic representations, the heroic imagination, the senses of “discovery,” the redefinition of “science,” the reversal of neo-Aristotelian and neo-Platonic poetics, the crisis of the Renaissance, and the role of the myth.

ITAL 705b / CPLT 639b / WGSS 740b, Gender and Genre in Renaissance Love Poetry  Ayesha Ramachandran
This course interrogates a persistent theme in the literature of the European Renaissance: the love for a much-desired, frequently unobtainable beloved. How and why does love—erotic yearning, sexual passion, unfulfilled desire, religious devotion—become a key subject and metaphor from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century? Focusing on two main poetic genres of the Renaissance—the lyric and the epic—romance—we investigate how questions of desire, love, and gendered subjectivity become a potent means for articulating psychological, social, political, philosophic, and spiritual concerns. Engaging with normative views of gender, erotic discourse, and romantic love from a long historical perspective, this course investigates the development of modern poetry and sexuality in conjunction with each other.
ITAL 773b, Work, Labor, Rights, Duties, Revolutionary Conscience: Nineteenth Century to the Present  Luigi Ballerini
An analysis of such documents as Marx and Engel’s *Communist Manifesto*, Gramsci’s essays on Americanism and Fordism, the Italian 1947 Constitution, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi’s *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*, and Alberto Asor Rosa’s *Scrìtti e Popolo* serves as background to the reading of novels, essays, and poetry by Giovanni Verga (*Mastro-don Gesualdo*), Matilde Serao (*Ventre di Napoli*), Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (*Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*), Alberto Asor Rosa (*Scrittori e Popolo*), Massimo Bontempelli (*Le mosche del capitale*), Ottiero Ottieri (*Donnarumma all’assalto*), Anna Maria Ortese (*Mare non bagna Napoli*), Pier Paolo Pasolini (*Ceneri di Gramsci*), Elio Pagliarani (*La ragazza Carla* and *Ballata di Rudi*), and Nanni Balestrini (*Vogliamo tutto*). The list may be subject to slight variations.

ITAL 781a, The Decameron  Millicent Marcus
An in-depth study of Boccaccio’s text as a journey in genre in which the writer surveys all the storytelling possibilities available to him in the current repertory of short narrative fiction—ranging from ennobling example to flamboyant *fabliaux*, including hagiography, aphorisms, romances, anecdotes, tragedies, and practical jokes—and self-consciously manipulates those forms to create a new literary space of astonishing variety, vitality, and subversive power. In the relationship between the elaborate frame-story and the embedded tales, theoretical issues of considerable contemporary interest emerge—questions of gendered discourse, narratology, structural pastiche, and reader response among them. *The Decameron* is read in Italian or in English. Close attention is paid to linguistic usage and rhetorical techniques in this foundational text of the vernacular prose tradition.