

ITALIAN STUDIES

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<http://italian.yale.edu>
 M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair

Jane Tylus

Director of Graduate Studies

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Professors Millicent Marcus, Jane Tylus, Heather Webb

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Senior Lectors I Michael Farina, Simona Lorenzini, Deborah Pellegrino

Affiliated Faculty Paola Bertucci, (*History of Science, Medicine, and Public Health*), Howard Bloch (*French*), Jessica Brantley (*English*), Francesco Casetti (*Film and Media Studies*), Joanna Fiduccia (*History of Art*), Jacqueline Jung (*History of Art*), Laurence Kanter (*Yale University Art Gallery*), Gundula Kreuzer (*Music*), Morgan Ng (*History of Art*), Jessica Peritz (*Music*), David Quint (*English; Comparative Literature*), Ayesha Ramachandran (*Comparative Literature*), Kevin Repp (*Beinecke Library*), Lucia Rubinelli (*Political Science*), Pierre Saint-Amand (*French*), Gary Tomlinson (*Music*)

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

FIELDS OF STUDY

The Italian Studies 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 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

The department recognizes that good preparation in Italian literature is unusual at the college level and so suggests that students begin as soon as possible to acquire a broad general knowledge of the field through outside reading. Candidates must

demonstrate proficiency in two languages in addition to English and Italian; these could be other Romance languages, Latin, or non-Romance languages relevant to the research interests of the individual student. Students are reminded that it is difficult to schedule beginning language courses during the academic year and are therefore encouraged to take them in the summer. (Yale Summer Session offers online language-for-reading courses as well as Latin instruction each summer, for which incoming and continuing students will receive a tuition fellowship.) All language requirements must be fulfilled before the Ph.D. qualifying examination.

Students are required to take two years of course work (normally 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 two courses waived. Students who have had little or no experience in Italy are generally urged to do some work abroad during the course of their graduate program. At the end of the first and second years, students' progress is analyzed in an evaluative colloquium. 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 a three-member committee, chosen by the student. In the term following the qualifying examination, the student will discuss, in a session with faculty members, 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 Studies. 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 Early Modern Studies

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

Italian and Film and Media Studies

The Department of Italian Studies 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 Studies. All documentation within the application should include this information.

MASTER'S DEGREES

M.Phil. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

M.A. Students who withdraw from the Ph.D. program may be eligible to receive the M.A. degree if they have met the requirements and have not already received the M.Phil. degree. For the M.A., students must successfully complete two years of course work (normally sixteen courses), including two graduate-level term courses outside of Italian studies. Candidates in combined programs will be awarded the M.A. only when the master's degree requirements for both programs have been met.

Program materials are available upon request to the DGS, Italian Studies, Yale University, PO Box 208311, New Haven CT 06520-8311.

COURSES

ITAL 6570b / FREN 6700b / LING 5640b / SPAN 5000b, Principles of Language Teaching and Learning Staff

Introduction to the basic principles of second-language acquisition theory, focusing on current perspectives from applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. Topics include language teaching methodology, communicative and task-based approaches, learner variables, intercultural competence, and models of assessment.

ITAL 6578b / ENGL 6576b, Medieval Women Mystics: Piety and Disobedience

Jessica Brantley and Jane Tylus

How was female sanctity practiced in medieval Europe? How did mystical engagement, in particular, spark both piety and disobedience? How was mysticism explored in writing and the arts by women themselves—especially those women who would challenge the status quo by asserting their own direct connections to the divine? Finally, how do we “access” these medieval minds today, and to what extent do contemporary theoretical concerns about gender identity, subjectivity, and alterity enable us to grapple with the intensely personal dynamics of mystical experience? We introduce these questions—and many others—in connection to the lives and works of five medieval women, beginning with Clare of Assisi, who fled her parents’ wealthy home in the middle of the night to join her radical neighbor, Francis. We consider the writings of Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Julian of Norwich, all formative figures in the crisis-ridden fourteenth century who unsettled the boundaries between private and public, religious and “profane.” Finally, we read the *Book of Margery Kempe* as a fifteenth-century record of how the mystical experiences of female saints inspired one bourgeois woman’s negotiation between her piety and her community. Historical, cultural, and religious topics to be considered include: the influence of the emerging vernaculars on religious movements and texts; the reassessment of Biblical figures such as Mary, Mary Magdalene, Judith, and Ruth; the impact of marginal, possibly heretical groups such as the Beguines; and the rise of the mendicant orders and the resulting changes to monastic and convent life. If our funding applications are successful, we take a course trip to England and Italy during spring break.

ITAL 6990a / CPLT 6640a, Taking Leave: Meditations on Art, Death, and the

Afterlife from the Bible to the Twentieth Century Jane Tylus and Bruce Gordon

This seminar seeks to contextualize leave-taking within the explicitly religious and artistic contexts of Western culture. We open with readings from ancient texts from Mesopotamian, Greek, Latin, and Judaic cultures, and end with the U.S. Civil War. And in between we spend considerable time on the ways in which the advent of Christianity and, in turn, the Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and modern worlds influenced the practices and understanding of leave-taking. En route we explore how,

for example, Catholicism sought to extend life into the third realm of Purgatory, why the Reformation sought to undo those imaginative excursions, and the extent to which the different faiths of figures such as Michelangelo, Shakespeare, and John Donne produced radically different kinds of finished – and unfinished – works. As we explore the transformative potential of the goodbye in literary and religious works, we also engage with more recent discussions from theologians, theorists, and therapists about grieving, transitions, and letting go. Our objectives are: to strive to understand the important role that leave-takings play in the history of Christianity and artistic expression, especially between 1300–1850; to probe the difference between religious faiths of early modernity with respect to rituals of saying goodbye and the afterlife; to sharpen our skills as readers, spectators, and listeners of works that engage with complex questions regarding the meaning of one's life and one's lifework; and to contextualize our readings within contemporary conversations about dying, grief, and letting go. Area V and Area III.

ITAL 8594a, Canons and Counter-Canons: Modern and Contemporary Italian Prose

Serena Bassi

There's no such thing as "the great Italian novel". The modern bourgeois aesthetic form *par excellence* may be routinely described by literary theorists as emerging and seeing its major developments in Spain, Britain, France, or Russia. Italy is usually excluded from this particular invented cultural trajectory. Instead of seeing this assessment as an indictment on Italian versions of the novel form, we interpret the supposed lack as an opportunity for rethinking the novel from a marginal vantage point. We read six canonical Italian novels and six minor ones that may be read as critical responses to the better-known texts, beginning at the start of the nineteenth century and ending two centuries after with the likely winner of the 2025 *Premio Strega*. Throughout the class, we ask what may be peculiar or eccentric about the Italian novelistic tradition by focusing, in particular, on the ways in which the novel registers and encodes philosophical debate about the nature of time and history; collective and individual memory; class and social mobility; *Bildung* and selfhood. The class is held in English, but reading knowledge of Italian is required (we read all texts in Italian; many of them do not have available English translations).

ITAL 8783a / FILM 7790a, Italian Film Ecologies: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Millicent Marcus

Landscape and the natural environment have never occupied "background" status in Italian film. Given the spectacular visual presence of its terrain – thanks to the relative proximity of mountain chains and the long seacoast – and given the pivotal importance of farming and pasturage in this traditionally agrarian economy, the synergy between the human and natural worlds has played a prominent role in Italian filmmaking since the very inception of the industry. Most recently, two developments have pushed this issue to the forefront of scholarly attention: the advent of ecocriticism, which found one of its earliest and most influential champions in Serenella Iovino, and the establishment of regional film commissions, grassroots production centers that sponsored cinematic works attuned to the specificity of "the local." The course includes study of films that predate our current environmental consciousness, as well as recent films that foreground it in narrative terms. In the case of the older films, which have already attracted a great deal of critical commentary over time, we work to shift our interpretive frame in an "eco-friendly" direction (even when the films' characters are

hardly friends of the environment). Among the films considered are *Le quattro volte*, *Il vento fa il suo giro*, *L'uomo che verrà*, *Gomorra*, *L'albero degli zoccoli*, *Riso amaro*, *Red Desert*, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, and *Il ladro di bambini*. We screen one film a week and devote our seminars to close analysis of the works in question.

ITAL 9999a, Preparing for Doctoral Exams and Prospectus Writing Serena Bassi

The aim of this seminar is to give third-year students the opportunity to work together on the three projects that will occupy them throughout Year 3: the oral comprehensive exam (for early November), the written exam on the three topics lists (for March–April), and the writing of the prospectus, to be defended in September of Year 4.

Weekly meetings are run and coordinated by a faculty member in Italian, generally the graduate adviser. Each week of the first nine weeks is devoted to a specific topic on the comprehensive lists requested by the students themselves. Students are in conversation with each other, with the presiding faculty member, and with an additional guest lecturer who is an expert in the areas under discussion. Following the ninth week, there is a dry run of the oral exam. The remaining four weeks are devoted to discussing the composition of the topics lists and to the writing of the prospectus. Informal meetings may continue through the spring to discuss these issues as well. Prerequisite: completion of all other graduate course work (15 credits).