

Politics in Modern Italy
Instructor: David Walthall
Language of Instruction: English
UO Credits: 5
Contact Hours*: 45

SYLLABUS

Total Hours of Student Engagement (THSE) in all course activities*:
Level: 300

Siena, Italy

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores modern Italian political history, from the Risorgimento and unification in 1861 through the World Wars, fascism, the post-war economic boom, and EU integration. Contemporary topics include governmental instability, regionalism, corruption, reforms, political messaging and Italy's evolving role in global affairs.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Trace the foundations and historical development of modern Italy
- Investigate contemporary Italian politics and current events
- Explore political communication, from historical propaganda to modern social media
- Examine Italy's relationships with global allies and rivals
- Reflect on populist movements and the visibility of key Italian political actors
- Visit sites in Siena and environs that illustrate key historical and political themes

STUDENT OUTCOMES.

- Understand how historical events have shaped contemporary Italian politics
- Analyze the impact of the European Union, economic crises, and the rise of populism
- Develop a visual and textual vocabulary for interpreting persuasion and rhetoric
- Gain tools to critically evaluate modern political discourse

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

- Three class sessions per week, combining lectures and discussions
- Frequent site visits in Siena related to course themes, including:
 - Palazzo Pubblico (Risorgimento Room)
 - Le Stanze della Memoria (museum of fascism, resistance, and WWII)
 - Siena Synagogue (Jewish community history and experiences)
 - Public monuments (e.g., Garibaldi statue, Fascist-era buildings, war monuments)
- Required day-long / overnight group program excursions (tbd)

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

The course will be graded as follows:

- **50%** – 10 weekly short quizzes (10 × 5 pts), covering weekly course themes
- **40%** – 2 extended reflections (2 × 20 pts) on macro course themes and identification questions
- **5%** – Individual or small group presentation on a weekly topic
- **5%** – Attendance and active course participation

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Overview; Current Governmental Institutions and Procedures; Political Parties and Elections; Key Actors. 1815-1915: Italian Resistance to Austrian Domination, the Movement for National Unity and Independence (Risorgimento); The Kingdom of Italy; Site visit: Monuments in la Lizza.

[Recent Government Press releases](#)

[Reading A: Italy overview](#)

[Reading B: Overview Continued](#)

[Reading C: Parliament overview](#)

[Reading D: https://www.governo.it/en/president](https://www.governo.it/en/president)

Quiz _1: Based on Readings

Presentation _1: Italian Political Landscape Today

Week 2: Risorgimento; The New Kingdom of Italy; Triple Alliance & World War I;

Site visit: Palazzo Pubblico;

Readings 2:

Pollard: Ch 1. The Prehistory of Italian Fascism p. 1-17

Pollard: Ch2. The Crisis of the Liberal State and the Rise of Fascism p.18-37

Quiz_2: based on readings

Presentation_2: Mazzini & Garibaldi

Week 3: The Rise of Fascism

Site visit: Poste Centrali & WWI memorials

Readings 3:

Pollard: Ch3. The Conquest & Consolidation of Power p.38-5

Pollard: Ch 4. The Fascist Regime 55-74

Extra: Linter: The Liberal State & Fascism p.172-201

Quiz_3: based on readings

Presentation_3: Cult of personality

Week 4: Colonial Italy & World War II

Site visit: Stanze della memoria

Readings 4:

Pollard: Ch5. Fascist Economic & Social Policies p.75-88

Pollard: Ch6. Fascist Foreign Policy 1922-1939 p.75-88

Extra: Ginsborg Chapter 1. "Italy at War" p. 8-37.

Quiz_4: Based on Readings

Presentation_4: Rome-Berlin Axis

Week 5: WWII; Partisans, Allies, Civil War
Site visit Synagogue

Readings 5:

Pollard: Ch. 7 War, defeat & the Fall of Fascism p.103-117

Pollard: Ch. 9 The Legacy of Fascism p.129-141

Extra: Ginsborg Chapter 2. “Resistance & Liberation” p. 39-71.

Quiz_5: based on Readings

Expanded Reflections 1

Presentation_5: Liberation of Siena;

Week Six: Monarchy to Republic; Intensification of Partisan Politics; The Rise of the Christian Democrats.

Readings 6:

Ginsborg Chapter 3: “The Post-War Settlement 1945-48” p.[72-120](#).

Ginsborg Chapter 5: “Christian Democracy in State and Society” p.141-185

Quiz_6: Based on readings

Presentation_6: Cold War Dynamics in Italy

Week 7: The Economic Boom/Miracle & Social Transformations; Immigration;

Readings7:

Ginsborg Chapter 7-8: “The Economic Miracle: Rural Exodus & Social Transformation 1958-1963” p. 210-251, 283-290.

Quiz_7: Based on Readings

Presentation_7: Mass consumer society :Vespa

Week 8: Student protests, Urban Terrorism, Corruption,

Readings 8:

Ginsborg Chapter 9: The Era of Collective Action 1968-1973;

Ginsborg Chapter 10: Crisis, Compromise and the Anni di Piombo 1973-1980.

Quiz_8: Based on Readings

Presentation_8: Red & Black Brigades

Week 9: Berlusconi, Forza Italia and Corruption

Site visit: Bottega Libera Terra

Readings 9

Ginsborg: Italy and its Discontents Ch 6 Corruption and the Mafia: 179-212

Ginsborg: Italy and its Discontents Ch 9. From Berlusconi to Berlusconi p.285-324

Quiz_9: Based on Readings

Presentation_9: Forza Italia and Marketing

Week 10: Italy, Europe and the World

Recent elections and Current Coalitions: Future of Italian Politics.

Readings tbd (current events)

Quiz_10: Based on Readings

Presentation 10: Expansion of European Union?

Expanded Reflection 2

COURSE READINGS

Broder, David. *First They Took Rome: How the Populist Right Conquered Italy*. London: Verso, 2020

Lintner, Valerio. *A Traveller's History of Italy*. Interlink, 2003.

Ginsborg, Paul. [*A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980*](#). London: Penguin, 1990.

Ginsborg, Paul. [*Italy and Its Discontents 1980-2001*](#). London: Penguin, 2003.

Origo, Iris. *War in Val d'Orcia*. London: Allison & Busby, 1999 (1947 original)

Pollard, John. *The Fascist Experience in Italy*. London: Routledge, 1998 (1958 original)

Tomasi di Lampedusa, Giuseppe. *The Leopard (Il Gattopardo)*. New York: Pantheon, 1991.

Periodic consultation of historical video archive footage from [Istituto Luce](#).

Periodic consultation of articles, audio stories, and videos from media sources including *Corriere della Sera*, *La Nazione*, *The Economist*, *The Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Reuters*.

Periodic consultation of Facebook and Instagram channels of Italian/International political actors/parties including 5 Stelle, European Union, Fratelli d'Italia, Italia Viva, Lega, PD.

Academic Misconduct

[The University Student Conduct Code](#) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before attempting an act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

Generative AI Course Policy

Students may use GenAI tools for coursework and assignments—for example, to brainstorm, outline, or edit. If you include any GenAI-generated content (text, images, graphics, etc.) in your submissions, you must cite the tool as you would any other source (books, articles, websites, etc.). Guidelines for citing GenAI and other sources will be provided in class and on Canvas, along with tips on how to use GenAI effectively to support your learning. Please note: GenAI output can be inaccurate or misleading, and relying on it may lower the quality of your work and your grade. Questions and discussion about GenAI are welcome—let's talk about how to use it responsibly and thoughtfully.

Accessible Education

The University of Oregon and I are dedicated to fostering inclusive learning environments for all students and welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Accessible Education Center (AEC) assists students with disabilities in reducing campus-wide and classroom-related barriers. [If you have or think you have a disability](#) and experience academic barriers, please contact the AEC to discuss appropriate accommodations or support. Visit 360 Oregon Hall or aec.uoregon.edu for more information. You can contact AEC at 541-346-1155 or via email at uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Pregnancy Modifications. Pregnant and parenting students are eligible for academic and work modifications related to pregnancy, childbirth, loss of pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, lactation, and related medical conditions. To request pregnancy-related modifications, students should complete the [Request for Pregnancy Modifications form](#) on the OICRC website. OICRC coordinates academic and other modifications for pregnant and parenting students to ensure students can continue to access their education and university programs and activities.