

SYLLABUS

CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES: A JOURNEY THROUGH CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Instructor: Silvia Minucci
Language of Instruction: English
UO Credits: 2
Hours*: 20
Siena, Italy

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Living in Siena offers you two important learning experiences. The first (more obvious) one concerns Italian life and culture, specifically as it is lived out around you in Siena day by day. What is important to people here? What patterns are woven into their lives? What about their history, their hopes, their daily dilemmas? The second learning opportunity involves coming to understand the cultural baggage that you have (inevitably) brought with you to Siena and the implicit assumptions that you use in understanding Siennese life. The juncture of these two learning experiences for students living and studying in Siena.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

This course has been designed to develop skills in observing cultural life, interpreting the meaning of interactions, and challenging your own interpretations. Students should reach a level of integration and understanding of the host culture, their home culture, and of themselves. Cross-Cultural adaptation is, in fact, a continuing process that involves the evolution of insight, knowledge, and emotional skills. Meeting local people gives our students the opportunity not only to learn how the locals behave in different situations but also to be able to understand why. This is why students should avoid making definitive, prejudicial judgments that may stem from their own cultural responses, but rather stay open-minded and receptive to different ideas, concepts, and behavior. This course explores how culture and traditions shape personal and collective identities, communication styles, values, and learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Most of the classes combine in-class lectures with outside visits. Through local fieldtrip, interactive sessions, reflections on cultural identity, and sharing personal stories, showing photographs, we explore and discuss cultural changes in Italy, comparing them to those in American culture. Other class activities include videos, small group tasks, reflective journaling, guest speakers, cultural interpretation by the instructor and shared group experiences.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

- Attendance and active participation (30%).
Attendance at all classes is mandatory.

Active participation in activities and discussions. You are expected to engage with the topic of each session and contribute to discussions and assigned tasks.

Observation/interpretation papers (50%). Late papers will be penalized.

- ICC: Final Presentation (20%).

Weekly Topics:

- **Introduction & Cultural Competence**

Overview of course organization and expectations.

ICC Readings:

Paige M. R., Cohen A.; Kappler B.; Chi J.; Lassegard J.P., “Strategies for Social Relations” (pp. 77-90); “Adjusting” (pp. 91-106) in *Maximizing Study Abroad* – Second Edition University of Minnesota, 2014.

- **Non-Verbal Communication**

Introduction to some of the subtleties of Italian interpersonal style.

ICC Readings:

Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, “Physical Distance and Contact” (pp. 80) in *The Italian Way*

Falassi Alessandro, Raymond Flower, “The Languages of Italians” (pp. 40-49) in *Cultural Shock!*

Hall Edward T., “Chapter 1: The Voices of Times” (pp.1-19) in *The Silent Language*

Paige M. R., Cohen A.; Kappler B.; Chi J.; Lassegard J.P., “Strategies for Developing Intercultural Competence” (pp. 107-118); “Strategies for Keeping a Journal” (pp. 119-124); “Strategies for Intercultural Communication” (pp.125-132); “Non Verbal Communication”(pp.133-142) in *Maximizing Study Abroad* – Second Edition University of Minnesota, 2014.

- **Community and Mobility**

How is community created and maintained in Siena? Learn how *contrada* membership shapes social interactions and opportunities for Siennese people, lifestyle by lifestyle. (Short video on the *Palio*). What role does the *contrada* play in community organization and services?

ICC Readings:

Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, “Il Bar” (pp.5,6); “Il Campanilismo” (pp.16, 17); “Il Palio” (pp.77 - 79); “La Piazza: The Center of Daily Life” (pp. 80, 81) in *The Italian Way*.

Falassi Alessandro, Raymond Flower, “Campanilismo” (p.7) in *Cultural Shock!*

“Our little Paris” from *The Passeggiata and Popular Culture* (pp. 14 -19)

ARTICLE: *Personal Space – Why Italians Seem Require Less of it.*

- **Siena’s Palio Horse Race: Everything you need to know**

Emotional and Cultural Depth: The Palio involves intense emotions, pride, rivalry, joy and heartbreak. It is the beating heart of Siennese cultural life, binding the past to the present and shaping community identity.

ICC Readings:

Dundes A.; Falassi A., “The Contrada”, pp. 29-56, “The days of the Palio” pp. 57-74; “The Palio as a Metaphor for Siennese Worldview”, pp. 165-206 in *La Terra in Piazza – An Interpretation of the Palio of Siena*.

Campanini, Michele (editore) e Monica Minucci (illustratore) 17 storie per 17 contrade. Gli animali e i simboli fantastici delle contrade del Palio di Siena raccontati dagli studenti di Santo Spirito.

- **Visit the Istrice (Porcupine) Contrada Museum**

- **Visit the Torre (Tower) Contrada Museum**

- **Religion**

What does it mean to have a “national religion,” both personally and politically? What role does Catholicism play in Italian life? What role does religion play in community organization and groups?

A tour of Saint Dominic Basilica will be held by Father Alfred Father Alfred today can help answer these questions and all the others that you have on this complex topic.

ICC Readings:

Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, “Religion” (pp.86-87) in *The Italian Way*.

Krause L. Elizabeth, “Catholics and Communism” (pp.81-83) in *A crisis of Births: Population Politics and Family-Making Italy*.

“Catholic Culture” in *Italian Cultural Studies (article)*.

- **Visit the hidden corners in Siena and Saint Catherine House**

- **Underground tunnels (Bottini)** “There is a hidden underground town beneath Siena. 25 km of tunnels lie below the city and its surroundings. In the Thirteenth Century, the underground tunnels (known as *bottini*) were dug from the tufa to collect rainwater to supply public fountains. These tunnels were used as aqueducts until the First World War”. Watch the video.

ICC Readings:

Catoni G.; Piccinni G., “Siena and Water” pp. 190-192. In *An Illustrated History of Siena*.

Serino V. *Siena e L'Acqua: storia e immagini di una città e delle sue fonti (images)*.

- **Some Tentative Conclusions**

What insights have you gained during your sojourn in Siena? Class discussion will process observations and experiences.

Storti, C., “The Stages of Reentry” (pp.53-72) in *The Art of Coming Home*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997

Books You Might Find Interesting

- Abbott, C. *Culture Smart! Italy*, Kperard, Graphic Arts Center Publ., 2004.
- Althen, G. *American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2003.
- Barzini Luigi, *The Italians*. Athenaeum, New York. 1977.
- Bennett, M. J., ed. *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1998.
- Brislin, R. W., Cushner K. Cherrie C., Yong M. *Intercultural Interactions: A Practical Guide*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc. 1986.
- Catoni G., Piccinni G.; *An Illustrated History of Siena*. Pacini editore. 2008.
- Costantino M., Gambella L., *The Italian Way - Aspects of Behavior, Attitudes, and Customs of the Italians*. Passport Books 1996.
- Dundes A.; Falassi A., *La Terra in Piazza – An Interpretation of the Palio of Siena*. 2025
- Edward C. Stewart, Milton J. Bennett, *American Cultural Patterns- A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Intercultural Press, Inc. 1991.
- Falassi Alessandro, Raymond Flower, *Cultural Shock! Italy*. Kuperard, 1999.
- Fisher, Glen (1997) *Mindsets – The Role of Culture and Perception in International Relations*. Yarmouth ME. Intercultural Press.
- Fowler, S. M., and M. G. Mumford, eds. *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods* Vol. 1. Yarmouth ME: Intercultural Press, 1995.
- Fowler, S. M., and M. G. Mumford, eds. *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods*. Vol. 2. Yarmouth ME: Intercultural Press, 1999.
- Hall, E. T. *Beyond Culture*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1981.
- Hall, E. T. *The Hidden Dimension*. Anchor Books. 1990.
- Hall, E. T. *The Silent Language*. Anchor Books. 1990.
- Hofstede, J., P. B. Pedersen, and G. H. Hofstede. *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2002.
- Kohls, L. R., and J. M. Knight. *Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-Cultural Training Handbook*. 2nd ed. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1994.
- Kohls, L.R., *Survival Kit for overseas living*. 4th ed. Yarmouth, ME: The Intercultural Press, 2001.
- Krause L. Elizabeth, *A crisis of Births: Population Politics and Family-Making Italy*; Thomson Wadsworth, 2005.
- Paige M. R., Cohen A.; Kappler B.; Chi J.; Lassegard J.P., *Maximizing Study Abroad – Second Edition* University of Minnesota, 2014.
- Raelen D’Agostino Mautner, *Living La Dolce Vita: Bring the Passion, Laughter and Serenity of Italy into Your Daily Life*. Sourcebooks, Inc. 2003
- Reid I., *Strolling around Siena*, Amazon Italia Logistica S.r.l. Torrazza Piemonte (TO), Italy, 2018
- Savicki V., *Developing Intercultural Competence and Transformation*, Stylus Publishing, 2008
- Seelye N. H., *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning*. Intercultural Press. 1996.
- Serino Vinicio, *Siena e l’acqua, storia e immagini della città e delle sue fonti*, nuova immagine editrice, 1998.
- Stewart, E. C., and M. J. Bennett. *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1991.
- Storti, C. *Figuring Foreigners Out: A Practical Guide*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1999.
- Storti, C. *The Art of Coming Home*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997
- Storti, C. *The Art of Crossing Cultures*. 2nd ed. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2001.
- Storti, C., *Cross-Cultural Dialogues: 74 Brief Encounters with Cultural Difference*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1994.
- Summerfield, E. and Lee Sandra, *Seeing the Big Picture – A Cinema Approach to Understanding Cultures in America*. The University of Michigan, 2006.
- Summerfield, E., *Survival Kit for Multicultural Living*. Intercultural Press. Inc. 1997.
- Vande Berg, M., Paige R.M.; Lou K., *Student Learning Abroad – What Our Students Are Learning, What They’re Not, and What We Can Do About It*. Stylus Publishing, 2012.
- Zanobini Folco., *What Do You Think of Italy?* Bulgarini Ed., 2000.
- Zollo M., Aust D., *World Cultures: Italy*, Teach Yourself, 2004

Academic Misconduct

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) 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 committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at <https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>.

Generative AI Course Policy

Students may not use GenAI tools in this course to produce course materials or assignments in whole or in part. All work you submit for this course toward completion of course requirements must be your own original work done specifically for this course and without substantive assistance from others, including GenAI. Work you've completed for previous courses or are developing for other courses this term also should not be submitted for this course.

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 uoacc@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.