

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION/ CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Instructor: Dr. Silvia Minucci

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 is the focus of this course.

Methodology

This course has been designed to develop skills in observing cultural life, interpreting the meaning of interactions, and challenging your own interpretations. Written assignments focus on a particular weekly topic and are used as the basis for in-class discussions. Other class activities include films, local fieldtrips, small group tasks, guest speakers, role plays, opportunities to meet Italian students, and cultural interpretation by the instructor.

Grading and Evaluation

Your grade will be based on the following three components:

- Attendance and active participation (30%).
Attendance at all classes is mandatory. Promptness is essential. Active participation in activities and discussions. You are expected to engage with the topic of each session and contribute to discussions and assigned tasks. Suggested readings provide important background information keyed to each weekly topic. Copies of these short articles can be checked out at the counter.
- Five observation/interpretation papers (50%). Each paper focuses on one small incident that you have personally observed and is due **at the start of class** on the day assigned. Detailed instructions will be provided in a separate handout for the content and format of these papers. Follow these guidelines carefully. Late papers will be penalized.
- Final performance (20%).

Weekly Topics

Week one: **Community and Mobility**

How is community created and maintained in Siena? Visit to a *contrada*, followed by discussion and questions. Learn how *contrada* membership shapes social interactions and opportunities for Sienese people, lifestage by lifestage. (Short video on the *Palio*).

Visit to the Val of the Ram (Val di Montone) contrada.

Suggested Readings:

Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, Il Bar (p.5); Il Campanilismo (p.16); Il Palio (p.77); La Piazza: The Center of Daily Life (80) in *The Italian Way*.

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

Stewart Edward C., Bennett Janet M.. Chapter 4: Form of Activity (pp 61-87); Perception of the Self (pp.129-136) in *American Cultural Pattern – A Cross-Cultural Perspective*.

Week two: **Non-Verbal Communication**

Overview of course organization and expectations. Introduction to some of the subtleties of Italian interpersonal style.

Suggested Readings:

Althen Gary, Chapter 2: The communicative style of Americans (pp. 42-51)

Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, Physical Distance and Contact in *Italian Way* (p. 80/107) Falassi Alessandro, Raymond Flower, The Languages of Italian in *Cultural Shock!* (pp. 40-49).

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

Stewart Edward C., Bennett Janet M. Chapter 3: Language and Nonverbal Behavior in *American Cultural Pattern – A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (pp 56-60)

Week three: **Cultural Shock**

Video showing of *Cold Water*, followed by discussion. What is known about culture shock? Why do some people seem immune while others really suffer? What's been your own experience so far?

(Note: An opportunity to meet and socialize with Italian university students is being arranged for an evening, in this week or in the near future.)

Suggested Readings:

Althen Gary, Chapter 21: Some Helpful Ideas, in *American Ways* (pp.265-267).

Bennett. Janet M. Transition Shock: Putting Culture Shock in Perspectives (pp. 215-223) in *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication*.

Kohls, L. Robert *Survival Kit for overseas living* (pp. 63-68).

Storti, Craig, "The Regular Life" in *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (pp. 99-103).

Week four: **Gender and Sexuality**

What are the general expectations for men and women in Italy? What about sexuality? Are behaviors and expectations changing? What differences are there with the U.S.?

Paper #1 is due at the start of class.

Suggested Readings:

Althen Gary, Chapter 12: Male-Female Relationships in *American Ways* (pp.173-186)

Barzini Luigi, Chapter Eleven: The Power of the Family (pp. 190-203) in *The Italians*.

Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, The Latin Lover (pp.110-111); Women (pp. 112-113); Work (pp.113-114) in *The Italian Way*

Falassi Alessandro, Raymond Flower, The Italian Lover (pp.82-83) in *Cultural Shock!*

Stewart Edward C., Bennett Janet M., Chapter 4: Perception of the Self (pp.142-147) in *American Cultural Pattern – A Cross-Cultural Perspective*.

Week five: **Family and Discipline**

What are Italian children taught? How are they encouraged to “behave properly”? Disciplined if they don’t? What does “family” mean to Italians?

Paper #2 is due at start of class

Suggested Readings:

Althen Gary, Althen Gary, Preface, (pp. xxvi-xxvii); Chapter 6: Family Life (pp. 85-99).

Bulgarini, The First Thing Is the Family in *What Do You Think of Italy?* (pp.6-10; 13-16).

Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, Family and Friends (pp.36-38) in *The Italian Way*.

Falassi Alessandro, Raymond Flower, Home Life and Attitudes in *Cultural Shock!* (pp. 68-71)

Week six: **Social Status, Values and Display**

How is social ranking demonstrated and maintained? How are certain classes of people or certain individuals able to prevail in some situations? What are the important symbols of social status in Siena? Are these different in the rest of Italy?

Paper #3 is due at the start of class

Suggested Readings:

Althen Gary, Equality (pp. 14-17)

Barzini Luigi, How to Succeed (pp. 226-230; 232-233) in *The Italians*

Bennett, Janet M. Social Relationships (pp. 160-162) in *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication*
Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, Professional and Civil Titles” (pp.83-84);
“Gallantry” (pp.41-42); “*La Raccomandazione*” (pp. 85-86) in *The Italian Way*.
Falassi A., Raymond F., “Dress Code” (pp.73-74); “Visiting Cards” (pp.81-82) in
Cultural Shock!
Stewart Edward C., Bennett Janet M. Chapter 5: Form of Social Relations
(pp.89-100) in *American Cultural Pattern – A Cross-Cultural Perspective*.

Week seven: **Religion**

What does it mean to have a “national religion,” both personally and politically?
What role does Catholicism play in Italian life? Our guest speaker today can help
answer these questions and all the others that you have on this complex topic.
Paper #4 is due at the start of class

Suggested Readings:

Bulgarini, Believers or Disbelievers, Common Morality in *What Do You Think of Italy?* (pp.36-47). Althen Gary, Chapter 8: Religion (pp. 119-127)
Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, Religion (pp.86-87) in *The Italian Way*.
Falassi Alessandro, Raymond Flower, Houses of Worship in *Cultural Shock!* (p. 149).

Week eight: **The “Iron Baron”, Chianti, a wine for eternity**

“Contemporary history of the *Chianti Classico* began in the 1800s, when Bettino Ricasoli (the Iron Baron), who we might call the “father” of modern Chianti, codified the recipe for Chianti production. In 1847 he defined the traditional method of Tuscan wine-making and established the proportions of the grapes comprising Chianti: *this wine receives most of its perfume and a certain vigorous sensation from Sangiovese; from Canaiolo it draws agreeability to temper any initial harshness; Malvasia, which is rarely used in wines to be aged, tends to reduce the prominence of the two preceding varieties, adds flavor and makes this wine lighter and easier to consume daily at table.*”

Visit to **CASTELLO DI BROLIO** and wine tasting at **FATTORIA di BROLIO** (Half day excursion).

Week nine: **Relationships**

What relationships are central to Italian life? What are the traditional power institutions of Italy, and how is power displayed and maintained? What rewards does it offer, at all levels?

Video showing of *One Hundred Steps*, followed by discussion.

Paper #5 is due at start of class. Be sure your tally sheet is turned in with your paper.

Suggested Readings:

Barzini Luigi, "Sicily and the Mafia" (pp. 252-275) in *The Italians*.

Bulgarini, The Observance of the Law (pp. 44-58); "The Non-Political Italian "Us" and "Them" (pp. 62-71) in *What Do You Think of Italy?*

Costantino Marco, Gambella Lawrence, "Politicians" (pp.81-83) in *The Italian Way*.

Falassi Alessandro, Raymond Flower, "The Mafia" (pp. 83-84) in *Cultural Shock!*

Week ten: **Some Tentative Conclusions**

What insights have you gained during your sojourn in Siena? Class discussion will process observations and experiences, followed by information about the organization and planning of next week's "final extravaganza."

FINAL PERFORMANCE (t.b.a)

Our class ends with a final performance, in which all students collaborate and take part. This is your chance to act out some of the definitive moments that helped you capture the uniqueness and meanings of Italian culture, especially those that differ with "the normal U.S. way." Draw on the experiences you described in your papers and your daily interactions for humorous and telling case studies. See how insightful, funny, and culturally specific your group can be!

BOOKS YOU MIGHT FIND INTERESTING

- Abbott, C. *Culture Smart! Italy*, Kuperard, Graphic Arts Center Publ., 2004.
- Althen, G. *American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2003.
- 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*. Sage Publications Inc. 1986.
- Bulgarini, *What Do You Think of Italy?* Bulgarini Ed., 2000.
- Costantino M., Gambella L., *The Italian Way - Aspects of Behavior, Attitudes, and Customs of the Italians*. Passport Books 1996.
- 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.
- Luigi Barzini, *The Italians*. Atheneum, New York. 1977.
- Raeleen D'Agostino Mautner, *Living La Dolce Vita: Bring the Passion, Laughter and Serenity of Italy into Your Daily Life*. Sourcebooks, Inc. 2003
- Seelye N. H., *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning*. Intercultural Press. 1996.
- 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 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., *Survival Kit for Multicultural Living*. Intercultural Press. Inc. 1997.
- Zollo M., Aust D., *World Cultures: Italy*, Teach Yourself, 2004.