

**PSCI 009-303 Critical Writing Seminar in Political Science:
Italian Politics and Society**
Thursdays 1:30-4:30, McNeil Building 582

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Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30am-12pm

Course description

As a critical writing seminar, this course provides an introduction to college-level writing, culminating in the production of a full-length research paper. As a freshman seminar, it offers a window onto the discipline of political science through the study of a particular country "case," Italy.

Italian politics provides us with a wealth of sensational subjects: violence, religion, sex, fascism, communism, organized crime, corruption. *Eppur si muove*. And yet Italy DOES work, sort of. Our task over the course of this semester is to understand why, and how. We'll examine these sensational subjects with an eye to how they fit into the context of every day life and normal politics in Italy. We'll scrutinize political science explanations for these phenomena to see whether they help us understand Italian politics, or just invent new stereotypes. And we will work on producing our own informed arguments about Italian politics.

How this class works

This class is not a place to passively soak up expert knowledge, but rather a place of discussion and collaboration. We will read a variety of interpretations of the world around us, and spend our time in class thinking together about what these different interpretations add up to. During the course of this work together, we will also examine our own arguments, with an eye to what works and what doesn't in scholarly writing.

The questions posed in the syllabus for each week will help you focus your reading and provide a basis for provocative class discussions. Informed participation is the key to a productive semester. Start by reading actively and critically; then come to class ready to debate. Not all students "participate" by talking a mile a minute, and the most important contributions to a discussion do not always take the form of being the first, most frequent or most insistent speaker. But within the bounds of your own personal style, I demand that you take risks and think out loud, and forbid you to wait until you have the perfectly formulated comment or question to throw out on the floor. Apart from three mini-lectures on Italian politics introducing each section of the course, I will

act primarily as a guide and a referee to make sure that our discussion stays on track. Beyond that, the floor is yours, and the more engaged you are, the more interesting the class will be. YOU are the course.

Readings

The readings for each week combine writing about reading, writing and researching with descriptive and analytical treatments (textbook, journalistic or anthropological, and/or political science) of a subject that is thematically important for the study of Italian politics and society. There is more assigned reading for this course than for many other critical writing seminars, because learning about new case material in political science often depends on critical reading as much as critical writing. I recommend that you read the selections in the order in which they are listed on the syllabus. As you read, keep in mind the week's study questions and writing assignments, and be sure to record your thoughts about what could be used as "evidence" to support your responses to these questions.

The shorter required readings are collected in a course pack available at Wharton Reprographics, 3620 Locust Walk, Steinberg Hall - Dietrich Hall (basement).

The remainder of the readings are substantial excerpts from the following books:

- Andrews, Geoff. 2005. Not a Normal Country: Italy after Berlusconi
- Banfield, Edward. 1967. The Moral Basis of a Backward Society
- Belmonte, Thomas. 1989. The Broken Fountain
- Levi, Carlo. 1947. Christ Stopped at Eboli
- Maimon, Elaine, Janice Peritz, and Kathleen Blake Yancee. 2007. A Writer's Resource
- Putnam, Robert. 1992. Making Democracy Work
- Ross, Valerie, ed. 2006. The Practice of Writing (2nd ed)
→ Contains Bruffee and Lanham readings
- *Schneider, Jane and Peter Schneider. 2003. Reversible Destiny
- *Spotts, F and T Weiser. 1986. Italy, A Difficult Democracy

(*= less than half of the book is assigned; purchase is recommended but not required)

These books are all available for purchase at Penn Book Center (130 S. 34th St). With the exception of the Maimon et al. textbook (which the Critical Writing Program requires that you purchase) the books will also be on reserve at Rosengarten Reserve, located in the Undergraduate Study Center on the ground floor of the Van Pelt Library.

Assignments

You are expected to come to class having read and digested the week's readings on both writing and Italian politics; having completed the written assignment(s); and prepared to debate the study questions and other issues that arise in seminar.

Participation in seminar discussions and collaborative exercises will account for 25% of your final grade.

Weekly **written work** is ungraded, but timely completion of work is required and will count for 25% of your final grade. Weekly written assignments are due in hard copy (no staples, please!) in my mailbox in Stiteler Hall by **9:30am on the Thursday of class** AND in electronic form via email. **Late assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances.** With written assignments due every week, any one late (no credit) assignment will not compromise your final grade unduly. Failing to complete assignments will, however, make it harder to participate effectively in class and to compile your final paper portfolio. It is up to you to prioritize the many competing demands on your time.

A **final paper portfolio** including the following elements will count for the remaining 50% of the final grade:

- Three researchable questions (Week 2)
- First introduction (Week 5)
- Skeleton paper (Week 10)
- Second draft (Week 13)
- Final paper (due December 18th)

Part I: Images of Italian Politics and Society

- *Week 1 (Sept 7) Course Introduction*

In class:

Mini-Lecture: Italian geography and Italian politics from the Risorgimento to Mussolini
Writing diagnostic

Readings:

Read syllabus carefully and note deadlines in your calendar

- *Week 2 (Sept 14) Civicness and Uncivicness*

Readings:

Bruffee (*in Ross*) pp. 73-84 (propositions), 140-157 (descriptive outlines)

Maimon pp. 130-136 (argument), 207-213 (research papers)

Putnam, Robert (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press (Chapters 1,3,4,5,6).

Questions:

Is Putnam's view of Italy biased? Is it scientific? Defend your position with examples, and be sure to define key terms.

Assignments:

Take grammar diagnostic in Maimon et al. online.

Write a "descriptive outline" of one chapter from *Making Democracy Work*.

Write, rewrite, or revise (from Week 1 in class) three researchable questions about Italian politics. Devise a proposition or thesis (best guess, at this point) in answer to each of the three questions.

- *Week 3 (Sept 21) Patrons and Clients*

Readings:

Bruffee pp. 84-99 (reasons), 29-39 (two reasons), 47-50 (Nestorian order), 53-55 (straw man), 57-59 (straw man and one reason), 61-62 (concession), 104-116 (unity and coherence)

Maimon pp. 21-32 (reading critically)

Piattoni, S. (2001). "Clientelism in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in Piattoni, S., ed. *Clientelism, interests, and democratic representation: the European experience in historical and comparative perspective*. New York, Cambridge University Press (pp. 1-30).

Spotts, Frederick and Thomas Wieser (1986). *Italy: A Difficult Democracy. A Survey of Italian Politics*. New York, Cambridge University Press (Chapter 7).

Questions:

In what ways are patronage and clientelism "traditional" and/or "modern" (and what do you mean by those terms)?

Is clientelism a "Southern problem" or a national problem? Or is it not a problem at all?

Assignments:

Write a Bruffee essay (your choice of form) using one of the questions above as a jumping-off point. (You may *either* use your answer to one of these questions as your proposition *or* devise another proposition related to one of these questions.)

- Week 4 (Sept 28) *Fascism and Mussolini's Italy*

Readings:

Maimon pp. 403-425 (editing for clarity)

Lanham (*in Ross*) pp. 234-256 (paramedic method)

Payne, Stanley (1980). *Fascism, Comparison and definition*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press (pp. 42-51).

Levi, Carlo (1947). *Christ Stopped at Eboli: The Story of a Year*. New York, Noonday Press (1998 edition) (Chapters 1-7, 9-14, 20, 22, 24-25).

Questions:

How are the key ideological tenets of Italian Fascism similar to or different from a "layperson's" definition of fascism?

Was fascism imposed on Italy by Mussolini, or did it spring organically from Italian society?

Assignments:

Edit your essay from Week 3 for clarity and apply Lanham's paramedic method. When you submit the assignment, turn in both drafts with a brief introduction making note of the main changes that you made and how they improved your essay.

Go in person to the library, and introduce yourself to a reference librarian. Work with the librarian to identify and locate sources of information that you could use for a research paper on some aspect of Italian politics and society. Examples include academic journals, books, government documents, newspapers, public opinion data, publications of international organizations, encyclopedias or yearbooks, political party web sites, etc. Pick one of these sources that you think might potentially be useful to you in writing a paper (make sure to take the language of the source into consideration, especially if you do not speak Italian). Write a brief summary of the nature of the source, information about how to locate it (call numbers, urls, special collections rooms and hours of access, etc.), and a paragraph explaining what kinds of questions the source could be used to answer/"reasons" it could be used to support. Record the name of the reference librarian you worked with, and report on his/her helpfulness. We will collect these reports on sources in a packet to be distributed to all members of the seminar.

Part 2 "Eppur si muove": Politics and Society in Post-War Italy

- *Week 5 (Oct 5) The Church and the DC*

In class:

Mini-Lecture: Italian politics from WWII to 1989

Readings:

Bruffee pp. 69-72 (introductions), 120-125 (assumptions)

Maimon pp. 32-50 (writing critically)

Spotts, Frederick and Thomas Wieser (1986). *Italy: A Difficult Democracy. A Survey of Italian Politics*. New York, Cambridge University Press (Chapter 12).

Evans, Robert (1976). *Life and Politics in a Venetian Community*. Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press (pp 1-12, 140-151, 158-172).

Questions:

Why/how did the DC stay in power for so long?

Did Italians vote for the DC because of their politics, or because of their culture?

Assignment:

Write a Bruffee essay (using a different form from the one you used in Week 3) in response to one of this week's questions.

Write a one-paragraph introduction to a fifteen- to twenty- page research paper that specifies:

1. The focal question of your research
2. The relevance of this question for political science theories and/or for substantive concerns in the real world
3. Your hypothesized answer to the question. Be wary of unwarranted assumptions in your hypothesized answer!

- *Week 6 (Oct 12) Italo-Communism and the Left*

Readings:

Maimon pp. 207-230, 245-252 (research)

Howard, Marc Morje, Evan Lieberman, and Julia Lynch (2004). "Symposium: Field Research." *Qualitative Methods* 2(1): 2-15 (Read Lieberman sections "Translating a Research Design into a 'To Get' list" and "Develop an Information Management System," and Lynch entire.)

Spotts, Frederick and Thomas Wieser (1986). *Italy: A Difficult Democracy. A Survey of Italian Politics*. New York, Cambridge University Press (Chapter 3).

Kertzer, David (1980). *Comrades and Christians: Religion and Political Struggle in Communist Italy*. New York, Cambridge University Press (Chapters 1, 6).

Questions:

Was the PCI a "real" communist party (and what do you mean by "real")?

Was the PCI an important force in Italian politics and society, even though the party never controlled the government?

Assignments:

Revise your Bruffee essay from Week 5 paying close attention to the introduction and eliminating any unwarranted assumptions. Submit both the original and revised version, with a brief summary of the changes you made and their effects on the persuasiveness of the essay.

Revise your one-paragraph introduction from Week 5. Add the following features in outline form:

4. Major alternative hypotheses
5. A plan for how you will evaluate competing hypotheses
6. A 'to get' list
7. A preliminary bibliography (APA style)

- *Week 7 (Oct 19) Castles in the Sand: The Southern Question*

Readings:

Maimon et al. pp. 253 -269 (sources and plagiarism)

Salamini, L. (1992). "Southern Italian Underdevelopment in the Post-War Period: Some Observations on State Policies and the Mafia." *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 29, 2, Oct: 201-215.

Belmonte, Thomas. (1989). *The Broken Fountain*. New York, Columbia University Press (Chapters 1,2,4,7,8).

Questions:

In what ways is Southern Italy "underdeveloped" (and what do you mean by that term)?

Why is Southern Italy "underdeveloped"?

Assignment:

Write a Bruffee essay (different form from Week 3 or 5) on a proposition related to the following question: Why are the questions for this week important for political science beyond the study of Italian politics? (If these were the focal questions of a research paper, why would we bother to answer them?)

Keep working on completing the tasks on your "to get" list.

- *Week 8 (Oct 26) Cosa Nostra*

Readings:

Schneider, Jane and Peter Schneider (2003). *Reversible Destiny: Mafia, Antimafia, and the Struggle for Palermo*. Berkeley, University of California Press (Chapters 2-5).

Questions:

Is organized crime in Italy a cultural phenomenon, a political phenomenon, or an economic phenomenon?

Why did the Mafia's links with Italian politics last so long?

Assignment:

Locate and write a *synthesis* of three sources related to a single piece of your research topic. What does each of the sources tell you about your question? Taken together, what issues do these sources raise for further investigation? If the sources contradict one another, which one do you believe, and why?

Part 3: Towards The Second Republic

- *Week 9 (Nov 2) The Death of the First Republic: Tangentopoli and the Lega Nord*

In class:

Mini-Lecture: Italian Politics in Transition

Readings:

Bruffee pp. 219-220 (extended form)

Di Scala, Spencer (1995). *Italy: From Revolution to Republic, 1700 to the Present*. Boulder, Westview Press (Chapter 21).

Frei, Matt (1996). *Italy: The Unfinished Revolution*. London, Sinclair-Stevenson (Chapters 1, 2).

Destro, A. (1997). "A New Era and New Themes in Italian Politics: The Case of Padania." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 2, 3, fall: 358-377.

Questions:

Why did the Lega Nord emerge when it did? What effect did its emergence have on Italian politics?

Who was to blame for Tangentopoli? The politicians who took bribes? The businessmen who paid them off? The judiciary and the police for not enforcing the laws? Or the Italian people for letting it all happen?

Assignment:

Write a descriptive outline of an extended Bruffee essay (any form; at least 7 paragraphs in addition to the introduction) on a proposition related to your research question.

- *Week 10 (Nov 9) What Came After: The New Politics*

Readings:

Maimon et al. 426-458 (coordination and subordination), 470-476 (comma splices and run-ons)

Andrews, Geoff (2005). *Not a Normal Country: Italy after Berlusconi*. Ann Arbor, Pluto Press (Introduction, Chapters 1-4).

Questions:

Is the new Right in Italy more “modern” than the old Right (and what do you mean by “modern”?)

Assignment:

Begin working on a "skeleton" paper (first draft) that presents *in full text* your research question, hypotheses, and research design, and *in outline form* your evidence/reasons, including complete citations and bibliography. You may incorporate all or part of your extended Bruffee essay from Week 9. You will submit this assignment in Week 11. The remainder of the semester will be spent fleshing out the skeleton and revising for content and style.

- Week 11 (Dec 16) *Italian Society in Transition?*

Readings:

Lanham pp. 257-277 (voice)

Andrews, Geoff (2005). *Not a Normal Country: Italy after Berlusconi*. Ann Arbor, Pluto Press (Introduction, Chapters 6-9).

Questions:

Has Italy's political culture changed as a result of the adventures of the 1990s?

Do general cultural change and political change go hand in hand, or can one change without the other?

Assignments:

Continue researching as necessary.

Submit skeleton paper with full introduction, revised for voice.

- Week 12 (Nov 30) *The Civic Culture Revisited*

Readings:

Banfield, Edward (1958). *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*. New York, The Free Press (Introduction, Chapters 1-3, 5, 8).

Said, Edward (1978). *Orientalism*. New York, Pantheon Books (Chapter 1).

Questions:

Is Banfield's study “Orientalist” (and what does Said mean by that term)?

How does Banfield's argument differ, if at all, from Putnam's?

Assignments:

Prepare for in-class "trial" of Banfield.

Continue working on second draft of research paper.

- *Week 13 (Dec 7) Conclusion and Presentation of Research Proposals*

In class:

Presentation of research questions, hypotheses, methods, and preliminary findings. Presentations should be no more than 10 minutes in length. Plan to use Powerpoint (bring your laptop or PC-compatible USB stick), handouts, writing on the board, or some other form of visual aid to communicate with your audience.

Assignment:

Submit second (full) draft of research paper.

- *Reading period and exam period. Revise research paper for submission*

Assignment:

Revise research paper for unity, coherence, clarity, voice, and correctness. Perform Lanham's paramedic method. Submit final paper to my mailbox in Stiteler Hall no later than 4:30 pm on Monday, December 18, 2006.