



**McGill University**  
Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures  
Italian 250

## LITERARY COMPOSITION

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Zoom meeting on Thursdays 2:35—3:55

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Italian 250 is an advanced language course designed for students who already possess an intermediate knowledge of Italian. This course focuses on textual analysis, writing and revising. The aim is to improve written proficiency in Italian through an in-depth study of complex syntactic structures and extensive vocabulary building through written and oral practice. Students will refine their writing skills by analyzing and discussing a selection of texts that are drawn from a diverse range of media and genres. We will read two novels, Amara Lakhous' *Scontro di civiltà* and Italo Calvino *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, as well as shorter literary texts by modern and contemporary writers and poets such as Natalia Ginzburg, Gianni Celati, Patrizia Cavalli, Michela Murgia and Umberto Eco. Additionally, we will view contemporary films such as Gianfranco Rosi's *Fuocoammare* (2016), Gianni Pringalli's *Ho fatto il mio coraggio* (2009), and Valerio Ciriaci's *If only I Were that Warrior* (2015). The course will explore various writing registers (description, storytelling, analysis), formal and stylistic features, and ways of structuring critical arguments. Students are asked to write and revise five compositions experimenting with different genres. They will also be asked to produce a final group project with both a written and an oral component on a topic that will be discussed and agreed upon during the course.

### **Instructor's Learning Goals:**

At the end of this course, students will be able to recognize and use different writing styles and rhetorical registers and to identify the formal elements characterizing different types of narration and argumentation. Upon successful completion students will be able to comprehend and analyze higher-level written and visual texts, communicate their thoughts and opinions in clear and correct written Italian in different genres (e.g., autobiography, critical essay, review, short story) at an intermediate-to-high level, and adequately respond to feedback and suggestions for revisions.

**Comprehension:** Understand, summarize and analyze articles, literary texts and films; comprehending formal and rhetorical nuances and cultural references.

**Writing Skills:** Produce summary, descriptive, narrative and argumentative texts, mastering new vocabulary, and using correct grammar and proper syntax.

### **Prerequisites**

To be admitted to this course, students must have taken an intermediate level course in Italian, either in the Department (ITAL 215, ITAL 216 or ITAL 210) or at another institution (in this case, the permission of the Department is required). Should the student have previous knowledge of the language but no formal instruction, permission of the Department is required.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Short readings and links to films posted on MyCourses.
- Amara Lakhous, *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore in piazza Vittorio*, Edizioni e/o 2006.
- Italo Calvino, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, Mondadori.

The books are available at the McGill bookstore: you can do a curbside pick up or ask to have the books sent to you. If you prefer, you can purchase them as e-Books at IBS Internetbookshop Italia (<https://www.ibs.it/scontro-di-civiltà-per-ascensore-ebook-amara-lakhous/e/9788876419379>; <https://www.ibs.it/sentiero-dei-nidi-di-ragno-ebook-italo-calvino/e/9788852027338>)

A dictionary is an essential tool to learning a foreign language. Through the McGill library with Hathi Trust, you have access to *Il Ragazzini, Dizionario di Inglese-Italiano e Italiano-Inglese* you can check out the dictionary through this link: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015047594141>

### **EVALUATION**

Homework and discussions	25%
Compositions (5)	40%
Quizzes (2)	10%
Final Group Project	20%
Final Oral presentation	5%

### **Extraordinary Circumstances Statement**

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

## **COURSE ORGANIZATION**

This course will be taught as an asynchronous online course with one regular live component: a Zoom class held on Thursday at our scheduled time: 2:35-3:55 pm. The live session will be recorded for the students unable to attend. Our home base for all the materials, assignments, Zoom meetings, as well as the recordings of the live sessions, will be MyCourses.

### **1. Learning online: Homework and Discussions**

The course is divided into **five modules**: an introduction, three thematic modules and one week-long study module at the end of October reserved for the research and preparation of the draft/outline for the final project. Each module contains the course materials (readings, links to films and articles) and learning activities.

The students will be asked to engage with activities within the module **following sequentially** the presentation of the materials. The weekly tasks will vary according to the materials covered, but generally the modules will be divided into pre-reading/viewing activities, the reading/viewing of the stories/novels/films, and follow up forum discussions and short writing tasks. All the modules as well as other related documentation and guidelines are located in MyCourses under **Content**.

For each module the students will be organized in **Homework Pods** of randomly chosen groups of 4 students that for two weeks will share a collective forum space for discussion and peer review of their work.

### **2. Weekly Zoom meetings**

On Thursday, at the scheduled class time, we will meet on Zoom. The link to the platform and the semester meeting schedule will be posted on MyCourses in the Zoom section. This live class will allow us to explore the module's central questions by reading materials and/or watching film clips, and working in groups on short writing pieces. We will discuss and agree upon a Zoom etiquette on the first day of class. While the students will have the option of not turning on the screen and be recorded, hopefully we will be able to create a community of trust and collaboration that will approximate the normal classroom experience. There will be no recording of the breakout discussion rooms. When the session is recorded you will be notified through a "pop-up" box in Zoom during the meeting. You can turn off the camera, so that only your name appears on screen. If you do not feel comfortable sitting in a recorded class, you may leave the meeting by logging off Zoom. For these students and for students who will not be able to attend classes a recording of the class will be uploaded on MyCourses.

**Technical requirements:** All students are required to have access to a computer, the internet, a microphone and webcam. Please do the following before joining the course:

- Create a basic account through this link: <https://mcgill.zoom.us> You must sign in with your McGill username/password. Having a Zoom account will help you facilitate virtual meetings for collaborative assignments.
- Read this section on getting started: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362033-Getting-Started-on-Windows-and-Mac>
- Please contact me if you do not have a webcam or microphone so that we can find a solution together and make appropriate accommodations.

## **COURSE WORK**

### **Homework and Participation in group work/discussions (25%)**

You are expected to **complete the sequence of reading, viewing and online task activities on MyCourses** in a timely manner. The two main signposts for the preparation are Tuesday—the day of group work and/or forum discussion--and the Zoom meeting on Thursday. Plan on spending 1-1.5 hours on studying and preparing for the class per day (more on some days, less on others) so that you will be able to interact with your peers and participate in an informed and creative way in the discussions. In order to keep pace with your instructor's and peer's feedback, no late assignment will be accepted.

### **5 Written Assignments (40%)**

You will be asked to write 5 compositions of varying lengths and difficulty that will help you develop different writing strategies and allow the instructor to monitor your progress and acquisition of the material covered in class. The *Piano di studio* (overview for the course) lists all due dates. Submit your essays as **Word-Documents (.doc or .docx-format)** on MyCourses under **Assignments**. You will **submit two drafts of each essay**; you must submit a second draft regardless of your grade on the first. Your essays will be graded for both content and grammar/style.

### **2 Quizzes (10%)**

During the semester two quizzes covering grammar points and vocabulary will be administered at the instructor's discretion. The students will be actively involved in the quizzes' choice of materials and design.

### **Final Group Project (25%)**

Outline of the project: To be submitted on October 29.

Oral Presentation: to be delivered on Zoom on November 26--December 1.

Final group project: To be submitted on December 7.

In Module 2 *Abitare lo spazio* (week of September 15), we will initiate a discussion on the impact that COVID-19 has had on our sense of private and public space and time, the limitations that it imposed on our lives, and unexpected insights we gained from it about the world.

Following that introductory discussion, we will work collectively to create a series of research topics to explore our present moment. You will be asked to choose from that list of topics and, based on their expressed interest (and taking into consideration the time zone distribution), students will be divided into research groups of three or four which will remain the same for the duration of the semester. Students are expected to meet each week to work on their project: coming up with key questions, searching for relevant materials (articles, videos etc.), discussing their relevance, and reflecting on the insights that the readings/films of that week might bring to their subject. The highlights of each discussion must be reported in a weekly entry (in the form of notes, bullet points, images, clips) in the project journal of the Group. The students are expected to organize their own weekly meetings, independently using an online platform of their choice (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google etc.). The meetings may take place at any time, depending on the group's needs, but keeping a fixed schedule is strongly recommended. The final form of the project could be a written text, a Power Point with recorded voice over, a video clip, or a website.

**Rubrics** for the grading of assignments, short compositions and discussions as well as detailed **guidelines** on forum discussion and the final group project will be posted on MyCourses.

### **KEEPING IN TOUCH—aka Office Hours**

I will create a page on MyCourses where students will be able to post queries (*in Italiano possibilmente*) that either the instructor or fellow students will be able to answer. There will not be official office hours, but you will be able to reach me by email. Beside the regular feedback on the forum discussions, drafts of compositions and weekly Zoom meetings, I am planning to meet at least twice with each group working on the final project to discuss their progress.

### **A FEW TIPS: How to succeed in the online setting**

Create your workspace at home. Manage your time: complete the assignments in a timely manner, space the tasks, don't procrastinate. The organization of the course will help you early on to create early on a routine. The course is focused on writing, but we will build our knowledge and fluency in written and oral Italian together: make the most of the many options for group interaction and collaboration. Technology can be overwhelming, but we are all

learning the tools of our new learning trade. We will make trial runs of the major platforms we will be using (Zoom; Microsoft One Drive and Microsoft Teams). Please look at McGill's Teaching and learning services for more tips: <https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/students/remote-learning-resources>.

### **NETIQUETTE STATEMENT**

The University recognizes the importance of maintaining teaching spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all involved. To this end, offensive, violent, or harmful language arising in contexts such as the following may be cause for disciplinary action:

1. Username (use only your legal or preferred name)
2. Visual backgrounds
3. "Chat" boxes

To maintain a clear and uninterrupted learning space for all, you should keep your microphone muted throughout class unless invited by the instructor to speak.

You should follow instructors' directions about the use of the "chat" function on remote learning platforms.

## McGILL UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF ARTS

Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures – Italian Studies

**Plagiarism and cheating:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) ). It is the student's responsibility to read the university policy as stated in the rules and regulations of the university AND also read the departmental policy as presented in this document. Students who are found violating the Code will be reported to the Associate Dean, and appropriate action will be taken. Students who have any doubt as to what might be considered *plagiarism* or *cheating* in a given course should consult their instructor.

**Oral or written assignments, essays, oral or written presentations, summaries, projects, thesis, research papers, etc.**

### What is not accepted?

- **Copying** or submitting any academic work that has been produced by another student or another person (all or in part);
- Allowing another student or any **other resource person** (native speaker, language teacher, tutor, advanced level student) **to produce or correct your work**--translate written texts or interpret/explain oral comprehension exercises for you;
- **Handing in written work** or preparing oral work largely inspired by or copied from somebody else's work **without clearly acknowledging sources** (books, articles, essays, course notes, films, radio programs, audio documents, Web material, etc.) and showing the extent of the borrowing;
- **Presenting for grading** any academic work (oral or written) for which you have already received academic credit or **presenting the same work** for grading more than once.

### What is acceptable or recommended?

- Consulting resource persons (i.e. instructor) for explanations but without receiving answers or corrections for the work to be submitted;
- Practicing language skills with qualified resource persons;
- Studying intelligently with fellow students;
- Sharing information within team members working on a group project;
- Using your own words, making up your own sentences (paraphrasing) and using quotation marks when borrowing from someone's work;
- Identifying sources and documenting information and ideas even when material is not directly quoted.