

**McGill University Faculty of Arts**  
**Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures - Italian Studies**  
**ITAL 260: Reading Italian Literature**  
**The Italian Intellectual during and after WWII**  
**Fall 2022**

**Course schedule:** Tuesday/Thursday 1:05 – 2:25am

**Room:** 688 Sherbrooke 495

**Lecturer:** Ruben Specchi; 688 Sherbrooke 447

**Email:** ruben.specchi@mcgill.ca

**Office hours:** Tuesday/Thursday, 11–12am **or by appointment**

**Communication plan:** McGill email /MyCourses; I will answer questions within 24 hours on weekdays.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How important is political engagement? In a period of social turmoil, is maintaining political neutrality tantamount to standing on the wrong side of history? Is it worse if you do so as an intellectual? Many influential Italian authors and artists distinguished themselves in their political thinking. But acting on their beliefs did not come without risk. In fact, in doing so, many lost prestigious positions, were exiled from Italy for their political beliefs, or faced discrimination for their at times unpopular views. Were they right in asserting their values? Now more than ever, the world asks itself what is at stake if those in influential positions backed by knowledge and experience fail to promote progressive and inclusive social values.

This course aims to reflect on Italian – and European – society before, during, and immediately following the Second World War. Students will read and discuss four books and will learn about social conditions in Europe between 1939 and 1945, and the philosophical issues that mark writers from or reflecting upon this period. More specifically, they will ponder the role of the Italian author, artist, or intellectual in fraught periods of social tension. Finally, they will review and expand upon all intermediate-level structures (B2) of the Italian language.

### **PREREQUISITES**

Students enrolled in this course must have successfully completed ITAL 210 or ITAL 215/216. Students who have not completed ITAL 210 or ITAL 215/6 but have comparable knowledge of Italian acquired at another institution are asked to speak to the instructor at the beginning of the term for a linguistic assessment and placement.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

*Available at le James bookstore:*

Antonio Tabucchi, *Sostiene Pereira*

Italo Calvino, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*

Anna Maria Ortese, *Il mare non bagna Napoli*

Primo Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati*

*MyCourses:*

Weekly reading guides

## **METHODOLOGY**

This class will be conducted in person as an undergraduate seminar. It will rely heavily on synchronous participation in classroom discussion and group activities. Teaching methods include lectures, class debates, oral presentations, audio-visual presentations, class discussions, and group work.

The course will examine each book in sections corresponding to chapters. Each week, a reading guide (*chiave di lettura*) will be posted on MyCourses to assist with students' reading. Each reading guide contains:

- a glossary of terms and idiomatic expressions
- an explanation of one (or a few) grammatical structures
- reflection questions

Reading must be completed *before* each class. Each week, students will be assigned a section of a book and asked to complete its corresponding comprehension and grammar exercises online (MyCourses). Lectures will both review that section's featured grammar structures in communicative and academic contexts and devote time entirely to oral production and the discussion of the provided reflection questions.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

This course assesses students' Italian reading comprehension, oral comprehension, oral production, writing production, and grammatical proficiency. In addition to weekly asynchronous comprehension and grammar exercises (MyCourses) on required readings, students will also be asked to complete five grammar quizzes (asynchronous, MyCourses) testing specific structures of advanced-intermediate Italian as they are used in each studied text.

In addition, each student will be asked to sign up for and prepare a primary and secondary oral response presentation, to be delivered synchronously (in class, in person), in Italian. In their 5-7-minute research-based primary response, students will present an assigned text, author, historical figure, or social issue to their classmates. In their 3-5-minute secondary response, students will elaborate upon or react to the presentation of the primary respondent.

Students' written production will be evaluated in four compositions and one final project, all submitted online via MyCourses. Each composition corresponds to one of the book's four studied texts and will seek to practice a specific genre or style of writing found therein (eg, essay, narrative story, confession, eulogy). These 350-600-word compositions must be completed in Italian. The 700-1000-word final project must also be written in Italian.

## Evaluation Plan

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Comprehension and grammar exercises:   | 15% |
| Grammar quizzes (5):                   | 15% |
| Compositions (best 3 out of 4):        | 25% |
| Final essay:                           | 25% |
| Participation and in-class activities: | 10% |
| Oral presentations:                    | 10% |

A note on in-class participation: occasionally, students will be invited to respond to a reflection question on the MyCourses discussion forum. Doing so will provide them with an additional opportunity to participate in a classroom discussion they may have missed or foregone for personal or academic reasons. Participation in these discussions is recommended, but not mandatory.

## TENTATIVE CLASS CALENDAR

Please note that this calendar is subject to change at the instructor's discretion based upon the pace of the course and other considerations (guest speakers, audio-visual components, etc.). The instructor will confirm required readings and evaluation dates weekly in class, via e-mail, and on MyCourses.

September 1: Introduction to Course

September 6: *Sostiene Pereira* 1-5

September 8: *Sostiene Pereira* 6-11

September 13: *Sostiene Pereira* GRAMMATICA 1-11 GRAMMAR QUIZ 1

September 15: *Sostiene Pereira* 12-16

September 20: *Sostiene Pereira* 17-21

September 22: *Sostiene Pereira* 22-fine

September 27: *Sostiene Pereira* GRAMMATICA 12-fine GRAMMAR QUIZ 2  
COMPOSITION 1 DUE OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup> AT MIDNIGHT

September 29: *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* 1-3

October 4: *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* 4- 6

October 6: *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* GRAMMATICA 1-6

October 11: NO CLASS- FALL READING BREAK

October 14 (Make-up day - Tuesday schedule): *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* 7-9

October 18: *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* 10 - 12

October 20: *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* 7-9

October 25: *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* GRAMMATICA 7-12

October 27: GRAMMAR QUIZ 3

COMPOSITION 2 DUE OCTOBER 29<sup>TH</sup> AT MIDNIGHT

Nov. 1: *Il mare non bagna Napoli* - *Un paio di occhiali*; *Oro a Forcella*

Nov. 3: *Il mare non bagna Napoli* - *La città involontaria*

Nov. 8: *Il mare non bagna Napoli* GRAMMATICA

Nov. 10: *Il mare non bagna Napoli - Il silenzio della ragione*

Nov. 15: *Il mare non bagna Napoli - Il silenzio della ragione*

Nov. 17: *Il mare non bagna Napoli - Il silenzio della ragione*

#### GRAMMAR QUIZ 4

#### COMPOSITION 3 DUE NOVEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup> AT MIDNIGHT

Nov. 22: *I sommersi e i salvati - La memoria dell'offesa, la zona grigia*

Nov. 24: *I sommersi e i salvati - La vergogna, comunicare*

Nov. 29: *I sommersi e i salvati - L'intellettuale ad Auschwitz, Lettere di tedeschi*

December 1: *I sommersi e i salvati* GRAMMATICA

#### GRAMMAR QUIZ 5

#### COMPOSITION 4 DUE DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup> AT MIDNIGHT

December 6: *I sommersi e i salvati - Conclusione, Postfazione*

FINAL PROJECT DUE: December 13<sup>th</sup> by midnight

### **COURSE POLICIES**

- Asynchronous activities:
  - Each week, the instructor will post reading comprehension questions on MyCourses (quizzes). These will be available for the entire week but will need to be completed by the week's end (Friday at midnight) to be graded.
  - All grammar quizzes will be taken asynchronously on MyCourses. They will be made available for 48 hours and, once accessed, will be timed at 60-90 minutes.
- Written work:
  - Students are asked to submit all compositions and their final project in .docx or pdf format via MyCourses. Should their final project include a visual component, alternative arrangements should be discussed individually with the instructor. Submissions made by e-mail will be discarded.
- Late policy:
  - Barring documented extenuating circumstances supported by a doctor's note, submissions made more than 48 hours late will be discarded. Late submissions will receive a penalty of 3% per day late. Extensions should be requested at least one week in advance.
- Make-up work:
  - No make-up quizzes, tests, or assignments will be given in this course. No work for extra credit will be offered.
- Instructor communication and availability:
  - In addition to her office hours, the instructor may be reached by e-mail. The instructor will be checking and responding to e-mail messages between the hours of 9am and 6pm from Monday to Friday. Students may expect a response to their sent messages within 24 hours, excluding weekends.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

**“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 [McGill’s guide to academic honesty](#) for more information). (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l’honnêteté académique de McGill](#)).

- Note that to support academic integrity, your assignments may be submitted to text-matching or other appropriate software (e.g., formula-, equation-, and graph-matching).”
- **Please remember the following points when you write your compositions and final paper:**
  - It is a violation of the honor code to have your work proofread by someone else.
  - It is a violation of the honor code to use translation software or online translation tools.
- The following statement should be added at the beginning of every written composition: **“I will be fair and honest in my coursework. I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on any assignment, quizzes or exam”**.

“© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, comprehension questions, grammar exercises, reflection questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.”

### **INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

*As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009.*

### **END OF COURSE EVALUATION**

End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student’s learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.