Italian Studies Program Learning Goals

Italian Studies is an interdepartmental program that prepares students to explore and understand several aspects of Italian culture while broadening analytical skills in related disciplines. Students who wish to pursue a minor will be required to take five courses from a range of disciplines, which include advanced Italian Language and Culture, Literature, Film Studies, Art History, Italian History, Music, and Classical Studies. The pursuit of these interests takes an interdisciplinary approach, encouraging students to study the culture of Italy from antiquity to the present both in depth and in breadth. Those who wish to pursue Italian Studies further can petition for an Independent major and discuss with the Italian Studies Faculty options for fulfilling the requirements. In such a case, the requirement is nine courses from the same core of suggested disciplines, including three additional courses given in Italian Language (such as Ital 110: Intro to Ital lit, Ital 120: Modern Ital Lit, Ital 128: Mapping Italian Culture, Ital 134: Italian Jewish Culture) offered at Brandeis or their equivalent taken through study abroad or the offerings of consortium institutions in Boston.

1. Knowledge:

* An understanding of the fundamental contributions of Italy to the development of vernacular European literature, the Visual Arts and Architecture since Antiquity, and Western Music. In all of the fields, especially the latter, much of the technical terminology and core forms and concepts are Italian in origin.

* Familiarity with the major writers, artists, monuments, and composers who contributed to the historical pre-eminence of Italian culture in literature (1300-1600), art and architecture (100 B.C.E -500 C.E.; 1250-1700), and Music (1500-1725).

* An appreciation of the continuing dynamism and vitality of Italian culture from the Napoleonic era through the Risorgimento and to the present day in literature, music, opera, fine arts, architecture, film, design, and fashion.

* An understanding of the key moments in Italian political history from the rival republics and princely courts of the Renaissance, to the unification during the Risorgimento, to the importance of the Italian Kingdom and Republic in European and Global affairs of the past century. Related to this is an understanding of the role these political entities played in fostering Italian culture.
An understanding of the social and religious diversity of Italy in the historical past and evolving present. This includes the dominant and fraught role of the Catholic Church and Papal States in Italian history and society, as well as minority communities.

2. Core Skills

* To attain proficiency in all four language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

* To communicate and express oneself in Italian at the expected range of proficiency (Intermediate-high to advanced-low for the minor, and from advanced-low to advanced-high for the independent major) in both everyday and academic settings.

* To write prose clearly and effectively in Italian.

* To acquire essential analytical skills in relation to art, literature, film and music, and the ability to think critically about primary texts/ works and the interpretative claims in the secondary literature.

3. Study Abroad

* All students are strongly encouraged to study in Italy for a semester, a full year, or in intensive summer programs. Study abroad provides students with daily interaction in the target language and enables them to achieve two goals:

  1) Greater linguistic precision in speaking, reading, writing and listening to the language.

  2) The experience of living and learning the culture in an authentic setting.

  3) The Italian Studies minor/independent major will obtain a greater understanding of human diversity based on the study or experience of different social backgrounds and settings, especially that obtained through time spent abroad.

4. Social Justice:
* Italian humanist thinkers and political philosophers are essential to the development of historical and modern political theory as it applies to the Republic, Absolutism, Constitutional Democracy, Fascism, and Communism. Throughout its history, Italian political entities have served, for better or worse, as the venues for the implementation of such theories, thereby revealing both intended and unintended consequences of social interactions among diverse economic, cultural and religious communities.

5. Upon Graduation:

* The Italian Studies minor or independent major will have the background to embark on graduate studies in Italian and/or Comparative literature.

* The Italian Studies minor or independent major can employ one’s mastery of language and cultural background in any number of fields in which Italy makes a major contribution: Design, fashion, film, architecture, studio art, art history, hospitality, tourism, cuisine, international business, Italian teaching, and translation. A minor or independent major in Italian Studies conspicuously enhances credentials in applying to graduate programs in these fields.