



THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# Language and Culture of Italy

## SFS 2031

**Syllabus**  
**2 credits**

The School for Field Studies (SFS)  
Center for Sustainable Food Systems  
Greve, Chianti, Italy



## COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

***Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.***

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that may present. In other words, the elephants are not always where we want them to be, so be flexible!

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## Course Overview

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This is a 2-credit course whose hours are divided between Italian classes and culture classes and activities. This course provides two integrated modules: **Italian Language Instruction** and **Italian Society and Culture**. The Italian Language Module, taught by professional Italian instructors, offers reading, listening, oral, written, and practical applications of the Italian language at three levels of proficiency (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) to increase students' comprehension and communication skills.

The Italian Society and Culture Module provides the basic context to understand the history and cultural expressions of Italian society. A combination of lectures, readings, field experiences and classroom discussions will facilitate the comprehension of the cultural context of Italy.

To the extent that is possible, we will include activities knowledge and skills, such as cooking, dancing, and playing sports, and sessions of community service. These activities may involve interactions with key stakeholders and community leaders. Assignments may include quizzes, essays, discussions, and reflections on community interaction.

## Learning Outcomes

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**Italian Language Module:** This involves 20 contact hours with professors who are native Italian speakers. Student language aptitude levels will be identified through an oral and written placement test administered by the language professors at the beginning of the semester. All oral presentations, tests, essays, and community extension projects will be graded. As with any SFS activity, your participation is mandatory. The Italian course aims at providing basic Italian instruction. It is not an immersion in Italian. If your Italian level is beginner or intermediate, the course will improve it, but it will not give you total fluency. As a student, you will have opportunities for positive community interactions, either structured or during your free time. You need to take advantage of these opportunities to improve your Italian.

**Italian Society and Culture Module:** Students will participate in activities designed to provide insight and experiences with the cultural and historical context of Italy. Students will learn specific strategies and skills for working within a community-based research context and develop a basic understanding of Italian culture. For this reason, students will participate in activities involving young Italians and their families. The idea is to be part of a program called "Cucina for English" where students can help Italian students with homework and conversation in English in change of family dinner. During the visit to the Italian families participating to the program, students can practice their Italian language and learn cooking skills. It will be lots of fun and will be a great opportunity to get closer to the Italian family traditions.

This is not a cultural immersion course since the main emphasis of the program is on the core courses. As the number of contact hours for the culture module is less than half of that of the core courses, we encourage you to foster positive community interactions and pursue additional cultural activities on your own.

## Assessment

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We expect active participation in the discussion and analysis of classes, readings, and field activities. Some of the classes presented below could change, but updated information will be given sufficiently ahead of time. Material for discussion will be indicated ahead of time. Student performance in this course will be evaluated based on the assessment items and their proportional weight to your final grade described in the table below. Each assessment item will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Assessment Item	Value (%)
Italian module	50
Culture module: Quizzes/reflections/participation	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### Italian Module (50%)

The evaluation of the students' proficiency in Italian includes short writing, quizzes, and oral presentations. Oral class participation is highly encouraged since it is critical for language acquisition. Field trips will serve as an outlet for students to practice Italian outside class and be in closer contact with real-life situations and socio-cultural spaces. This activity consists of structured exercises with specific objectives and activities, addressing different levels of proficiency in Italian.

### Culture Module (50%)

We expect active participation in the discussion and analysis of classes, readings, and field activities. Some of the classes presented below could change, but updated information will be given sufficiently ahead of time. Material for discussion will be indicated ahead of time. Each assessment item will be evaluated on an individual basis. The culture class provides a basic background on Italian culture and Society but does not have the same number of contact hours as the 4-credits of the other courses in the program, and thus, it does not have the same workload.

### Grading Scheme

A	95.00 - 100.00%	B+	86.00 - 89.99%	C+	76.00 - 79.99%	D	60.00 - 69.99%
A-	90.00 - 94.99%	B	83.00 - 85.99%	C	73.00 - 75.99%	F	0.00 - 59.99%
		B-	80.00 - 82.49%	C-	70.00 - 72.49%		

### Italian Placement Test and Levels

The Italian module focuses on spoken fluency and grammatical precision. With that purpose, students will do ample oral practice in class to develop their speaking, listening, and reading skills. As students improve in these areas, their writing skills will also improve. New grammar topics are introduced methodically; readings and cultural notes are integrated to provide further context. Additionally, scenarios will be used to stimulate more fluid conversations relative to group and individual levels.

Students come to SFS with different language backgrounds: some have no experience with a language, others have more extensive experience and exposure as well as limited conversational abilities. Finally there are those who may be fluent but need more practice to improve their interaction with native speakers. During the placement test, prior to the beginning of the Italian module, the Italian instructors will evaluate the students' proficiency through conversation and will place them in the adequate language level (basic, intermediate, or advanced). The following description pertains to the level in which you will be placed (either basic, intermediate, or advanced).

**Basic:** Students finishing this level will be able to understand and use familiar, everyday expressions, as well as basic phrases. Students will acquire the tools to introduce themselves and others, and to ask and answer questions about personal details such as: where you live, people you know and things you do.

**Intermediate:** Students completing this level will understand the main points on familiar matters encountered regularly at work, school, leisure, etc. Students will deal successfully with most situations likely to arise when traveling. Furthermore, students will produce simple connected texts on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Finally, students will describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for their opinions and plans.

**Advanced:** At this level, students will be able to understand the main ideas of complex texts about concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialization. Students can interact with a good level of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers effective. Additionally, students will produce clear, detailed texts on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topic giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

## General Reminders

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**Readings** – You are expected to have read all the assigned research articles prior to each class. All readings will be available as PDFs on Student Drive. Readings might be updated or changed during the semester. Not all material will be explicitly taught during lectures, material not covered in lecture will NOT be on exams. Supplemental readings are not mandatory but are recommended to expand your knowledge. Additional readings could be assigned.

**Honor Code/Plagiarism** – SFS places high expectations on their students and we hold students accountable for their behaviors. SFS students are held to the honor code below. SFS has a zero-tolerance policy towards student cheating, plagiarism, data falsification, and any other form of dishonest academic and/or research practice or behavior. Using the ideas or material of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. Any SFS student found to have engaged in or facilitated academic and/or research dishonesty will receive no credit (0%) for that activity.

*“SFS does not tolerate cheating or plagiarism in any form. While participating in an SFS program, students are expected to refrain from cheating, plagiarism and any other behavior which would result in a student receiving credit for work which they did not accomplish on their own. Students are expected to report any instance of cheating or plagiarism by others.”*

**Deadlines** – Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated to promote equity among students and to allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments before others are due. As such, deadlines are firm; extensions will only be considered under extreme circumstances. Late assignments will incur a penalty of 10% of your grade for each day you are late. After two days past the deadline, assignments will no longer be accepted. Assignments will be handed back to students after a one-week grading period. Grade corrections for any assessment item should be requested in writing at least 24 hours after assignments are returned. No corrections will be considered afterwards.

**Content Statement** – Every student comes to SFS with unique life experiences, which contribute to the way various information is processed. Some of the content in this course may be intellectually or emotionally challenging but has been intentionally selected to achieve certain learning goals and/or showcase the complexity of many modern issues. If you anticipate a challenge engaging with a certain topic or find that you are struggling with certain discussions, we encourage you to talk about it with faculty, friends, family, the HWM, or access available mental health resources.

**Participation** – Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one lecture can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the course is mandatory, it is important that you are prompt for all activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises and class activities, and simply get involved.

## Course Content

**Type- L:** Lecture, **D:** Discussion, **FL:** Field Lecture

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)	Required Readings
<b>Italian Module</b>				
1	<b>Italian Placement Test</b> Students are divided into different groups according to their level of Italian proficiency		1.0	
2	<b>Italian Language Instruction</b>		15.0	Gruppo Italeida (2020).
<b>Culture Module</b>				
3	<b>A Brief History of Italy, Part I:</b> From Native Cultures to the Renaissance		1.0	Duggan C. (2013).
4	<b>A Brief History of Italy, Part II</b> Italian Unification to the Modern Era		1.0	Duggan C. (2013).
5	<b>Italian Food, Cooking, and Regionalism</b> Participation in the "Cucina for English" program - students will assist Italian students with English homework and conversation in exchange for cooking lessons and family dinner.		3.0	Harper and Faccioli (2011). Blog post: "20 Italian Regions and 20 Italian Dishes"
6	<b>Italian Pop Culture</b>		1.0	Grazian D. (2017).
7	<b>Holidays and Festivals</b>		1.0	Venturini (2021).
8	<b>Sicilian History and Culture</b> (during trip to Sicily)		1.0	Britannica: Sicily
9	<b>Italian Art History</b>		1.0	Blog post: "Italian Art Through History"
10	<b>Italian Educational System</b>		1.0	University of Pisa: "The Italian Educational System"
11	<b>Italy and the EU</b>		1.0	Duggan C. (2013).
		<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	
		<b>UMN Instructional Hours*</b>	<b>32.4</b>	

\*UMN defines an instructional hour as a 50-minute block. SFS syllabi are written in full 60-minute hours for programming purposes. Therefore 50 full hours = 60 UMN instructional hours (for four credit courses) and 25 full hours = 30 UMN instructional hours (for two credit courses).

## Readings

1. "Sicily." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sicily>, 2023.
2. "The Italian Educational System." *University of Pisa*, 6 Mar. 2017, [www.unipi.it/index.php/study/item/2265-educational-system](http://www.unipi.it/index.php/study/item/2265-educational-system).
3. "20 Italian Regions and 20 Italian Dishes" *Livitaly*, 3 June 2017. [www.livitaly.com/eat-every-italian-region](http://www.livitaly.com/eat-every-italian-region)
4. Duggan, C., (2013). *A Concise History of Italy*, Cambridge University Press.
5. Grazian, D. (2017). *Mix It Up: Popular Culture, Mass Media, and Society*. New York, W.W. Norton & Co.
6. Gruppo Italice, (2020). *New Italian Espresso (for beginner, intermediate or advanced level)*, Firenze, Alma
7. Harper, D. and Faccioli, P. (2011). Chapter: "Love." In *The Italian Way: Food and Social Life*. Univ. of Chicago Press. Chicago Scholarship Online.
8. Kordic, Angie. "Italian Art Through History." *Widewalls*, 15 Nov. 2016, [www.widewalls.ch/magazine/italian-art](http://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/italian-art).
9. Ostuni, A., et al. (2017). *Italian Society and Gender Role Stereotypes*, online.
10. Venturini, Gloria. "10 eventi in Italia tra cultura folk e tradizioni popolari" ["10 Italian events between pop culture and folk tradition"]. *VisitItaly.eu*, 17 Sept. 2021, [www.visititaly.eu/it/storie-e-tradizioni/10-eventi-in-italia-tra-cultura-folk-e-tradizioni-popolari](http://www.visititaly.eu/it/storie-e-tradizioni/10-eventi-in-italia-tra-cultura-folk-e-tradizioni-popolari).