Contemporary Italian Identities: Perspectives from Migrants, Women, & LGBTQIA+ Communities

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: FLOR 3013
Number of Credits: 3
Language of Instruction: English
Contact Hours: 45
Instructor: Marah Dolfi, Ph.D.

Course Description

Each of us is an autonomous individual pursuing personal objectives, yet we are also members of groups—groups that constrain us, guide us, and sustain us. Just as each of us influences the group and its members, so, too, do groups shape each one of us. The ethical principles of societies have been developed through group processes, and ethics play a crucial role in the contemporary world.

Using the lenses of social identity theory and community psychology, this course invites students to reflect critically on the ethical implications of what has and continues to constitute Italian-ness in light of new identities emerging in Italian society. We will do so by addressing "minority identities" in Italian society, starting with an overview of Italy's colonial past and racial history up to the contemporary challenges that a multicultural Italy faces today.

While learning about new Italian identities, we will discuss and reflect on the basic theories of community psychology (diversity, oppression and power, empowerment, being an agent of change, etc.), discussing the role that concepts such as gender, race, nation, culture, value/s, diversity, otherness, and intersectionality play in contemporary Italy.

More specific topics, studied in the Florentine context, include the following:

- Migrants in Italy: a "recent" phenomenon. We will talk about acculturation strategies, different cultural backgrounds, and the emerging of new identities.
- History and actuality of LGBT+ people living in Italy. We will conduct an overview of the evolution of Italian culture and of the legislation concerning LGBT people, health services, and activism.
- Women in Italy, between stereotypes and modernity. We will discuss how in many aspects of everyday life women still remain prisoners of stereotypes, despite major progress made in legislation and education.

This course aims to prepare students to become active and responsible citizens within their local, national, and world communities, encouraging them to develop, defend or challenge their personal values and beliefs. To this purpose, they will engage in a series of conversations with local stakeholders in minority representation in Italy.

Course Objectives

This course trains students to:

- Understand the basic theories of community psychology applied to the Italian context.

- Reflect on the concepts of diversity, oppression and power, empowerment.

- Apply a socioecological perspective in analyzing social phenomena.

- Recognize the intersectionality of sociocultural differences on the definition of social identities.

- Recognize the impact of stigma on "minority identities."

- Challenge their personal values and beliefs as residents of the United States and members of a global society.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Recognize, describe, and critique the value systems that underlie social constructs.
- Recognize their own cultural biases.

- Critically read US and Italian media and popular culture using race, class, and gender concepts.
- Formulate original theses to manage contemporary problems and the important challenges facing our society and world.

Methodology

The students' active participation in class discussion and guided reflections is the core of this course and will be supported by short lectures and presentations.

Site visits and meetings with activists for civil rights will deepen our understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of oppression and resilience of "minority identities."

The theoretical foundations of the course are provided by social identity theory and community psychology.

Social identity theory provides a framework for explaining intergroup behavior, based on the inherent value humans place on social group memberships and their desire to view their specific social groups in a positive light.

Community psychology goes beyond an individual focus and integrates social, cultural, economic, political, environmental, and international influences to promote positive change, health, and empowerment at individual and systemic levels.

Experiential Learning & Field Visits

The students will be involved in experiences like field trips, meetings with diverse organizations and people, gaining a better understanding of course material, insight into their own skills, interests and values and a broader view of the world.

All proposed experiences will be supported by guided reflection, conceptualization and elaboration of theories and possible actions.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for the course.

Required Reading / Materials

Leonard A. Jason; Olya Glantsman; Jack F. O'Brien; and Kaitlyn N. Ramian eds. (2019). *Introduction to Community Psychology. Becoming an Agent of Change.*

https://press.rebus.community/introductiontocommunitypsychology/

Chapters:

1 Introduction

Other readings referenced during the course

- Ambrosini, M., & Caneva, E. (2010). "Tolerance and cultural diversity discourses in Italy." ACCEPT-PLURALISM, 2010/03, 1. Overview National Discourses, Background Country Reports
- Balocchi, M., (2022) "An Apparent Paradox: The Bio-medicalisation of Intersex Variations in Italy." *Interdisciplinary and Global Perspectives on Intersex* (ed. Megan Walker), Palgrave Macmillan, 155-175.
- Calavita, K. (2006). "Gender, migration, and law: Crossing borders and bridging disciplines." *International Migration Review,* 40(1), 104-132.
- Cicognani, E., Sonn, C. C., Albanesi, C., & Zani, B. (2018). "Acculturation, social exclusion and resistance: Experiences of young Moroccans in Italy." *International journal of intercultural relations,* 66, 108-118.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review,* 43(6), 1241. doi:10.2307/1229039
- Davis, G. e Preves, S. (2017), "Reflecting on Intersex: 25 Years of Activism, Mobilization, and Change", in J.Z. Spade, C.F. Valentine (a cura di), *The Kaleidoscope of Gender: Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities, SAGE Publications,* Los Angeles, pp. 30-43.
- Driel, E. Y., Verkuyten, M. (2022). "Contact theory and the multiethnic community of Riace, Italy: an ethnographic examination." *Journal of Community Psychology*, 50, 2326–2343.
- Ferragina, E. (2009). "The never-ending debate about the moral basis of a backward society: Banfield and 'amoral familism.'" *Journal of Anthropological Society of Oxford*, 1(2), 141-160.
- Pettigrew, T. F., Tropp, L. R., Wagner, U., & Christ, O. (2011). "Recent advances in intergroup contact theory." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 35(3), 271–280. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.03.001
- Sam, D. L. (2006). "Acculturation: Conceptual background and core components." *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology,* 11-26.
- Schmid, K. (2017). "Social identity theory." *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication,* 1-9
- Scoppa, V., & Stranges, M. (2019). "Cultural values and decision to work of immigrant women in Italy." Labour, 33(1), 101-123.
- Torresin, M. "At the Roots of Italian Identity." https://www.academia.edu/34809752/AT_THE_ROOTS_OF_ITALIAN_IDENTITY

Further readings

- Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee (2022), *Gendered Voices, Feminist Visions* (Eighth Edition). Oxford University Press

Resources

Non una di meno

- *https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/non-una-di-meno/*

Ni una menos

- https://www.npr.org/2021/10/15/1043908435/how-niunamenos-grew-from-the-streets-of-argentina-into-a-regional-womens-movemen

Black Italia resources

- https://www.blackitalia.info/

Black History Month Florence

- http://www.blackhistorymonthflorence.com/

Movimento identità trans

- https://mit-italia.it/

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation in class	10%
Engagement	20%
Midterm exam	30%
Final paper	25%
Presentation	15%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

Participation (10%)

This class is based on your participation, critical engagement in class with texts and other materials, and contribution to class discussion. Additional materials not enlisted in the readings may be shared during the semester and addressed in class.

Engagement (20%)

The engagement grade consists of various writing and engagement assignments given throughout the semester, as part of an active learning process. Active learning involves active responses to learning tasks, involvement and investment in the assignments, and concrete opportunities for students to identify and apply their knowledge of ethics, both in solving short-term problems and in creating long-term forecasts. Students will complete three in-class essays on topics under discussion on weeks 4, 8, and 12 (5% each), while the remaining 5% will be assigned on such indicators of engagement as asking questions to guest speakers; engaging in collaborative work during classroom exercises; preparing an observational checklist before the field trip, etc.

Midterm exam (30%)

Based on short answer questions, the midterm exam will cover assigned readings, class lectures, and any other material addressed during class time. The exam will test your understanding of concepts and theories as well of specific data in the readings and/or topics discussed in class.

Final paper (25%)

The final paper and presentation are an original analysis of a pre-approved topic of the student's choice. Six to seven pages, double spaced. A detailed outline, comprehensive of a fully developed introductory paragraph and original thesis, is due one week before the paper.

Final presentation (15%)

An oral presentation (with slides) of the final paper topic will take place the last day of the course.

Course Content

Unit 1

Introduction to the Course
- Syllabus. Introduction to Community Psychology. Definition of ethics and the role of ethics in civic life.
- **Reading:**
  - Chapter 1: Introduction

Unit 2

Italy & Italians
- At the roots of Italian identity, or identities. Culture, religion, regionalism, traditions.

- **Field trip** to a residential Florence neighborhood. Active observation of social dynamics: a "traditional" market and playground.

- **Concepts:** social identity, social dynamics, psychology of groups, ingroup, and outgroup.

- **Readings:**

  - Torresin, M. "At the Roots of Italian Identity"

  - Ferragina, E. "The never-ending debate about the moral basis of a backward society: Banfield and 'amoral familism'"

Unit 3

Women in Italy: Between Stereotypes & Modernity 1

- Including a brief history of women's rights in Italy: women's vote, divorce, abortion in Italy. Italian women remain, for the most part, prisoners of stereotypes, policies and services that are not sufficient to ensure the reconciliation of work and family life. Working and raising a family still remain two parallel and incompatible paths for many.

- **Concepts:** gender, gender role, sexuality, social construction, socialization, femininity, masculinity, women's studies, discrimination, harassment, economics, family, wage gap, public/private spheres

- **Readings:**

    - Chapter 5: Theories

Unit 4

Women in Italy: Between Stereotypes & Modernity 2

- The emerging of a new wave of feminism, also in reaction to the increasing cases of violence against women. Italy in the last century: from traditional *fuitine* (forced elopement) and rape as a crime against the moral, to the recent movements against violence in Italy and in the world: from "me too" to "ni una menos."

- **Meet with: Non una di meno Firenze:** Non Una Di Meno is an increasingly large network, articulated on an international level, of associations, anti-violence centers, feminist and queer collectives, women's houses and individuals, fighting the multiple forms of gender-based violence.

- **Concepts:** social inequality, privilege, power, patriarchy, intersectionality, oppression, social institutions, sexual violence, domestic violence

- **Readings & Resources:**

    - Domestic violence: https://domesticviolence.org/violence-wheel/

    - NUDM Firenze: https://nudmfirenze.noblogs.org/

Unit 5

Migrations & Italy

- From being migrants to a land of immigration. Brief history of migrations in Italy. The theory of acculturation as an individual balance strategy along the dimensions of native culture and host culture. Migration policies.

- **Classroom exercise: USA vs. Italy:** Waves and patterns of migration towards the "new world" during the past century and new economic migrations in a globalized world.

- **Concepts:** social identity theory, acculturation, migration, decolonization

- **Readings:**

    - Chapter 8: Respect for Diversity

    - Driel, E. Y., Verkuyten, M. "Contact theory and the multiethnic community of Riace, Italy: an ethnographic examination"

    - Ambrosini, M., & Caneva, E. "Tolerance and cultural diversity discourses in Italy"

    - Morning, A., & Maneri, M. (2022). *An Ugly Word: Rethinking Race in Italy and the United States*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Unit 6

The Emerging of New Italian Identities

- Black Italians are still struggling for acceptance in a country that sometimes tells them they're not wanted, while the rest of the world doesn't see them as Italians. Today, black and multicultural Italians are asserting their place in their country's society and pushing for legal changes to systemically racist citizenship laws.

- **Concepts:** social identity theory, acculturation, intergroup contact, stigma, resilience, decolonization

- **Readings & Resources:**

    - Cicognani et al. "Acculturation, social exclusion and resistance: Experiences of young Moroccans in Italy"

    - Pettigrew, et al. "Recent advances in intergroup contact theory"

    - Black Italia: https://www.blackitalia.info/

Unit 7

Sicily Study Tour—No Class in Florence

Spring Break

Unit 8

Being a Migrant Woman in Italy
- Women make up over 50% of the population moving from one country to another in the world and are the main architects of social and political change in the societies of origin and in the societies of destination. The obstacles they encounter on the Italian territory affect the health, bureaucratic, working, and parenting areas.

- **Meet with: Nosotras and/or Anelli Mancanti:** Nosotras is an intercultural association of women. Established in 1998, it focuses on empowerment, fight against gender violence, promotion of maternal and child health, and discrimination. Anelli Mancanti was established in Florence in 1997 as an aggregative experience of young Italians and immigrants. Today, it organizes multiple activities in response to the needs of an often disadvantaged and marginalized multicultural user.

- **Concepts:** intersectionality, oppression, race, class, stereotype, ethnicity, misogyny

- **Readings & Resources:**
    - Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color"

    - Calavita, "Gender, migration, and law: Crossing borders and bridging disciplines"

    - Scoppa & Stranges, "Cultural values and decision to work of immigrant women in Italy"

    - NOSOTRAS: https://nosotras.it/

    - ANELLI MANCANTI: https://anellimancanti.com

Unit 9

Midterm Exam (1.5 hours)
- History and actuality of LGBT+ people living in Italy.

- An overview of the evolution of Italian culture and of the legislation concerning LGBT+ people, health services and activism.

- **Concepts:** gender, sexuality, social institutions, sexuality, heterosexuality, homosexuality, heteronormativity, homonormativity, compulsory heterosexuality, heterosexism

- **Readings & Resources:**

  - Johnston, Alan *(13 June 2013).* "A gay island community created by Italy's Fascists." BBC. Retrieved 27 August 2021.

Unit 10

Being LGBT in Italy Today
- Discrimination, stigma, resilience in Italy and Europe. New identities for new generations. Same-sex families (rainbow families—*famiglie arcobaleno*)

- **Meet with: Azione Gay e Lesbica/Anemone/Famiglie arcobaleno**

- Local associations working for the rights and quality of life of LGBTQIA* people

- **Concepts:** social identity theory, minority stress, stigma, resilience, heterosexism, discrimination, harassment

- **Readings & Resources:**

  - Chapter 9: Oppression and Power

  - AZIONE GAY E LESBICA: http://www.azionegayelesbica.it

  - ANEMONE: https://associazioneanemone.it

  - FAMIGLIE ARCOBALENO: https://www.famigliearcobaleno.org

Unit 11

Being Transgender in Italy
- Social and health services, activism, surviving. Transgender as an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression or behavior does not conform to the sex assigned at birth.

- **Classroom exercise: *femminielli*, traditional transgender identities in Naples:** Guided research of images and articles about this unique tradition

- **Meet with: Arcigay/Love my way:** Local associations working for the rights and quality of life of LGBTQIA* people

- **Concepts:** minority stress, stigma, resilience, heterosexism, medical system, medicalization, essentialism, body politics

- **Readings & Resources:**

    - Chapter 10: Empowerment

    - Pearce, R., Erikainen, S., & Vincent, B. (2020). TERF wars: An introduction. *The Sociological Review*, *68*(4), 677-698.

    - MOVIMENTO IDENTITA TRANS: https://mit-italia.it/

    - ARCIGAY FIRENZE: https://www.arcigayfirenze.it/

    - LOVE MY WAY: https://www.lovemyway.it/

Unit 12

Intersex Bodies & the Challenge to Binarism
- Intersex includes various physical variations affecting elements of the body considered "sexed," and often people with these biological variations undergo or have undergone heavy medicalization. The birth of intersex activism in the US and Italy.

- **Meet with: Intersexioni:** Intersexioni was founded in 2013 in Italy to join a pledge to the scientific research and divulgation of intersex issues with the advocacy for intersex right.

- **Concepts:** human rights, medical system, medicalization, essentialism, body politics

- **Readings & Resources:**

    - Balocchi, M. "An Apparent Paradox: The Bio-medicalisation of Intersex Variations in Italy"

    - Davis, G. e Preves, S. "Reflecting on Intersex: 25 Years of Activism, Mobilization and Change"

    - INTERSEXIONI: https://www.intersexioni.it/

Unit 13

How to Become an Agent of Change?
- **Meet with: Professor Patrizia Meringolo and LabCom. LabCom is a spinoff of the University of Florence specialized in training, consultancy, research (qualitative and quantitative), monitoring,** impact assessment and other services aimed at promoting well-being in social, organizational and educational contexts.

- PAPER DUE

- **Readings & Resources:**

    - LabCom: https://www.lab-com.it/

Unit 14

Final Week
- Papers presentation in class

- **Final remarks and concluding discussion**

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (e.g., readings) and participation in class discussions. If you miss **more than one class meeting for courses meeting once a week or two class meetings for courses meeting more than once a week** without evidence of medical need, **your final grade for the class will be dropped by a third of a letter grade for each extra absence** (check the *Academic Handbook* for the attendance policy in place at the Florence Program). When missing class, it is the student's responsibility to find out what information was given in class, including any announcements made.

Missed assignments: a valid doctor's certificate dated on the day of the absence is required to make up for any missed assignment (paper due, presentation due, project due, test, quiz, midterm, final, and all other graded activities). Failure to provide such evidence will automatically result in an "F"/"0" grade for the assignment. No exceptions allowed.

See the *Academic Handbook* for guidelines on providing a valid medical certificate.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.

Use of Electronic Devices in Class

All electronic devices, including cell phones and laptops, must be turned off during class time.

Failure to comply with this policy will be factored into the participation grade for the course and may lead to disciplinary measures.