Description
This course provides a cultural approach to the history of the adaptation of Italian immigrants to American culture and society, and compares it with the present change occurring in Italy, in the light of an unprecedented inbound immigration. The epical phenomenon of the Italian mass migration to the U.S. will be examined using immigrants’ words as primary sources—analyzing novels, poetry, “colonial” journalism and theatre, and private letters—, with a keen attention to cases of bilingualism and code-mixing. These will be scrutinized by looking, for instance, at the production of a bilingual poet like Arturo Giovannitti (1884-1959), and of such diverse novelists like Pietro di Donato (1911-1992) and Garibaldi Lapolla (1888-1954). Another focus will be provided by the breathtaking inventions of popular comedians like Farfariello (the Neapolitan Eduardo Migliaccio, 1882-1946) and Nofriio (the Sicilian Giovanni De Rosalia, 1864-1935).
Furthermore, we will show how complex and deep tenets of Italian culture such as Dante’s *Comedy*, the enduring fascination of Renaissance masterpieces, or the patriotic allure of the Risorgimento (as expressed, for instance, in Verdi’s operas, or Manzoni’s writings), were “transplanted” and re-appropriated by Italian Americans in a rich variety of ways (satirically, nationalistically, in theatre and popular songs, in the visual arts, etc.).

Finally we will be comparing the stratified landscape of Italian American culture with the challenging new scenario provided by immigrants’ culture in contemporary Italy: a country characterized by huge waves of outbound migration has reversed this tendency by becoming a “destination” country, home to over 4 million people (roughly the same amount of Italians who left for the U.S. from the 1870s to the 1920s) from a variety of disadvantaged nations. We will introduce a discussion on the thought-provoking scene of today’s “new” Italians, through works like those by Amara Lakhous, Kossi Komla-Ebri, Elvira Dones, Gëzim Hajdari.

Some of the issues addressed during the course will be:

– *Unity or disunity?* To what extent Italian historical emigration can be viewed in terms of opposition to Italy’s mid-nineteenth-century political unity?

– *Orality vs. textuality?* How and in what terms can we account for the weight of orality within Italian America, as opposed to the sophisticated textuality of Italian American cultural artifacts?

– *A postcolonial Italian culture – really?* Contemporary Italy presents a complex scenario, where postcolonial conditions meet and intertwine the outcomes of the global economic system and of geo-political upheaval. To what extent is the so-called “global” paradigm critically valid?

**Course materials**
The course is conducted in English; knowledge of Italian is not strictly necessary, although it could help.

**Course requirements**
Final grades will be assessed as follows: attendance and participation, 20%; class presentation, 30%; final paper, 50%.

Class presentation: according to the schedule, each student will give at least one 15-minute presentation during the course. The presentation will relate on an assignment based on a literary or social topic addressed in class, and will preferably expand on a specific aspect of a work of art or of a historical phenomenon related to the migratory experience.

**Schedule of bi-weekly course meetings and Readings**

1. *Introduction. Italy and emigration: outbound, inbound. Here and There: Garibaldi in New York, Whitman in Italy*
   Vecoli 1995 and 2010
   Pretelli
   Zincone

2. *The Italian scene: a smalltown exodus. The American scene, from East to West. “Italian American” in the OED*
   Handouts

3. *“Rebellious brothers”: transatlantic and circular migration of a poetical image. From the street to the page: the first stories*
4. Saving Private Arturo. The papers and poetry of Arturo Giovannitti
Giovannitti
Marazzi Voices, 216-30
Harrington, 105-25

5. The Kitchen of a Novelist. Garibaldi Lapolla and his Grand Gennaro
Lapolla, The Grand Gennaro
Marazzi King
Belluscio, introduction to Lapolla, Fire in the Flesh

6. Tragic modernity, modernist writing. Pietro di Donato’s masterpiece(s)
   Midterm Exam
Di Donato, Christ
Viscusi, Buried 53-58, 95-110
Kvidera

7. The Italian American Theatre. Farfariello and Nofrio
Cautela
Aleandri
Haller
Durante 75-94, 103-16

8. Italian Classics in Little Italy. The Italian American Press
Marazzi, “Our Brother Dante”
Marazzi, Voices 22-46
Vecoli 1998

   by Onorio Ruotolo
Booker T. Washington
Handouts

Gadda
Lakhous

11. “Embarassing” encounters. A multicultural Italian literature
Komla-Ebri
Orton – Parati
Parati – Tamburri

12. The return of the native. Pietro di Donato’s Christ in Plastic. The global FIAT on an ethno-analytic couch
Handouts

13. When We Were Albanians. New perspectives and masters
Dones
14. Review session. Final Exam

Required Readings [* = available at NYU Bookstore and at Bobst Library]

* Di Donato, Pietro, *Christ in Concrete* (New York: Signet Classic, 1993 [1939])


Recommended Readings [* = available at NYU Bookstore and at Bobst Library]


Bibliography and Further Readings [* = available at Bobst Library]


Benevieni, Marcella, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture. The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890-1940* (NYU P 2011)

Bendinelli Predelli, Maria – Andreoni, Antonio, *Piccone e poesia. La cultura dell’ottava nel poema d’emigrazione di un contadino lucchese* (Lucca: S. Marco Litotipo, 1997)

Benelli, Sarah, “*Christ in Concrete* and the Failure of Catholicism,” www.uvm.edu/~arosa/christconcrete.html


De Caldas Brito, Christiana, *Qui e là* (Isernia: Iannone, 2004)

———, *Amanda Olinda Azzurra e le altre* (Oedipus: Salerno-Milano, 2004)
* Durante, Francesco, *Storia e letteratura degli italiani negli Stati Uniti. La scena di Little Italy* (Napoli: Pironti, 2013)
Fante, John, *Dago Red* (New York: The Viking Press, 1940)
Frasca, Simona, *Mondadori, 1995*)
——, *Poema dell’esilio* (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Fara 2007)
Lakhous, Amara, *Divorce Islamic Style* (New York: Europa, 2012)

**Useful websites**

www.disp.let.uniroma1.it/basili2001  
www.eksetra.net  
www.el-ghibli.provincia.bologna.it  
www.ilgiocodeglispecchi.org  
www.sagarana.net  
www.scritturemigranti.it  
www.terre.it