

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

FACULTY OF MEDIEVAL AND MODERN LANGUAGES



Information for the Preliminary Course in

ITALIAN

2009/2010

SUB-FACULTY TEACHING STAFF

The Italian Sub-faculty is part of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, and is at present made up of the following teaching staff:

Dr. Guido Bonsaver (Pembroke)
Dr. Marco Dorigatti (St. Hilda's)
Dr. Nicola Gardini (St Cross)
Dr. Vilma De Gasperin (Exeter)
Dr. Manuele Gragnolati (Somerville)
Prof. Martin McLaughlin (Magdalen)
Ms. Nicoletta Simborowski (Hertford)
Dr. Giuseppe Stellardi (St. Hugh's)
Dr. Emmanuela Tandello (Christ Church)
Prof. Diego Zancani (Balliol)

Language teaching

Language Instructor: Dr. Vilma De Gasperin
Lettrice: Ms. Eliana Maestri
Lettore di ruolo: Mr Aldo Vittorio Grassi Pucci da Filicaja

Part-time language tutors: Ms. Rosalba Biasini, Ms. Eleanor Parker, Ms. Giancarla Vanoli,
Mr Giles Walker

There are also several postgraduate students who teach on some papers.

You will have a tutor responsible for your progress and welfare in Italian, but you will not always be taught by that tutor as your course progresses. Your tutor (and indeed any of us) will be happy to help you with any difficulties you have at any stage of your course. Please do not hesitate to ask.

THE PRELIM COURSE

No matter what other subject you take in combination with Italian, the Prelims exam papers (also known as the First Public Examination or FPE) which you will study for in your first three terms in Oxford will consist of the following:

I - Language

The language papers are designed to cover a wide range of different language exercises each testing a different aspect of your ability to understand and use modern Italian to a high level. You will be taught grammar and given practice in all these exercises (translation from and into Italian, listening and reading comprehension, essay writing) in a minimum core of 4 hrs of classes per week. Students will sit a Language Test before the beginning of the Course (Wednesday of Week 0) and be streamed into four different groups according to the level of their language. Those without A-level (or equivalent) in Italian will be given intensive instruction and help to get their language up to the necessary level after three terms.

(i) *Listening comprehension, Reading comprehension and Essay*

Listening comprehension: you will practise listening to audio and video excerpts, including authentic TV news, interviews, documentaries.

Reading comprehension: you will be reading texts from a variety of authentic sources (literary texts, contemporary newspaper and magazine articles), develop your reading skills in order to summarize, answer content and stylistic questions on the text and rephrase linguistic structures in your own words.

Guided Essay: you will develop your writing skills and practise writing argumentative essays (*saggistica*), creative writing (*narrativa*), summaries, diary notes, formal and informal letters.

(ii) *Prose (translation from English into Italian) and Translation from Italian into English*

(a) *Translation into Italian*

You will attend a weekly Prose class, together with a Grammar class, taught by the same Tutor in order to complement translation exercises with progressive and thorough grammar learning and reinforcement. The teaching lays a strong emphasis on grammatical accuracy, as well as on stylistic devices required to render more faithfully the style and structure of the original passage.

(b)

Translation into English

You will attend a fortnightly translation class, where a variety of passages taken from twentieth-century literary works will be translated into English. The aim of this class is to develop and practise key translation skills in order to ensure a clear, fluent and idiomatic transfer of meaning from Italian into English.

To view past exam papers: www.oxam.ox.ac.uk

To read Exam conventions: http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/current_undergrad.php (See Conventions > prelims > Italian)

II - Literature

The literature papers are designed to introduce you to several different and perhaps unfamiliar literary forms and genres, and also to different types of literary analysis, from the strictly textual to a more contextual, historically based approach. You will have approximately two hours per week of lectures on this aspect of the course. Your college tutor will arrange a combination of tutorials and seminars (between one and two hours per week) for which you will prepare and present written work in groups of two to three in tutorials, or in seminars of about eight.

(iii) Poetry

(a) The Italian Sonnet

The sonnet was almost certainly invented in Sicily in the thirteenth century and moulded by other Italian poets, especially Petrarch (1304-74), into the most influential and important poetic form for several centuries of European literature. You will study an anthology (provided by us) of about 50 sonnets, from its origins to the present day, which will enable you first to get used to reading poetry if you have not done so before, and then to appreciate and analyse the complex and subtle forms of expression condensed into the sonnet's 14 lines. At the same time the range of the anthology will give you some idea of the history of Italian literature and so will help you to make more informed choices about the later part of your course. A copy of the sonnets is available at the Faculty Office.

(b) Giuseppe Ungaretti

You will study a selection of the work of this important and powerful twentieth-century Italian poet, whose language and use of poetic form seem at first simple but who conveys intense emotion and philosophical sophistication in constantly and creatively refashioned forms of expression. Rather than studying a wide range of individual poems by different authors, as in (a), here you will study in depth the work of one author. Again this type of work will stand you in good stead for some of the papers after Prelims. The text used is G. Ungaretti *Vita d'un uomo: 106 poesie*, Mondadori, Milan (Oscar series) - [in particular the selections from *L'allegria* and *Sentimento del tempo*].

The exam will consist of a combination of commentaries and essays.

(iv) Modern Italian Narrative and Cinema

For this paper you will study up to five of the most important novels written in Italy since the Second World War. They have been chosen to offer a variety of literary forms, genres and techniques, of setting and of relations to the social and historical events which form their

backdrop. In addition to being studied for their own intrinsic value, they will also be seen as a testing ground for different ways of writing, reading and analysing the literature of the previous century. Each will be discussed and set in context by a series of lectures. Since they are all relatively recent and approachable the close study of these texts will help a great deal in refining your language skills. The novels studied are (in order of date of publication):



Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo* (1947)
Anna Maria Ortese, *Il mare non bagna Napoli* (1953)
Italo Calvino, *Il barone rampante* (1957)
Natalia Ginzburg, *Lessico familiare* (1963)
Pier Vittorio Tondelli, *Camere separate* (1989)

You will also study the film *I cento passi* (directed by Marco Tullio Giordana). This will be taught through a series of lectures and seminars in Hilary Term.

The exam will consist of essay questions on all the novels, and on the film. You will be expected to answer on at least four of these six items, and also to use background material (literary, intellectual, historical) where appropriate.

In Michaelmas Term, a series of introductory lectures on History and Society in 20th-century Italy will provide the social and historical background to the contemporary literary texts which you will study for your Preliminary Examination.

The University has three offices, the two Proctors and the Assessor, held by members of the colleges in rotation for one year at a time, who have a University-wide role of ombudsman. The Proctors have particular responsibility for University student discipline and formal complaints, while the Assessor is concerned with student welfare and support. You should refer to the *Proctors' and Assessor's Memorandum*, available from the University Offices or your college, for information about such matters (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/guidance/index.shtml>).

The University's Complaints and Appeals template may be downloaded in Word  or pdf  versions for inclusion in student handbooks.