**Course Description**

This course aims to explore the idea of national identity and how literary works, as well as language, can contribute to the birth of this identity in various ways. Specifically, we will examine the long process which led to the formation of a united Italian nation, touching on the political and sociological unity and divide of a country that - after the fall of the Roman Empire - remained fragmented and subdued for centuries. Key authors of Italian literature will guide us through the complex process of nation configuration through different ages.

We will discuss how Medieval writers, such as Dante Alighieri, Petrarca, and Machiavelli, helped shape the idea of a motherland. We will learn about the creation of a common Italian language through the collective efforts of writers and scholars. We will examine how literature narrated the historical moment of Italian political unification (Risorgimento), fueled nationalist feelings during the two World Wars, and in recent times challenged the very idea of homelands.

We will analyze works of prose and poetry, literary as well as cultural texts, related to the main themes of Italian identity and culture. Readings of critical theory will add a comparative and more philosophical approach: by discussing how society creates feelings of common identity and cohesion, we will try to reach a broader understanding of the human values attached to national identity – while also reflecting on the minoritized identities that have been marginalized by the dominant model of nationhood.

**Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Know major literary works and key authors of Italian literature.
- Understand the relation of those literary works to Italian society and culture.
- Know core themes and ideas in history and culture.
- Understand and describe literary works as modes of social inquiry representing specific historical and cultural contexts.
- Develop skills in reading, thinking, and writing critically through the composition of an academic essay and other homework assignments.
- Develop analytical skills and argue interpretations through class discussions.
- Identify different issues, authors, and works of art from a comparative perspective.

**Required Texts and Films**

Assigned readings and films posted in Sakai/Panopto.

**Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation, and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.
This course meets once a week, thus a total of one unexcused absence will be permitted. **Unexcused absences beyond this will result in a 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.** Consistent tardiness or long breaks out of class will also affect negatively your participation grade. 

The collective health of the JFRC is everyone’s responsibility. Do not attend class if you are ill.

**Required Work**
The course will fulfill its learning outcomes if you comply with the following requirements:

*Reader Responses:* To enhance both your reading and class discussion, for each class you will find a handout in Sakai with a list of topics/questions that we will discuss. Choose one or two questions that interest you and address them through some written notes, including a quotation or two as evidence in support of your claims. These meditations are a chance for you to consider the readings before coming to class. As the semester progresses, your responses should become more analytical and offer connections between the works, the authors, and the literary theories. Your Responses will also be useful when writing your final paper. Please, note that I will ask you to discuss your Responses in class and that I might collect them. I will evaluate your Reader Responses in your final Participation grade. Failure to complete the Reader Responses accurately will impact negatively your final Participation grade.

*Participation:* This course relies largely on class discussion, and the success of discussions depends upon your active presence, thus your presence and contributions are crucial - both to me and to your classmates. To help stimulate class discussions, you should come to class prepared for the assigned readings, and you should participate actively through your Reader Responses. I would like everyone to speak at least once every class. I recommend you take notes of lectures and discussions: you will find your notes invaluable when you need to prepare for the quizzes or if you write a paper on the text. The kind of reading we will practice requires marking up a text and reading passages from the texts during all class discussions. If it is a PDF file posted to Sakai, highlight the important quotes in yellow and/or take notes of the page numbers and of your comments.

*Quizzes:* There will be four in-class quizzes (multiple-choice questions) on all material covered (readings, lectures, discussions). To succeed in the quizzes, completing the assigned readings and taking accurate notes in class is essential. The professor’s PowerPoint slides can be used for a quick review of the main points and are not meant to replace your own note-taking and readings of the material.

*Team Presentation:* Each team will prepare one 20-25 minute presentation (about 5 minutes for each student), presenting one artistic work discussing the theme of national identity (literature, art, or film). See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on the presentations.

*Meeting for Paper Proposal:* about one week before the final essay is due, we will meet individually to discuss the topic, summary, and bibliography of your final paper. See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on the paper proposal. See me outside of class if you would like to discuss your paper proposal earlier in the semester, or more at length than the official meeting schedule allows.

*Final Paper* (5 pages, double-spaced): The final essay will show your ability to choose a focused question and thesis to guide your discussion, and to follow the conventions for writing about literature. See Assignments in Sakai for detailed instructions on the final paper.

*Sakai:* This course will be using Sakai. You are required to check the course site regularly for announcements, messages, readings, and assignments posted there.

*Electronic Devices:* Cell phones are not allowed for use in class. Personal laptops are allowed only for note-taking and during a class discussion of the textbook. If you use your laptop as a distraction when it is clearly not
needed (such as during a student’s presentation, or while we are watching a video), this will impact your participation grade.

**Assessment Components**

- Participation/Reader Responses: 10%
- Quizzes (4): 40% (or each quiz 10%)
- Team Presentation: 10%
- Meeting for Paper Proposal: 10%
- Final Paper: 20%
- Attendance: 10%

**Grading**

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**Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here: [http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml). You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

I expect that all work you produce for this course will be your own and that you will not submit work you have already completed for other courses. **Submitting the same Reader Responses of another student (if collected) will be considered plagiarism.** Paraphrasing or otherwise copying the work of another person without citing the source of the words and ideas will be considered plagiarism. If you have any questions about using or citing texts, please talk with me.

**Late or Missed Assignments**

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. **As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.**

**Accessibility Accommodations**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, during the first week of classes.

**And finally…** Welcome to this class! I find the study of literature both intellectually and emotionally fascinating (as well as a lot of fun), and I look forward to exploring it together. Please do not hesitate to converse with me about the course or the readings throughout the semester. As far as possible, I want to make sure the class meets your own academic goals as well as those I have outlined in this syllabus.

**Course Schedule (syllabus may vary, make sure to check the updated copy on Sakai):**

Friday Class Day: Friday, October 27
Week 1
Th 9/7
Introduction to the course. What is a nation? The notion of Italy.

Week 2
Th 9/14
Our Motherland: Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

Week 3
Th 9/21

Week 4
Th 9/28
Our Motherland: Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and Antonio Gramsci’s *The Modern Prince*.

Week 5
Th 10/5
**Quiz 1.** The language question in the Middle Ages: Dante Alighieri, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.

Week 6
Th 10/12
The language question during the Risorgimento: Alessandro Manzoni.

Week 7
Fall Break (October 13 – 22): no class on Thursday, October 19

Week 8
Th 10/26
**Topic for team presentation due.** Discussion of presentation topics. The language question in our times: Pasolini and Calvino.

Th 10/27
Friday class day. **Quiz 2?** The Risorgimento. Giuseppe Verdi: *Nabucco* and *The Battle of Legnano*. Antonio Gramsci’s interpretation of the Risorgimento (from *The Prison Notebooks*).

Week 9
Th 11/2

Week 10
Th 11/9
**Quiz 3.** A united nation and its nationalism. *Futurist Political Manifestos*. Gabriele D’Annunzio’s *Ode to the Latin Resurrection*.

Th 11/16

Week 12
Thanksgiving Break (November 23-26): no class on Thursday, November 23

Week 13
Th 11/30
**Team presentations? Topic for final paper due.** Discussion of final paper topics.

Week 14
Th 12/7

Week 15
M 12/11
**Final paper due today.**