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ITAL 223 Advanced Conversation in Italian

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Queens College – City University of New York
ITAL 223 – ADVANCED CONVERSATION IN ITALIAN
FALL 2019



Instructor: Nicola Lucchi, Ph.D., nicola.lucchi@qc.cuny.edu

Classroom time and place: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:15-10:30AM, Queens Hall 350F

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30-11:30AM, Queens Hall 330G

Course Description: this course is designed to immerse you into the practice of Italian conversation and into the world of verbal performance. We will familiarize with the vocabulary, expressions and registers that Italians use to express themselves on radio and television, in newspapers, cafés, universities, offices, and on the streets. We will discuss cinema and music, politics and sports; we will learn how to navigate job interviews and interactions with strangers, both friendly and hostile. All the while, we will review and expand our vocabulary and grammatical competencies.

Course Format: our class meets twice a week. We will dedicate a portion of each meeting to the review of intermediate and advanced grammar topics, and then venture into the discovery of conversational topics and into the practice of conversation. Our classroom activities will include debates, skits, role-play scenarios, task-based scenarios, as well as more traditional close readings, presentations, and oral exams.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, you will:

1. Understand better both written and spoken Italian, including its conversational conventions, regional varieties and idiomatic expressions.
2. Have expanded your Italian vocabulary as well as your general knowledge of Italian culture and language
3. Perform staged and impromptu verbal exchanges with your classmates and complete strangers in Italian
4. Make use of spoken Italian more effectively, with confidence, clarity, expression, and correct pronunciation
5. Review, assess, and critique your own spoken performance and the one of your peers

Required Texts: this is an OER/Zero-cost-textbook course, and there are no required textbooks for purchase. All reading material is publicly available. The course will make ample use of VOCAT (Video Oral Communication Assessment Tool), an open source application developed by colleagues at CUNY's Baruch College and especially hosted on the Graduate Center's Digital Commons servers for an experimentation with our class. You will need to download a copy of this app on your mobile phone, or to access it through a computer.

Course Requirements:

1. Regular attendance is required. You are excused for a maximum of three absences during the semester. Further unexcused absences will lead to a lower final grade (minus 2 points per absence). Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Three (3) late arrivals are calculated as one (1) absence. Excused absences due to serious illnesses or family emergencies should be communicated to your instructor prior to class, if possible. Religious obligations, if communicated in advance, are excused for the date of the religious holiday.
2. The course runs in Italian, and you are expected to speak Italian at all times, for all purposes. We must be loud, expressive, and theatrical—embrace the challenge with a smile!
3. Active participation to classroom discussions and activities is expected. Participation means taking part in conversations through informed and constructive dialogue, listening actively when others speak, and contributing with your work, knowledge, and intuition to group activities.
4. You should complete all assigned readings and screenings ahead of class meetings; homework assignments must be completed by their respective deadlines
5. In-class use of computers and portable electronic devices is allowed exclusively to the extent that it serves the technological aspects involved in our classroom activities. Computer-related tasks and queries, however, should be discussed and handled in Italian to the maximum extent possible.

Assessment: Your classroom interactions in Italian are constantly observed and will be evaluated comprehensively at the end of the semester. Your recorded homework will also be checked, annotated, and evaluated following an extensive grading rubric. The same will happen to a number of specific classroom activities, and to the final oral exams.

Diario di classe: you are expected to keep a classroom logbook in which you will annotate all the new words and idiomatic expressions encountered during the semester. Logbooks will be collected and checked by the instructor during the last week of classes.

VOCAT and course technology: this course adopts VOCAT (Video Oral Communication Assessment Tool), a flexible, open source video annotation software originally developed by Baruch College to train successful public speakers. VOCAT is available both on mobile platforms and on computers. You will use it on a weekly basis to complete your homework, which will consist of recorded spoken monologues and group conversations, which will then be shared on our dedicated VOCAT website and finally annotated and graded by the instructor. This tool will ensure that your practice of Italian conversation will continue well past the few hours of our classroom meetings, and will provide a record we can inspect for feedback, peer review, and constant self-improvement. Unless you request or authorize the retention of your data past the end of the semester, all recordings will be deleted after December 20, 2019.

Access to VOCAT and tutorials: you will receive an email invitation to join VOCAT before the start of the semester. Once received, please follow the link and create a personal account at <https://gc.vocat.io>, where you will be enrolled automatically in our course's website. In addition, if you have an Android or Apple mobile device, you can download a free copy of the software in the respective app stores of the two platforms. Assignment examples for the course are uploaded on the website, while you can find tutorials about VOCAT's many functions at <http://vocat.io/help>

Grading Criteria: Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

Classroom work and participation, logbook: 30%	Homework: 30%
Oral exam 1: 20%	Oral exam 2: 20%

Grade Scale:

A	100-93	A –	92-90		
B+	89-87	B	86-83	B –	82-80
C+	79-77	C	76-73	C –	72-70
D+	69-67	D	66-63	D –	62-60
F	59 and under				

Accommodating Students with Disabilities: this course is designed to train and develop advanced oral and listening skills in a foreign language; it also makes ample use of primary sources publicly available on the internet, such as Italian newspapers, television shows, and podcasts of radio shows. This third-party material may present accessibility issues that, if relevant to a student's learning experience, will be addressed and solved on a case-by-case basis. If you have a learning, sensory, or physical disability that would suggest the need for special accommodations in this class, please contact the Office of Special Services in 171 Kiely Hall at 718-997-5870; please also inform me at your earliest convenience and bring any documentation I should be aware of.

COURSE CALENDAR

Section	Topic	Activity	Assignment by end of week
Week 1 August 27 – 29	Introduction to the course and VOCAT training	Syllabus overview and practice with the features of the OER software	Complete a test Vocat assignment: <i>introduce yourself to the class</i>
Week 2 September 3	The fundamentals of Italian prosody	Target grammar: vowels, consonants, elements of Italian phonetics Classroom practice	Vocat practice: record your exercises of intonation, tone, stress, rhythm, difficult vowel and consonant sounds
Week 3 September 10 – 12	The variety of spoken Italian: dialects and regional variants	Target grammar: elements of regional Italian phonetics, linguistic variants Classroom practice	Vocat practice: record your experiments with different dialects and regional variants
Week 4 September 17 – 19	The variety of spoken Italian: registers and slang	Target grammar: examples of verbal simplification Classroom work on formal and informal Italian, formal and informal imperative	Vocat practice: record your use of different registers and slangs
Week 5 September 24 – 26	The language of television	Target grammar: formal and informal pronouns, direct object pronouns, indirect object pronouns, combined pronouns Classroom analysis of Italian talk shows	Vocat report on an episode of a tv talk show
Week 6 October 3	The language of radio	Target grammar: more direct, indirect, and combined pronouns Classroom work on historical and contemporary radio shows: analysis of	Vocat report on an episode of a radio program

		colloquialisms, humor, simplification	
Week 7 October 10	The language of popular music	Target grammar: simplification, convergence, slang Classroom work on cantautori and contemporary rap music in Italy	Vocat report on a song
Week 8 October 15 – 17	Daily conversational interactions: restaurants, hotels, shops, phone	Target grammar: the conditional as a form of courtesy Classroom role play of various scenarios	Vocat team scenarios: record a skit based on a restaurant, hotel, shop or phone interaction
Week 9 October 22 – 24	Conversational drama: dealing with medical emergencies, police, and heated confrontations	Target grammar: passive and impersonal verbs; basic medical terms; spelling words in Italian; acceptable and unacceptable curses; formal and sophisticated insults; the formal imperative Classroom role play of various scenarios	Vocat team scenarios: standing your ground, defusing heated confrontations
Week 10 October 29 – 31	Advanced conversational interactions: visual arts and cinema	Target grammar: the subjunctive, agreement of tenses, art and cinema vocabulary Classroom conversation on various artworks and film sequences	Vocat team scenarios: guided tour to a museum or film commentary
Week 11 November 5 – 7	Advanced conversational interactions: music and literature	Target grammar: the subjunctive, agreement of tenses, music and literature vocabulary Classroom analysis of poems and famous songs	Vocat report: reading and commenting a poem

Week 12 November 12 – 14	Advanced conversational interactions on politics and hot-button issues: class, race, gender, religion	Target grammar: use of subjunctive and conditional, if clauses, indirect speech and concordance issues, impersonal verbs Classroom analysis of newspaper articles and interviews	Vocat team scenario: report on Italian views on a topic of your choice
Week 13 November 19 – 21	Advanced conversational interactions: the job interview in Italy	Target grammar: formal pronouns, conditional, subjunctive Classroom practice of job interviews	Vocat report: introduce yourself to a professional audience
Week 14 November 26	Advanced conversational interactions: the oral exam in Italian universities	Target grammar: use of subjunctive, formal pronouns, passive voice, impersonal verbs. Classroom practice of oral exams	Vocat report: discuss a college-level subject of your choice
Week 15 December 3 – 5	Final presentations - Staged	Part 1: Sales Pitches, Orations	
Week 16 December 10 – 12	Final Presentations - Impromptu	Part 2: Police interrogation, College oral exams	