

Black, Queer, Jewish Italy



This seminar approaches the two most studied phases of Italian history, the Renaissance and the Twentieth century, by placing otherness at the center of the picture rather than at its margins. The main aim is to challenge traditional accounts of Italian culture, and to look at pivotal events and phenomena (the rise of Humanism, the rise of fascism, courtly culture, the two World Wars, Sixteenth century art, the avant-garde) from the point of view of non-white, non-Christian, non-heterosexual witnesses, authors, and fictional characters. In class, we will adopt a trans-historical, intersectional, and interdisciplinary perspective: themes and issues will be analyzed at the crossing of the two historical phases and of the three topics in exam, and the material will include historical and theoretical analyses, narrative texts of different genres, poems, films, and works of visual art.

Class Codes:

ITA 322 · GSS 339 · JDS 327 · ECS 332

Instructor:

Alessandro Giammei
(he, him, his · lui, tu)

Office Hours:

Wed 1:30 - 3:00 and by appointment
205 Scheide Caldwell House

(609) 258 - 9053

giammei@princeton.edu

Reading/Writing Expectations:

- 40-80 pages of selected required readings per week
- Additional suggested readings available (mostly secondary sources)
- Take-home Midterm paper (6-8 pp.). Final essay (10-12 pp.)

Concentrators in Italian (Certificate or Major) Will:

- Participate in the Italian Precept
- Read selected texts in the original language (5-15 pages per week)
- Write three short response-papers in Italian
- Write the Midterm paper in Italian

Assessment components:

MidTerm Paper	· 25 %
Final Essay	· 40 %
Oral Presentation(s)	· 20 %
Participation	· 15 %



MATERIAL

All **required readings** will be on blackboard. In order to focus on episodes and passages that are relevant to our seminary most of them are excerpts, but integral works are always available in Firestone. Readings are mostly from primary texts, and many are works of literature. Renaissance literature, in particular, can be very controversial and even offensive: one of the goals of this course is to learn how to look at that kind of material with historical detachment, and to extract information from every aspect of it (style, content, language) while making hypotheses about their original contexts and their impact on it. To help in this process, I selected some **further readings** available either on blackboard or in campus libraries. These texts are mostly meant to provide authoritative interpretations of each week's topic and specific analyses of problems related to race, religious, and sexuality in the primary readings. The material is very heterogeneous: some texts will be easy to read, others will be puzzling. I don't expect you to navigate all texts and films with ease: bring questions and interpretative challenges in class and let's approach them together.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Every week, a team of two or more students will open the discussion in class with an oral presentation (10-20 minutes) based on images. A successful presentation will **link the weekly readings with relevant images** (works of art, maps, photographs, etc.), **briefly read and interrogate the images**, and conclude with **questions for the class**. Each presentation will be scheduled at least one week in advance and will be thoroughly guided.



MUSEUM VISITS AND GUESTS

Class will be held at the **Princeton Art Museum on week 7** (October 26). We will have a guided tour in the galleries and a discussion in the seminar room. Selected works of art will be on display in the seminar room. A list of the objects that we will focus on will be available on Blackboard.

We will discuss the possibility of a visit to the Frick Gallery and the CIMA in New York.

A number of guests will visit our class. Prof. Gary Cestaro (DePaul University, Italian and Gender Studies) will join us on week 6 (October 19), curator Laura Giles (Princeton Art Museum) on week 10 (November 30), and we should be able to talk with Prof. Dana Katz (Reed College) and Aaron Robertson '17 (Oxford University) either via Skype or in class. I will ask you to prepare questions for each guest on their field of expertise in relation to what we have read and discussed in the seminar.

EXPECTATIONS

Being prepared on the required readings is crucial, but no interpretation of the material is definitive, and any interpretative attempt (as long as it is based on evidence) is welcome. Since a major portion of this course will be held as a seminar, I expect you to participate in discussions, respect other people voices, and contribute to the class with your perspective on readings and topics. For both the midterm paper and the final essay I will expect you to choose a research question about the course topics and to use the course readings (+ some additional bibliography) to try and answer it.

September 14

Week 1

Otherness in Renaissance & Modern Italy

Introduction to the historical contexts that we are going to explore, to the main resources available for the study of Renaissance and Modern Italy, to Jewish Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Race and Ethnicity Studies within Italian culture. Discussion of three key methodological issues: intersectional, trans-historical, and trans-media approaches to cultural memory.



Worlds, Bodies, and Souls from Humanism to the Baroque Age

Part I - Weeks 2-7

i. How Modernity Started: the World, the Book, the Individual

September 21

Week 2

The Birth of Racism as We Know it

Descriptions of Africa and Africans in Renaissance treatises and maps. The figure of Leo Africanus (al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi, or Yuhanna al-Asad), his scholarly work and, in particular, his *Book of the Cosmography and History of Africa* (1526). Reception of John Pory's English translation (1600) in the West. The geographic introversion of Renaissance Italy. Color, race, and religion in 16th century Europe.

Required Readings

- Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, trans. John Pory [treatise (excerpts from book I), 51 pp.]
- Ibram X. Kendi, "Origins of Racist Ideas," in *Stamped from the Beginning* [chapter in essay, 9 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

- Natalie Zemon Davis, "Writing in Italy" and "Conceiving Africa," in *Trickster Travels. A Sixteenth Century Muslim Between Worlds* [chapters, 20+27 pp.]
- "Othello in Context," in *The Longman Anthology of British Literature* [anthology of excerpts, 10 pp.]

IN FIRESTONE

- William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* [play, any edition]
- Amin Maalouf, *Leo Africanus* [novel, PQ3979.2.M28 L413 1991]

Soulless Ghetto Girls

The origins of the ghetto space in Venice. Religious debates, Jewish literature, and Jewish sociality in Italy's Renaissance and Baroque culture. The rise of the publishing industry. Intersections between gender and religious otherness in the cases of Devorà Ascarelli's poetry and of Sara Copio Sullam.

Required Readings

- *Manifesto of Sarra Copia Sulam, Jewish Woman* (+related writings by Cebà and responses) [public dialogue, 49 pp.]
- Sondra Henry and Emily Taitz, "Liberated Women—Renaissance Style," in *Written Out of History: A Hidden Legacy of Jewish Women Reveled Through Their Writings and Letters* [brief essay+Devorà Ascarelli's sonnet, 7 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

· Dana Katz, "The Ghetto and the Gaze in Early Modern Venice," in *Judaism and Christian Art* [chapter, 30 pp.]

· Benjamin Ravid, "How 'Other' Really Was the Jewish Other?," in *Acculturation and Its Discontents* [chapter, 40 pp.]

· <https://veniceghettocollaboration.com>



IN FIRESTONE

· Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* [essay, DS135 18 B6613 1994]

* **Italian Concentrators:** First short response paper in Italian due on Sunday, October 1 by the end of the day

The Platonic Closet

Idealizations of masculinity in Renaissance courtly culture (Rome, Florence). Homophilia and homophobia in pagan and christian imagery. Sexualization of bodies in religious art and Petrarchan poetry. Michelangelo's multimedia work, his myth and personality, his influence.

Required Readings

- Michelangelo, *Love Sonnets and Madrigals to Tommaso de' Cavalieri* [selection of sonnets, 45 pp.]
- Michelangelo, *Letters* [selection of letters, 7 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

· Introductions by Mortimer and Sullivan to their translations of Michelangelo's writings [introductory essays, 23+9 pp.]

· Gregory Woods, "The Male Body," in *Articulate Flesh: Male Homo-Eroticism and Modern Poetry* [chapter, 43 pp.]

IN FIRESTONE

· Leonard Barkan, *Transuming Passion. Ganymede and the erotics of humanism* [essay, NX652.G35 B37 1991]

· Glauco Cambon, *Michelangelo's Poetry. Fury of Form* [essay (see especially chapter 2), PQ4615. B6C3 1985]

October 12

Week 5

The Black Prince, the Queer Sculptor, and the Jewish Nation

The birth of capitalism, individualism, and machiavellian politics in Renaissance Florence. The Medici family: from 'Signoria' to Dukedom (15th-17th century). Benvenuto Cellini, Alessandro de Medici, and the Jewish community in the port of Livorno.

Required Readings

- Nelson Minnich "Race and Rulership: Alessandro de' Medici, first Medici duke of Florence 1529-1537" in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* [essay, 23 pp.]
- Catherine Fletcher, "Alessandro's Ethnicity," in *The Black Prince of Florence* [afterword, 9 pp.]
- Francesca Trivellato, *A New City, A New Society?: Livorno, the Jewish Nation, and Communitarian Cosmopolitanism* [chapter, 29 pp.]
- Benvenuto Cellini, *Vita* [autobiography, 5 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

- Margaret Gallucci, "ACTing UP in the Renaissance: The Case of Benvenuto Cellini," in *Queer Italia* [essay, 11 pp.]
- Francesco Bausi, "The Medici: Defenders of Liberty in Fifteenth-Century Florence," in *The Medici: Citizens and Masters* [essay, 12 pp.]
- Edward Goldberg, "The Synagogue," in *Jews and Magic in Medici Florence* [essay, 20 pp.]
- <http://www.medici.org/>



IN FIRESTONE

- Catherine Fletcher, *The Black Prince of Florence* [essay, DG737.7.A54 2016]

3. The Distorting Mirror of Literary Evasion

October 19

Week 6

Theatrical Bullying

The erudite Italian comedy and its portrayal of society. The intersection of misogyny, 'pederastia,' and anti-semitism in 16th century satire. Pietro Aretino and his pornographic, gossipy, outrageous comedic literature. Italy's licentious and flourishing culture at the eve of counter-reformation.

Required Readings

- Pietro Aretino, *The Master of the Horse* [comedy (3 acts) 55 pp.]
- Pietro Aretino, *Cortigiana* [comedy (1 scene) 16 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

- Wiley Feinstein, "The Inquisitional Cast of Mind," in *The Civilization of the Holocaust in Italy* [excerpt from essay, 10 pp. (but see the entire chapter and the whole book in firestone: DG571.F37 2003)]
- Deanna Shemek, *Aretino's Marescalco: Marriage Woes and the Duke of Mantua* [article, 15 pp.]

IN FIRESTONE

- Raymond Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr: Sexuality, Satire, and Self-Projection in 16th Century Literature and Art* [essay, PQ4564.W32 2004]

* **Italian Concentrators:** Second short response paper in Italian due on Sunday, October 22 by the end of the day

October 26

Week 7

Transoceanic Flights & Transvestitism

16th century explorations and colonialism vs. the fictional journeys of chivalric poetry. Gender bending and religious conversion in the literary tradition related to knights. The epic opposition of christianity and islam in terms of race. The moors, the saracens, and Africa itself in Ariosto's masterpiece. Folkloric uses of Ariosto's fiction: racialized and sexualized puppets in Sicily.

Required Readings

· Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso* (I, IV.1-23, VI.17-21, X.70-73, XXII-XXV) [epic poem (excerpts from 9 cantos), 71 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

· Mary-Michelle DeCoste, "Knots of Desire" [essay, 14 pp.]

· <https://edblogs.columbia.edu/eboiardo/>



IN FIRESTONE

· Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando innamorato* [epic poem, (see the episode of Fiordispina in the last canto) PQ4613.E5 R6713 1995]

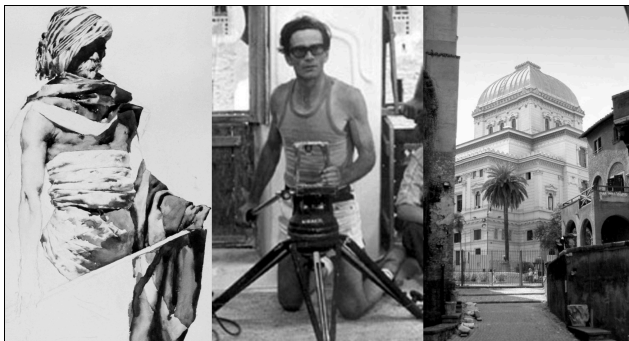
Fall Recess

Deadline for submitting midterm papers: Friday, November 3 by the end of the day.

Suggested Readings for the Break (Blackboard)

· Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*

[<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pn8g2>]



We will workshop ideas for the **midterm papers** between week 6 and week 7. All papers (6-8 pages, 12 pts, double spaced, 1 inch margin) should address **one clear research question** about the material that we discussed throughout the first half of the semester.

40 % of the grade will be determined by the question behind the paper, by the relevance of the sources chosen to address the question, and by the quality of the analysis of those sources.

40% of the grade will be determined by structure, clarity, and consistence of the paper, and by your ability to use the material to make a point.

20% of the grade will be determined by (1) the originality of the paper, and (2) your ability to intersect two or more aspects of what we discussed in class in order to cast light on a specific problem.

4. From Imperialism to Postcolonial Italy (via fascism)

November 9

Week 8

Black Futurist Utopia

Vanguardism, interventionism, and anti-classicism at the beginning of the 20th century. Italian futurism and its influence on Western modernism. "Primitivism" in the avantgarde, representation and sexualization of the black body. Marinetti's controversial relationship with Africa before and after fascism.

Required Readings

- Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Mafarka the Futurist* [novel, chapters 1 (excerpt) and 9 to 12, 76 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

- Barbara Spackman, "Mafarka and Son: Marinetti's Homophobic Economics," in *Fascist Virilities* [essay, 76 pp.]
- Przemyslaw Strozek, "Futurist Responses to African American Culture," in *Afromodernisms* [essay, 20 pp.]

IN MARQUAND

- *Futurism: an anthology*, eds. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, Laura Wittman [anthology of texts and documents NX456.5.F8 F87 2009]

November 16

Week 9

Intersectional Persecutions

The rise of fascism, the racial laws and their social and cultural impact. Homophobia, anti-semitism, and racism during the regime, Catholicism and nationalism as vectors of discrimination. The case of Ferrara's and Turin's Jewish communities. Two very different Jewish masters of Italian modern literature: Primo Levi and Giorgio Bassani.

Required Readings

- Giorgio Bassani, *The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles* [novel(excerpts), 73 pp.]
- Giorgio Bassani, *The Racial Laws* [poem, 2 pp.]
- Primo Levi, "Iron" and "Cerium," in *The Periodic Table* [short stories, "Argon", 10+7 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

- Giuliano Montaldo, *Gli occhiali d'oro* [1987 film (cinematic version of Bassani's novel), 103 minutes]
- Iael Nidam-Orvieto, "The Impact of anti-Jewish Legislation on the Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews (1938-1943)" in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi rule, 1922-1945* [essay, but see entire book in Firestone: DS135.I8 J48 2005]
- Wiley Feinstein, "Hitler in the Shadow of Mussolini," in *The Civilization of the Holocaust in Italy* [essay, 85 pp.]

* **Italian Concentrators:** Third short response paper in Italian due on Sunday, November 19 by the end of the day

Thanksgiving

Suggested Readings for the Break

ON BLACKBOARD

- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teorema* [film, 109 minutes]

November 30

Week 10

The Forgetful “Empire”

The struggle with memory in post-colonial and post-fascist Italy. Diversity after the wars: rights vs. penumbral discrimination. Pasolini as a communist (but conservative), gay (but catholic) intermedia artist and intellectual. Postcolonial writers.

Required Readings

- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Notes Towards an African Orestes* [film, 65 minutes]
- Igiaba Scego, *Sausages* [short story, 12 pp.]
- Uxax Cristina Ali Farah, *Little Mother* [novel (chapters 1-2), 50 pp.]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

- Aaron Robertson, *Contaminated Cosmopolis: The Destabilized Nation-State in Igiaba Scego’s Beyond Babylon* [article, 10 pp.]
- M.D. Usher, *An African Oresteia: Field Notes on Pasolini’s Appunti per un’Orestide africana* [essay, 38 pp.]
- Robert Young, “The Italian Postcolonial” in *Postcolonial Italy* [chapter, 7 pp., but see entire book in Firestone: DG451. P676 2012]

December 7

Week 11

Sentimental Educations

Genealogies of queer writing in modern Italian literature. Bisexual songbooks, Greco-Roman sexuality, and scriptural imagery in postwar fiction and poetry. The case of Umberto Saba, born in Austria and Italy, catholic and Jewish: his bisexual, biligious poetics and his intentional ‘Italianness’. The Jewish community of Trieste before and after the racial laws.

Required Readings

- Umberto Saba, *Ernesto* [novel (chapters 1 to 4, 80 pp.)]
- Umberto Saba, from *Songbook* [poems, 5 pp.]
- Sandro Penna, *A Low fever* [short story, 3 pp.]
- Sandro Penna, from *This Strange Joy* [poems, 3 pages]

Further Readings

ON BLACKBOARD

- William Van Watson, “Adapting to Heterocentricity; The Film Versions of Umberto Saba’s *Ernesto* and Giorgio Bassani’s *The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles*,” in *Queer Italia* [essay, 20 pp.]
- John Champagne, *Sandro Penna and anti-Oedipal impegno* [article, 16 pp.]
- Fabio Croce, “Italy, Literature” in *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Queer Culture* [entry, 3 pp.]

IN FIRESTONE

- Umberto Saba, *The Stories and Recollections*, trans. Estelle Gilson [prose, see in particular “The Jews” PQ4841.A18 A23 1992]

December 14

Week 12

Visibility and Visions Today: African-Italians, Jewish Dandies, and Queer Activists

Activism, cosmopolitanism, and integration vs. neo-fascism, campanilismo, and bigotry. Desirable and undesirable visibility in postmodern Italian society. Problems of representation, both in aesthetic and political terms. The responsibilities of those who study, narrate, and teach Italy.

Required Readings

· Fred Kuwornu, *Blaxploitalian* [film, 65 minutes]

· Charlotte Ross, *Visions of visibility: LGBT communities in Turin* [article, 18 pp.]

· Alessandro Piperno, *The Worst Intentions* [novel (chapters 1-2), 38 pp.]

Before the end of the class we will discuss everyone's abstract for the final paper and have a small workshop about research ideas and options.

Reading Period

Deadline for submitting Final Essays: Friday, January 19 by the end of the day.

RUBRIC FOR THE FINAL ESSAY (10-12 PAGES)

Basic formal aspects: 10%

The essay must be typed (12pts., double space, 1 inch margin) and submitted as an email attachment as either a Word, Pages, or PDF document. Please, use the Chicago Manual of Style, available through the Princeton Library online at <http://library.princeton.edu/resource/4306>, for any questions of style or formatting. Include a title, a 100 words abstract, and proper citations for all textual or visual sources used.

Idea, analysis, and depth: 40%

The main point of the essay is to show (1) your ability to critically analyze, in detail, material that is relevant to the course, and (2) your comprehension and ability to apply concepts, perspective, and methods of the course. Your idea should be backed by bibliographical sources (both primary and secondary texts) that serve your thesis and are analyzed in depth.

Relevance, clarity, and organization: 30%

You must have a clear thesis that explains your interpretation and provides the structuring principle of your essay. Every subsequent paragraph in the paper should in some way serve your thesis, and you need to explain how each point fits into your cohesive argument. It is not enough to simply describe or summarize.

Originality, and independent research: 20%

This essay should stem from your own ideas and your research, it is not enough to repeat the class discussions. Google is a good point of departure for any question, but it should never be the main source for your speculations and hypotheses (i.e. you do need to go to the library). You are welcome to ask for guidance: part of this assignment consists in discussing your essay project with me, and I will help you with bibliographic suggestions, feedback on your ideas, and information about the kind of specific research that your topic of choice might need.

Leo Africanus, 1494-1554

John Pory, 1572-1636

Sara Copio Sulam, 1592-1641

Devorà Ascarelli, 1550-1615 (ca.)

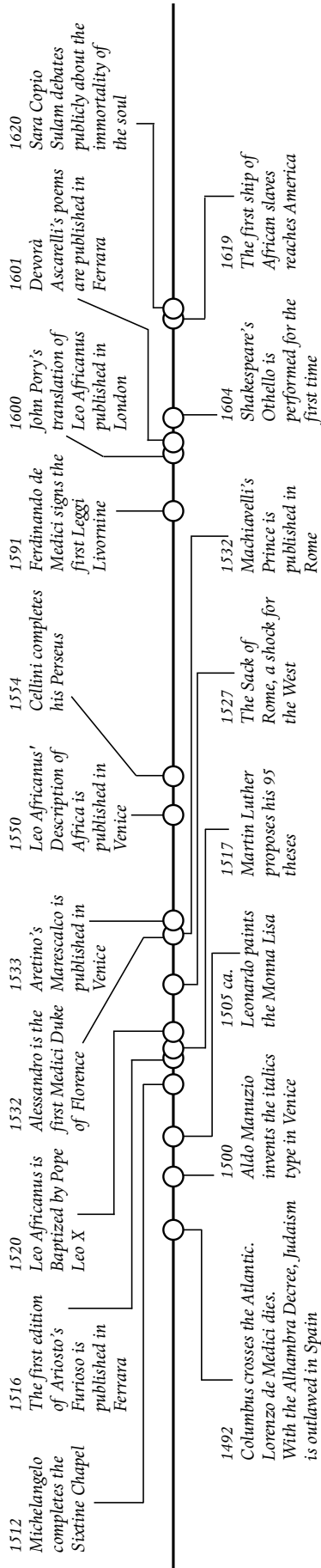
Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1475-1564

Alessandro de Medici, 1510-1537

Benvenuto Cellini, 1500-1571

Pietro Aretino, 1492-1556

Ludovico Ariosto, 1474-1533



1871
Italy becomes a unified kingdom.

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, 1876-1944

Giorgio Bassani, 1916-2000

Primo Levi, 1919-1987

Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1922-1975

Igiaba Scego, 1974 →

Cristina Ali Farah, 1973 →

Umberto Saba, 1883-1957

Sandro Penna, 1906-1977

Fred Kuwornu, 1972 →

Alessandro Piperno, 1972 →

(It will become a democracy in 1946, a few months after Mussolini's death.

The third article of Italy's democratic constitution says "All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions.

It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic and social nature which, really limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, impede the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country.")

