



The Rutgers ITALIAN Libretto

Spring 2024



From the Chair's desk:

The academic year started with a lecture by Jhumpa Lahiri, a major event co-organized and co-sponsored by the SAS Humanities Dean, the Writing Program, the English Department, and the Italian Department. During the event, which attracted more than 600 students and faculty, Lahiri spoke about her experience writing in Italian, a language she learned as an adult, and answered questions by a lot of attentive and engaged participants. Prof. Carmela Scala and Prof. Rosario Scalia have been working on a language instruction manual, which will allow us to offer an accessible, innovative textbook free of charge to all our students. Our colleague, Prof. Vetri Nathan has accepted a position at UCLA starting in September 2024. During his two years with us, Prof. Nathan was awarded a Mellon Fellowship at the Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice. He did cutting-edge, ground-breaking research in the field of Environmental Humanities and Transnational Studies, which gave visibility to our department, both within and outside Rutgers. We wish him all the best in his new job. Prof. Laura Sanguineti White was awarded the New York State Italian American Commission 2023-2024 Leonardo da Vinci Prize for excellence in her professional achievements. Congratulations, Prof. White! The academic year concluded with an Opera Night in April, a tradition we hope to continue in future years, and with a celebration of our past and current PhD students during our (by now customary) award ceremony at the beginning of May. We are, as usual, very grateful to our donors for their continued support. We wish everyone a great summer!

- Alessandro

Table of Contents

- Undergraduate News, pp. 4-5
- Alumni News & Reunion pp. 12-15
- Italian Graduate Society, p. 6
- Department Events, p. 16-17
- Graduate News, pp. 7-11
- Faculty News pp. 18-19

News



Italian Zine is created - "Italian* Beyond Stereotypes"

One of the main goals of our Italian department is to offer students opportunities to be creative and express themselves while learning new skills and knowledge. We encourage projects and group work that foster the exchange of ideas and personal experiences, building on the lesson content to discuss their perspectives and share their cultural backgrounds. The work produced by students during the semester often amazes us instructors and professors. The results are truly remarkable when students are given the chance to express themselves using their best-loved mediums.

In our monthly meetings with our Language Program Coordinator, we frequently discuss which activities offered during the semester yield the best outcomes. Noting the diversity and richness of our students' work, Professor Scala suggested we compile these projects into a publication. This idea gave birth to "Italian* Beyond Stereotypes," the first zine of the Rutgers Italian Department, featuring some of the students' works from the past academic year. The asterisk in the title symbolizes the inclusive forms of Italian we explore, not only in linguistic and grammar perspective, but also in the cultural contexts discussed in class. It reflects our department's effort to represent the contemporary, more inclusive, and heterogeneous Italian society beyond any outdone cliches, ensuring that different voices are heard and different perspectives are seen.



In this first issue, we have collected multilingual poems from language classes, essays on contemporary Italian films, interviews on current issues, AI-generated images on movies, posters against femicide, and even a blog on luxury from the Italian for Business class! This is just the beginning. We are thrilled to continue this journey of showcasing our students' exceptional work and look forward to the outstanding projects that will be featured in our future publications. Our aim is to publish at the end of each semester and establish awards for these exceptional projects, further motivating our students to excel in their creative endeavors and encouraging them to believe in their critical abilities and skills and learn how to use (and not be used by) technological tools.

The (very proud) Italian* Beyond Stereotype Committee
Prof. Carmela Scala
Diletta Pasetti
Maria Teresa De Luca

You can view the Zine here:
<https://italian.rutgers.edu/news-events/news>

News

Professor David Marsh retires after nearly 40 years at Rutgers.

He retired on January 1, 2024 and is now Professor Emeritus. In the fall of 2023, he was a Fellow of Christ Church, Oxford, and from January to March 2024 was Visiting Professor at Villa I Tatti in Florence. He can be contacted via email at dmarsh@rutgers.edu.

Congratulations on a standout career, and best wishes for your retirement!
- Rutgers Italian Dept.



A visit with Professor Emeritus Umberto Mariani & Italian Quarterly

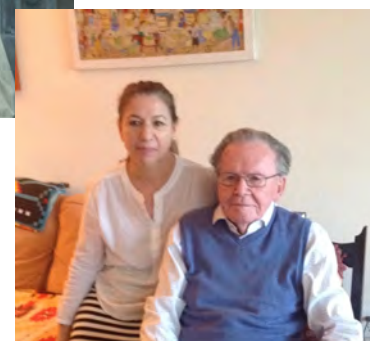
Professor Vettori recently enjoyed a nice visit with Umberto Mariani at his home. Besides being a Professor of the Italian Department for many years, he is credited for producing *Italian Quarterly* for several years. He can be contacted via email through his daughter Francesca at fmariani123@gmail.com.

During the 2023-24 academic year, the Department's journal *Italian Quarterly* published two issues of volume 60: one regular issue and a special issue titled "La preghiera nella cultura letteraria italiana," guest edited by Erminia Ardissino, Magdalena Maria Kubas, and Alessandro Vettori. Our next issue will be another special volume on Horror in Italian Studies, guest edited by Andrea Capra and Marco Malvestio. Editor Alessandro Vettori and managing editor Sandra Waters invite specialists in literature, culture, film, pedagogy, translation, and history to send article submissions to sandra.waters@rutgers.edu. Send proposals for creative reviews to Eilis Kierans emk177@italian.rutgers.edu. To start your subscription to Italian Quarterly, contact the department at itquarterlybilling@gmail.com.



What an amazing person and what a remarkable life!

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Prof. Peter Demetz, a world-renowned scholar of German Studies and Comparative Literature, Sterling Professor Emeritus of Yale University, who in more recent years also taught courses at the Rutgers University's Department of German, Russian, and East European Languages and Literatures. Prof. Demetz was our colleague Paola Gambarota's husband and was a frequent presence at our department functions, always delighted to meet new students and colleagues, and always eager to learn about their projects and their dissertations. He enlightened us all with his wisdom and knowledge, and we all harbor fond memories of him, his incisive remarks, and his unmistakable wit. We'll miss him very much and we express Paola our most heartfelt sympathy.



Are you following?

@italianRutgers
@rutgersroma
@ruitalianru



Top: Prof. Baldi presents Italian Major, Sophia Scala with a graduation gift. Prof. Scalia with Gabrielle Harrington who organized the Italian Book Club. Giuseppina Lane gives Language Excellence award to 101 student Annabella La Mantia.

Undergraduate News

from Undergraduate Director,
Professor Andrea Baldi



This was a very eventful year for our Undergraduate Program. Scores of students attended the wide variety of interdisciplinary cultural events we organized, and many were enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn about different aspects of contemporary Italy through lively intellectual conversations. At the end of the Spring semester, Carmela Scala, in collaboration with Maria Teresa De Luca and Diletta Pasetti, put together the first issue of “Italian* Beyond Stereotypes,” our department’s zine. This electronic publication showcased the best works produced by some of our students over this academic year, ranging from visual projects and poetry to translations; from critical essays to interviews, and even a blog! It is truly an amazing journal and a wonderful testament to the creativity of our students and instructors.

In the Fall semester Gabrielle Harrington, a graduating minor, launched the Italian Book Club, coordinated by Rosario Scalia, with the help of Steven Jacobs. The students participating in the club’s meetings read and discussed chapters of Elena Ferrante’s *My Brilliant Friend*. Given the success of the initiative, we hope it will continue next academic year.

In recognition of their academic achievements and dedication to Italian Studies, some of our Undergraduate students earned prestigious scholarships:

Cara Gibbons was awarded the Coccia Foundation Study Abroad Scholarship; Catherine Schoenfeld received the Clementina & Joseph Coccia, Sr. Memorial Scholarship; Natalie Tango was granted the Anna & Angelo Soriano Memorial Scholarship.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Elisa Coccia, President of the Coccia Foundation, and her family for their generous and ongoing support of our students!

We are proud of our graduating majors and minors, whom we recognized at our Senior Night. Zack Novak wrote an Honors Thesis On the Preservation of Sicilian, receiving High Honors (Advisor, Carmela Scala). Several students received prizes for their outstanding performance in our language, culture, and cinema classes. Furthermore, we inducted nine members at the inaugural ceremony of our chapter of the Italian Honor Society Gamma Kappa Alpha. We are looking forward to welcoming more students, who will follow these trailblazers next year. Congratulations to all!

Undergraduate Scholarships and Awards

Thanks to the generosity of the Coccia Foundation, Rutgers students were awarded three different scholarships this year. Seated below are Cara Gibbons, Joseph Coccia, Catherine Schoenfeld, Natalie Tango, Elisa Coccia, and Professor Baldi, Undergraduate Director.

2024 Coccia Foundation Study Abroad Scholarship was awarded to Cara Gibbons who will be studying in Rome

2024 Angelo & Anna Soriano Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Natalie Tango for Italian Studies

2024 Clementina & Joseph Coccia Sr. Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Catherine Schoenfeld for Italian Studies



Inaugural year for Italian Honor Society - Gamma Kappa Alpha

On April 30, 2024, students were inducted into the Italian Honor Society. Gamma Kappa Alpha symbolizes "Knowledge and Virtue," and it aims to acknowledge exceptional academic performance in the fields of Italian language and literature and to encourage college students to develop a deeper interest in and understanding of Italian culture.



Dio Tineo is recognized for 4 years of service to the Italian Dept. as a student staff member.

Group snapshots from holiday activities and take your dog to work day - Alessandro with Leo.



Italian Graduate Society

This past academic year debuted with the much-awaited Italian Graduate Society Conference. Held at the Eagleton Institute, Woodlawn Mansion, New Brunswick, on the 17th and 18th of November, the conference attracted doctoral PhD students from New York and Philadelphia, who exchanged ideas and opinions on a topic, “Masks in Italian culture, literature, cinema and theater”, which proved engaging and stimulating alike. Two keynote speakers, professors Teresa Fiore (Montclair State University) and Ronald Martinez (Brown University), delivered keen talks on topics such as Petrarch & Boccaccio and Migrant language.

In the Spring 2024 semester the IGS organized the screening of an Italian documentary, “Food for Profit”. The documentary tackled numerous critical issues in the Italian food industry. The next goal for the Italian Graduate Society, represented by the officers Angela Mininni, Steven Jacobs, Salvatore Taibi, and Marius Rusu, is to work on the upcoming issue of the graduate journal “La Fusta”, the oldest graduate journal of Italian Studies in North America.



IGS officers (left to right): Marius Rusu, President; Angela Mininni, Vice President; Salvatore Taibi, Secretary; and Steven Jacobs, Treasurer

<https://sites.rutgers.edu/italian-grad-society/>

Email: italian.grad.society@gmail.com

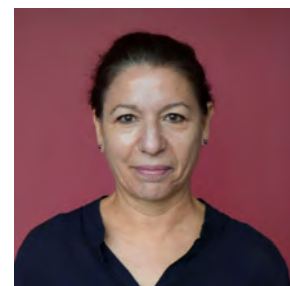


Rosario Scalia, Italian Government Lecturer

Rosario is our governmental lecturer appointed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Academic year 2023-2024 was his third year at Rutgers and a very busy time for him. Rosario faced new challenges and had more responsibilities. In the Spring semester he taught his first course in English. Teaching a “mafia movies” class was an exciting experience and Rosario’s students helped him create a thought-provoking learning environment. Also, during this academic year Rosario has been working on his dissertation for the Doctorate of Modern Languages (DML) Program at Middlebury College, VT. He just submitted his work about the cultural myth of the mafia and will be discussing it in July. Stay tuned...

Graduate News

from Graduate Program Director, Professor Paola Gambarota



This past academic year we welcomed two excellent young scholars in our PhD program, Maria Laura Spanedda and Sean Widlake, who, with their strong interdisciplinary experience and their many languages, continue to enrich our program. Both immediately distinguished themselves. Maria Laura was invited to talk at international professional conferences and is already completing a Certificate in Public Humanities this summer. Sean received the 2024 Prize for Best Italian Essay. In the fall 2024 we will be welcoming in our community two newly admitted PhD candidates, Roberta Berlingò and Erika Spadavecchia, who have an impressive background as comparatists. We are very much looking forward to meeting them in person in September.

Among the many accomplishments, Paolo Scartoni, Jamison Standridge, and Natascia Cappa defended their dissertation brilliantly. Paolo accepted a Lecturer position at Washington University in St. Louis, Natascia returned to teach in Italy, and Jamison will continue to teach for the Rutgers writing program. We are sad to see them go but happy and excited about the next steps in their careers.

The Italian Graduate Society (IGS) and all our graduate students continue to be exceptionally active and visible in our field, participating in numerous international conferences and contributing to professional initiatives such as the Dante Society of America, the journal *Italian Quarterly*, and the Rutgers Italian Book Series OVOI. Most of them received well-deserved travel and research awards. This Spring, two alumni, Sandy Waters and Francesco Pascuzzi – introduced by Prof. Ben Sifuentes-Jauregui (Comparative Literature, American Studies, Latin American Studies) – presented their translation of Porpora Marcasciano's *AntoloGaia* (OVOI, Rutgers UP) to an enthusiastic audience. The IGS organized a successful conference in the Fall and, in the Spring, an acclaimed screening of the documentary *Food for Profit*, with the participation of the director, who was available to the audience for Q&A (more on these initiatives in the IGS report).

This year the Graduate Alumni Reunion saw the participation of many distinguished guests and donors, such as Dr. Laggini Fiore, Elisa Coccia, Dr. Vito De Simone, Dr. Ronald Garutti. Our alumnus Prof. Richard Bonanno offered a lively and inspiring presentation on Fr. Roberto Sardelli, who, in 1968, decided to abandon the comfort of his parish church in Rome to live and practice his ministry among a group of immigrants living in a Roman encampment, where Sardelli also built and lead a school. The Reunion was a splendid conclusion to the Spring semester.

I am looking forward to our students' future initiatives and to celebrating their many achievements when I will return as GPD in Spring 2025.

Congratulations to our students and Alumni on their many successes!

Year in Review - Ph.D. Students

Maria Teresa De Luca

This past academic year has been very busy. I presented my research at the ADI conference in Naples and at the NeMLA conference in Boston. In the paper I presented at ADI, I applied the notion of Third Space (Soja) to Maria Corti's literary account of natural spaces while at NeMLA I expanded this research to explore similarities between Maria Corti's and Italo Calvino's reflections on the ways spaces are collectively organized and shared in the United States vs Europe, and discussed what this might reveal about the different impacts of socio-economic forces on the two sides of the Ocean. In Boston I also co-organized a panel titled 'Frame narratives in literature and across media'. This past Spring I completed my qualifying exam and I am currently working on the dissertation prospectus that I plan to defend in July. The dissertation project focuses on the reuse and re-interpretation of Greek tragedy and tragedies by Italian authors in the mid-twentieth century. I also gave an invited lecture at Vassar University on the impact of Aristotle's Poetics and related debates on the aesthetic of tragedy and on the origins of Italian Opera. Additionally, I have done extensive research based on a lesser-known short story by Beppe Fenoglio that I continue to develop. During the past two semesters I have taught Italian language courses at Rutgers and Columbia University. The last part of the Spring Semester at Columbia was impacted by measures taken to contain student protests on campus. This first-hand experience has prompted me to reflect a lot on the relevance and responsibility of universities in society, as well as the difficulties and importance of defending academic freedom and values from threats coming from within and outside the university. I am grateful to have been awarded the Dr. Vito and Mrs. Carolyn De Simone Endowed Fellowship for Italian Studies, and I am looking forward to enjoying my summer vacation once I defend the prospectus.

Giuseppe Grispino

The past year has been very rich both on the personal and professional levels. In August of 2023, I embarked on a new chapter of my American life and moved all the way to Norman, Oklahoma, for a teaching position at the University of Oklahoma. At OU, I have taught five classes and well over 100 students! I have also had the chance to enhance my dissertation research through the wonderful network of libraries and research centers here. With a full teaching load and dissertation research, I have very little spare time, but I did have the opportunity to travel back to Rutgers and I enjoyed exploring the richness of Oklahoma with my first car: Ornella. At the Alumni Reunion, I was honored

to receive the Joseph E. & Marie E. Laggini Memorial Endowed Scholarship, which will support my dissertation writing during the summer months. I want to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Stephanie Laggini Fiore for presenting this award. I am excited to finish my dissertation within the next academic year and to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise.

Ariana Guzman

The 2023-2024 academic year was very productive. Along with taking courses in Italian Studies, I also took courses in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department in order to expand my knowledge and aim towards broadening my interdisciplinary approaches. During the Fall 2023, I applied and was accepted for the Graduate Public Humanities Internship Program. Through the Graduate Public Humanities Internship Program, I have been given the opportunity to intern with the Rikers Public Memory Project this Summer 2024. I was also given the opportunity to assist the IGS in their events for 2023-2024. I participated as a moderator for the IGS's mask conference in November 2023. The opportunity to work under the guidance of the IGS has allowed me to learn more about the roles and about teamwork that plays an important role in event planning and organization. In Spring 2024, I attended the NeMLA conference in Boston, Massachusetts. During this conference, I presented my paper titled, "Contextualizing Voices: An Analysis of 'Barriers to Integration: Latin American Voices in Italy.'" This panel has shown me the importance of digital projects in social activism. This summer, I am happy to be a part of the Rikers Public Memory Project as an intern. I hope to learn a lot from this experience. As for the upcoming 2024-2025 year, I am very excited and look forward to teaching my first class!

Steven Jacobs

These past two semesters have been both productive and formative. I have just completed my fourth year, successfully defending my Qualifying Exam: "Lassù in montagna: Modalities of Environmentalism from Resistenza to the No-Tav Movement." During this time, I have served as treasurer for the Italian Graduate Society, helping organize the "Masks" conference and the film screening of "Food for Profit." I also concluded my tenure with Salvatore Taibi as Graduate Student Liaison. In the fall, I taught Italian Composition and Stylistics, while in the spring, I taught Italian 101. Additionally, I taught two sections of Italian for Travel. Currently, I am teaching Italian for Reading Knowledge while I design a course on the City of Rome, which I will teach in the upcoming fall semester. Next year, I am excited to also be teaching at Marist College. Beyond my academic commitments, I run a summer Italian conversation hour, "Due chiacchiere," to

help undergraduate students improve their language skills and work as the coordinator for Montclair State University's Summer Italian Intensive Pre-College Program. I also continue to collaborate with Ariana Guzman on a Digital Humanities project, *Voices of Latin-Americans in Italy*. Additionally, I have presented the roots of my dissertation at the NEMLA Conference in Boston and the FIGGS Conference at the University of Pennsylvania, and was a panelist at the ITA webinar, *Road to Italian Studies*. I have forthcoming reviews in two academic journals and will be chairing a panel on undergraduate research at the AATI conference in Perugia.

Dora Labate

Reflecting on the past year, I've achieved significant milestones in both my academic and professional pursuits. These include successfully passing my Qualifying Exams and meticulously crafting and defending my dissertation prospectus. Furthermore, I had the honor of presenting papers at prestigious Graduate Student Conferences hosted by Yale University and UCLA, thereby showcasing my scholarly contributions to a broader audience. Additionally, I proactively engaged in three classes aimed at enhancing my professional development: *Writing for the Dissertation*, *Writing Studio*, and *Intro to College Teaching*. Currently, I am fully immersed in the pursuit of my PhD in Italian studies, with a particular research focus on the intersection of social and epistemic justice. My goal is to leverage literature as a powerful catalyst for instigating social change within this framework. This project seamlessly aligns with my interdisciplinary interests, spanning fields such as Feminist Theory, Gender Studies, Critical Race Theory, and Decolonial Theory. These diverse areas of study enrich my scholarly perspective and serve as driving forces behind my commitment to thoroughly exploring complex social issues from various angles. Looking ahead, alongside my dissertation writing, I have two book reviews lined up for the *Italian Quarterly*. Furthermore, I am actively seeking opportunities to apply my extensive background and experience in meaningful ways.

Angela Mininni

This academic year, Angela has focused intensely on both her teaching duties and preparing for the Qualifying Exam. She's been deeply invested in her research on Renaissance Women Writers, exploring their work, lives, and contributions with great enthusiasm. She has also served for the second year as VP to the Italian Graduate Society. Balancing these demanding roles has been challenging, but Angela's excitement for the next steps in her research and work keeps her motivated. She can't wait to be done with the QE and start diving into the next phases of her project. Here's to a year of hard work, discovery, and a few more cups of coffee to keep the momentum going!

Diletta Pasetti

This past year flew by! I taught two online language courses and pursued studies in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Public Humanities Program. My fear of AI diminished after attending the course organized by Professors Carmela Scala and Rosario Scalia together with the Italian Consulate. I definitely learned a lot about how to include it in our coursework. In October, together with Vanessa Roghi, I participated in the "Rebellious Priests" event hosted at Casa Italiana at NYU, introducing Father Primo Mazzolari to the American public. Partially covered by the NeMLA Graduate Travel Fund, I attended NeMLA with a talk on Alda Merini's memoir, and in April, I presented my paper for the Dante course at the UPenn Graduate Conference, focusing on the connection between courtly love and femicide. The SGS funded my trip to Siena, allowing me to attend the incredible conference "Queer Kinship," where I spoke about Michela Murgia, the Virgin Mary, and surrogacy—a publication should follow the conference. I collaborated with Professor Nathan on the launch of the Cybercene Lab, and I had fun working on the first zine of the Italian department with Professor Scala and my colleague Maria Teresa De Luca. While shadowing the IGS committee, I collaborated in the organization of the screening of the "Food for Profit" documentary, and I am very grateful for this opportunity. This summer promises to be busy and also very exciting, with the AAIS conference in Sorrento and the entire month of July with the RU in Rome program. Don't worry, holidays will not be left behind: I'll spend some days with my family in Kefalonia and in Bozzolo with my two beloved dogs.

Marius Rusu

In both Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 I taught the Italian 101 hybrid class. The hybrid format was challenging, yet thanks to curious and collaborative students the results were neat. In March I attended the NeMLA conference in Boston, and was part of the panel "Excessive Abundance? Food in Italian and Italian-American Film, Literature, and Media", hosted by professors Irene Hatzopoulos and Valentina Morello. Subsequently I participated Rutgers French Department's Graduate Student Conference "Lights Out" with a talk on Giacomo Casanova, and also gave a talk at the Rutgers Writing Program Symposium on the relationship between Walter Benjamin's aura, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and gas warfare. Other than talks at conferences, I submitted several articles to academic journals, they have been accepted and are now forthcoming.

This summer I will teach an asynchronous class and do research for my dissertation. Together with my advisor, Professor Paola Gambarota, I was able to pinpoint the topic for my dissertation, World War I narrative and propaganda, and I look forward to visiting archives and libraries that might hold material that's relevant for my work.

The Rutgers Libretto

I am quite excited to delve deeper into this line of research. In July I will attend a Summer School at the Università per stranieri in Siena, where I will expand my knowledge of pedagogy and inclusive approaches.

Paolo Scartoni (RU'24)

This year has been a bittersweet one. I taught language and culture classes, including a class entitled “Death, Love, and Politics in Italian Opera,” at Vassar College. My wife, Morgan Griffith, and I organized and performed the second iteration of the Opera Night, a musical conversation about the secrets of opera. I presented my research at many conferences, and I was invited at Yale University to teach a workshop on how to incorporate improv comedy in Italian language courses. Last but not least, I defended my dissertation, entitled “The Sound of Morals. Figures of Grammar and Music in Dante,” and accepted a position as Lecturer at Washington University in St. Louis. I would like to use my last entry in the Libretto as a graduate student to thank all my professors, fellow graduate students, undergraduate students, and Sheri La Macchia for seven wonderful years! A presto!



Paolo Scartoni (RU'24) with his dissertation committee. Left to right: Alessandro Vettori and Paola Gambarota (Rutgers University), Paolo, Susan Boynton (Columbia University) and Rita Copeland (University of Pennsylvania).

Federica Soddu

This past year has been a busy and rewarding one for me. In the fall, I taught two sessions of Academic Writing 101 for the Writing Program. During the Winter break, I completed an essay that was recently published as a book chapter in *Logu e Logos. Questione sarda e discorso decoloniale* by Meltemi. In March, I co-chaired two panels at Nemla – “Italy and (Post)coloniality”, and “Frame Narrative in Literature and Across Media” – and presented a paper co-authored with my friend and colleague Maria Laura Spanedda titled “Sardinia is (not) a Paradise. Emptiness, Exoticism, and Wargames in the Italian South”. While I continue writing my dissertation, I am preparing to teach Intermediate Italian online in the Summer and to present a paper at the AAIS Conference in Sorrento, in early June. I’m also excited to take a week-long road trip to Sicily before going back to spend the summer in hot Sardinia!

Maria Laura Spanedda

This first year as a fellow at the Italian Department has been incredibly rewarding! I’m grateful for the opportunity to participate in a program that encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and supports my efforts to integrate Italian Studies with other fields. I have focused on Italian history and Environmental Humanities, exploring the intersections between Italian fascism, international migration, and ecology. Additionally, I have deepened the relationships between climate change, islands, and emerging issues surrounding national borders and citizenship. I recently published a book review of Bianca Garavelli’s work “Dante. Così lontano, così vicino”. I also presented my project titled “Displaced Fascism in a Post-War Migration: the Story of Rancho Littorio in Ecuador” at the NeMLA 2024 Conference in Boston (March 8-10, 2024). Furthermore, I had the pleasure of chairing the panel “Italy and (Post)coloniality” alongside my colleague and friend Federica Soddu. Together, we co-authored a paper titled “Sardinia is (not) a Paradise: Emptiness, Exoticism, and Wargames in the Italian South”. This summer I’ll travel to Italy as a presenter for the AAIS 2024 Conference in Sorrento with the contribute “A Journey Through Hell. From the Famous Caron to the Anonymous «Scafisti»”. During this time, I will also conduct archive research and interviews relevant to my ongoing project. I am currently engaged in a funded Public Humanities Internship that connects recent developments in the Environmental Humanities with the interdisciplinary expertise of my host organizations: COLAB Association and the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership in New Brunswick. I’m pleased with this first year of my PhD, and I’m excited to see what opportunities the coming year will present.

Salvatore Taibi

The 2023-24 academic year was exciting and challenging, exhausting yet rewarding. While the fall semester seemed tranquil—in hindsight, at least—and I taught only one course (Italian 102), as one calendar year rolled into the next the pace picked up and the spring semester was an exhilarating adventure from start to finish. During the spring, I taught Italian 250 “Composition and Stylistics,” served as a TA for Professor White’s “Italian Food Culture” course, and, to my great satisfaction, was selected as a part-time lecturer in the Department of French and Italian at Princeton University. There, I worked under Professor Pietro Frassica where I assisted with his course titled “Gastronomy of Literature.” I was responsible for teaching two individual precepts, expounding on the material from the lectures in a small-group setting. The faculty and the students were absolutely wonderful, and the experience was one of the most rewarding accomplishments of my young career. In addition to my teaching endeavors during the spring, I was able to spend some time with my own research. First, I finished writing and editing my article entitled “A Wooden Boy and a Lesson in Free Market Economics: How Pinocchio Becomes an Entrepreneur.” I am enthusiastic about the work that I have produced and very much look forward to seeing it in print later this year. I also was able to step outside my normal area of focus and attended the NeMLA conference in Boston where I presented on a new area of research: war films. This is a topic that is quite personal for me, and I was able to speak about Stanley Kubrick’s film *Paths of Glory*. Of course, not being someone who is afraid to buck the status quo, I took what is often perceived as the “anti-war film par excellence” and instead showed how the film could be read as offering the spectator several reasons why war is necessary and just. I was thrilled with the reception that I received, and hope that I can find time to continue this area of research in the future. Finally, looking ahead to this summer, I will be attending the RU Rome summer program where I will be teaching Italian 101. I am excited about this wonderful opportunity, not only because Rome feels, in many ways, like a second home to me, but also for the chance to share my passion for the city and the culture with my students. I am grateful to the department for selecting me for the program. Andiamo avanti!

Sean Widlake

This year, Sean successfully completed his first year of the PhD program. Having come from a background in Middle Eastern Studies, this transitional year has been both challenging and rewarding. He has been grateful for the supportive, immersive environment provided by the faculty and colleagues in the Italian department. Additionally, in the fall term Sean wrote and published a book review for *Italian Quarterly* on William Franke’s *The Divine Vision of Dante’s Paradiso: The Metaphysics of Representation*, which appeared in the most recent issue. In the spring term, Sean was selected as Rutgers’ representative for the Interuniversity Doctoral Consortium (IUDC) Medieval Studies Conference, for which he presented his paper “Waltzing Matelda: Penance, Redemption, and Dance in Dante’s *Purgatorio*.” Furthermore, he was delighted to receive the department’s Award for Best Paper in a Graduate Seminar for his essay, “Hysteric or Mystic: Neera’s Figuring of a Saint in *Teresa*.” This summer, Sean looks forward to participating as a fellow in RU in Rome as part of the department’s study abroad program.

Natascia Cappa (RU'24)

This year, Natascia completed her PhD with a dissertation focused on transnational fascism, titled *Fascist Spectralities: Haunted Imaginaries in Italian and Latin American Literature*. A contribution based on the first chapter of her dissertation, titled “Tempo di uccidere: il corvo e il cocodrillo come simbologia del male non redento,” will be published in 2025 in the proceedings of the conference *V Convegno internazionale di cultura neolatina: Bestiari* by the publishing house *Società Dante Alighieri Editore / Wydawnictwo Società Dante Alighieri*. She is now working as an Italian instructor for foreigners in Italy and plans to translate a collection of poems studied in her dissertation from Spanish into Italian.

Alumni News

Arianna Fognani (RU'16), This academic year, Arianna published two articles. Her analysis of Italian-American identity in the series *The White Lotus* (season 2) appeared in *Turisti per caso. Migrazioni e viaggi delle radici* a publication by the “Centro Altreitalie”. Additionally, her forthcoming article in *Italica* explores the translation of Italian comics by Zerocalcare and Takoua Ben Mohamed in language courses. Arianna also secured a grant from the Penn Language Center to develop a new course on Italian Translation, demonstrating her commitment to innovative teaching.

Marino Forlino (RU'15), Associate Professor of Italian at Scripps College, was one of recipients of the annual Mary W. Johnson Faculty Achievement Awards for Teaching for the 2022-23 academic year. These awards are given to outstanding Scripps faculty with extraordinary achievements in teaching, scholarship, or service for the 2022-23 academic year who also have demonstrated proficiency in the other two areas.

Deena Levy (RU'09), I write from Como, Italia, where I am currently leading an education abroad program for engineering students here at Penn State. I'm teaching a course on cross-cultural engagement, and I'm very happy and grateful to be back in Italia for this short period, and to connect again here with this part of me. I've also co-developed an intensive Global Learning Institute for Penn State faculty along with a Global Faculty Fellows program, now in its second year. It's been an awesome project to work on with a lot of faculty interest in the topic. I hope all of my Rutgers Italian colleagues are doing well :). Deena

Sandra Waters (RU'09), In the past year, Sandra has been busy managing the day-to-day tasks of Italian Quarterly and promoting the Other Voices of Italy series (which she co-edits with Eilis Kierans and Alessandro Vettori). Her co-translation (with Francesco Pascuzzi) of Porpora Marcasciano's groundbreaking memoir *AntoloGaia: Queering the Seventies, A Radical Queer Memoir* was published with OVOI in October 2023 with Rutgers University Press. At the 2023 AATI conference in Catania, Italy she presented the OVOI series with Eilis Kierans, Alessandro Vettori, and Micah Kleit (president of RUP), and also gave a talk on gendered language in *AntoloGaia*. She had a blast answering questions from the Department's faculty, grad students, and undergraduate students at the *AntoloGaia* book presentation in March.



OVOI staff: Eilis Kierans, Alessandro Vettori, and Sandy Waters

The latest news about OVOI - Other Voices of Italy

The Other Voices of Italy series, published with Rutgers University Press, had a fruitful year of new releases, promotional events, and creative collaborations. They published nine novels covering a wide range of engaging and critical topics, from Michelangelo La Luna's translation *The Round Dance*, authored by Carmine Abate, which explores the deep-rooted traditions of a small Arbëreshë community in Southern Italy, to Shirin Ramzanali Fazel's and Simone Brioni's translation *Islam and Me*, authored by Fazel, which focuses on the discrimination of Muslim women and the multicultural reality of our time. Among the variety of events that focused on OVOI translations this year, author Dacia Maraini and OVOI editor Alessandro Vettori discussed Jane Tylus's translation *In Praise of Disobedience: Clare of Assisi*, authored by Maraini, at the University of Pennsylvania was co-sponsored by Temple and Bryn Mawr. At Rutgers University, OVOI editor/ translator Sandra Waters and co-translator Francesco Pascuzzi, along with Prof. Ben Sifuentes- Jáuregui engaged in a conversation about their translation *AntoloGaia. Queering the Seventies*, authored by Porpora Marcasciano, and the difficulties of translating a book from a gendered language to a non-gendered language. At present, OVOI has a stream of riveting translations in the works. Keep your eyes peeled for new releases in the months to come!

Alumnae/Alumni Reunion

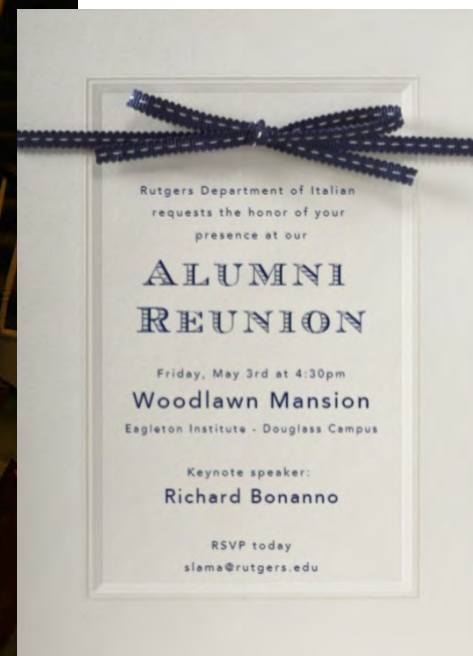


On May 3, 2024, Rutgers University PhD alums gathered together with faculty, staff, donors, current PhD students, and award and scholarship recipients for our annual Italian Dept. alumnae/alumni reunion. The invited speaker, Richard Bonanno (Rutgers PhD 2000), currently a professor at Assumption University in Massachusetts, is pictured on the right. He gave an inspiring talk entitled *What Lies beyond that Marvelous Backdrop?* Our annual reunion allows conversation and collaboration while we connect over dinner at the historic Woodlawn Mansion, Eagleton Institute. If you or your organization are interested in sponsoring a scholarship we invite you to contact the Italian Office at 848-932-5004 or email Sheri La Macchia (slama@rutgers.edu).



LEFT: Rutgers doctoral students Maria Laura Spanedda and Ariana Guzman pose with Professor Alessandro Vettori as they receive the Italian Department summer research fellowships. ABOVE: Mary Ann Mastrolia, (Rutgers'16) converses with current Ph.D. students, Steven Jacobs and Dora Labate.

Alumni Reunion



On May 3, 2024, Rutgers held their annual alumni reunion. TOP: group shot of current and former PhD students. The Garutti family shares dinner with Prof. Nathan, Whitney Prendergast and Gabriella Carbone from the Rutgers Foundation. Assemblyman Joe Daniels, Dr. Patricia Fuzzi, Alessandro Vettori, Giuseppina Di Martino, and Giuseppina Lane enjoy conversation over dinner. Sean Widlake receives award from Professor Baldi.

Grad. Fellowships and Awards

Garruti Family Awards

Innovative Teaching - Angela Mininni

Dedication to Service - Steven Jacobs

Excellence in Scholarship - Salvatore Taibi

Best Essay in a Graduate course

Sean Widlake - *Hysteric or Mystic: Neera's Figuring of a Saint in Teresa*

Italian Dept. Summer Research Fellowships –

Ariana Guzman and Maria Laura Spanedda

Paragano Family Foundation Endowed

Scholarship - Giuseppina Di Martino

Dr. Vito and Mrs. Carolyn DeSimone Endowed Fellowship for Italian Studies – Award is shared between Federica Soddu and Maria Teresa De Luca

Joseph E. & Marie E. Laggini Memorial Endowed Graduate Fellowship – Giuseppe Grispino



ABOVE: Alongside Stephanie Laggini Fiore, husband Michael share the fellowship with Giuseppe Grispino, of Oklahoma University. TOP RIGHT: Ron and Joanna Garutti present the Service Award to Steven Jacobs. Carolyn and Vito DeSimone present the awards to Federica Soddu and Maria Teresa De Luca. Giuseppina Di Martino, pictured with Rutgers Foundation staff, Whitney Prendergast and Gabriella Carbone receives the Paragano scholarship.

The Rutgers Libretto

Events

The Italian Dept. hosted and co-sponsored several events this past year.




MULTISPECIES HUMANITIES GRADUATE ROUNDTABLE

APR 24 4.30 PM AB 4052 College Av

Light Refreshments and Celebration of the new Lab will follow.

PINA DI MARTINO Creating a classroom community through animal-related storytelling.	DILETTA PASETTI Who is the Beast? Intertwined Narratives between Bear Executions and Femicide in Italy.
ARIANA GUZMAN Multispecies Interactions in Shaunak Sen's All That Breathes.	MARIALAURA SPANEDDA Sardinia is (not) a Paradise: Exoticism, War Games and Environmental Activism in the Italian South.
ANA LLURBA Staying with the Trouble: An Intervention between Indigenous Ontologies, Western Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities.	SEAN WIDLAKE Mystical Belonging: St. Francis and the Reclamation of Nature.
	WENJING YU Everything in the Forest is a Forest.

Follow Us! www.theybercenelab.org @cybercenelab



Rutgers University Italian Department presents:

Opera Night

Join soprano **Morgan Griffith** and pianist **Paolo Scartoni** for a night of live music and conversation about the secrets of Opera.

March 26 at 6pm
in the historic Kirkpatrick Chapel
81 Somerset St.
New Brunswick, NJ



RUTGERS
NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ

<https://italian.rutgers.edu/news-events/events>



PUEBLA UNIDO PRESENTS

FOOD FOR PROFIT

307 BILLION REASONS THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO WATCH THIS FILM

A FILM BY GIULIA INNOCENZI + PABLO D'AMBROSI

THE FIRST DOCUFILM TO INVESTIGATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEAT INDUSTRY POLITICS AND LOBBIES

#4 IN ITALIAN BOX OFFICE

FREE DOCUFILM SCREENING
O&A WITH DIRECTOR PABLO D'AMBROSI

APRIL 17TH, 2024 | 2.00 PM
403 ALEXANDER LIBRARY

• PROJECTION IN ENGLISH •




AntoloGaia

Presentation of the English translation of Professor Massimo's book AntoloGaia with Prof. Reni Suardini, Journalist (American Studies and Comparative Literature) and the two translators of the book, Dr. Francesca Pizzozzi and Dr. Sandra Waters

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 at 4:00pm
Rutgers Academic Bldg. Room 1032 West Wing



RUTGERS
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

SPONSORED BY RUTGERS DEPARTMENT OF ITALIAN



RU in Rome 2024 cohort connects at orientation session



We are thrilled to announce that this year, a group of 22 enthusiastic students will embark on an unforgettable journey to Rome with our RU ROME Summer Study Abroad program. This immersive experience goes beyond language learning as students can study Art History, Food Studies, and Culture. The 2024 cohort had a chance to meet fellow students and professors during the April 30th orientation, and the atmosphere was vibrant with camaraderie and excitement. With anticipation running high, we can't wait to explore everything Rome offers. Undoubtedly, this month-long adventure will be an unforgettable experience for everyone involved.

Embracing Italian Culture: A Recap of ITANJ's Italian Language and Culture Day at Rutgers University



On March 26, 2024, ITANJ held their annual event for high school and middle school students at Rutgers University. The competition involved students sharing skits with the theme of "Paese che vai, usanza che trovi". Students participated in cultural activities and learned about Italian customs and traditions. The ITANJ ILCD committee was comprised of: Silvana Berardo ITANJ President, Anna Ranieri ITANJ Vice President of Programs, Phyllis Pizzolato, Marcella Clatworthy and Marisa Fusaro Co-chairs, Guido Morsella, Federica Proietti and Fiorella Bologna. Visit <https://www.itanj.org/> for a complete list of the participants and for more information of how your high school or middle school can participate next year.



Un caffè?

Growing up in Seattle it's no wonder I have a special relationship with coffee that continues today. It's always a good time for coffee but it's also a good time for us coffee drinkers to unite to show our support to the Italian Department. A donation of one cup of Joe each month can really add up. Now I'm not really asking you to hit the nearest Starbucks and order several favorites off the menu then run them to the Italian Department at 15 Seminary Place, Room 5105... Grinding that coffee into a monthly donation of \$5 or more could caffeinate an undergraduate student studying abroad, energize one of many on-campus events, and help boost Ph.D. students in their scholarly pursuits. Won't you consider donating today?

– Sheri La Macchia <https://give.rutgersfoundation.org/italian-studies/13743.html>

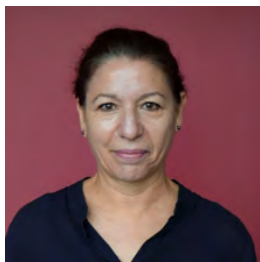
News from the Faculty



Andrea Baldi
Professor

This academic year has been quite exciting for me. In November, I gave a talk on Anna Maria Ortese's private letters at the Congreso Internacional on Interculturalidad, Intertextualidad e intelingüística in Madrid. In February, I participated in a Convegno Internazionale on Domenico Rea at the Università di Sassari, presenting a paper titled *Analogie e divergenze: Rea, Ortese e Stefanile*, which is set to be published in the Conference Proceedings by Federico II University Press. Over the summer, I will be attending three more academic conferences in Italy.

Additionally, I had the pleasure of supervising Jamison Standridge's dissertation during its final stages, culminating in his successful defense this past Spring. Lastly, I served as a member of the Academic Advisory Board of the NJIHC and chaired the panel of judges responsible for selecting the recipient of the 2023 Coccia-Inserra Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Teaching of Italian.



Paola Gambarota
Associate Professor

This has been a difficult year for me, and I have been fortunate to have the support and affection of my Rutgers colleagues and students, who have been a steady source of strength. Sheri La Macchia was always there to offer her wise advice. Teaching my courses, organizing a panel on "Everyday Life Under Occupation," and giving a talk on film adaptation (titled "Revealing Excess, or How Montage Acts on Authors. Francesco Patierno's adaptation of Norman Lewis' Naples 1944") at the NEMLA Annual Convention in Boston has provided some respite.

I am looking forward to being able to work on my book again during my sabbatical in Fall 2024 and to return to teaching and directing our graduate program in the Spring of 2025.



Vetri Nathan
*Associate Professor,
Mellon Associate Professor in
Global Racial Justice*

The past academic year was both extremely exciting and productive in terms of research and teaching. I completed the first draft of my next book, tentatively entitled *The Cybercene: Multispecies Habitability and Healing in a Transformed World*. The development of this monograph is unusual in the humanities due to its co-conception with a new humanities lab (The Cybercene Lab: www.thecybercenelab.org), that I founded in May 2023 and officially launched in April 2024. This lab is conceived as a gathering place for collaborative research as well as a space for generating new curricular possibilities in the upcoming years.

In addition to a very busy year in research, I developed and offered a new and experimental graduate seminar in Multispecies Humanities, as well as a new study abroad track in Italian Food and Cultural Studies in the department's RU in Rome program in July 2023, co-taught with an Italian chef-instructor. This was a very successful first year for the track (with an amazing group of undergraduate students!) also thanks to the support and advice from program director Professor Carmela Scala. Finally, 2024 also marks a big, unexpected and bittersweet change for me personally and professionally: beginning this summer, I will be Associate Professor in the Department of European Languages and Transcultural Studies at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). My impending move to California would not have occurred without the collegial and innovative professional ecosystem here at Rutgers, both within and beyond the Italian department. I will miss many of the incredible folks with whom I have had the joy to work with here.



Carmela Scala
Associate Teaching Professor,

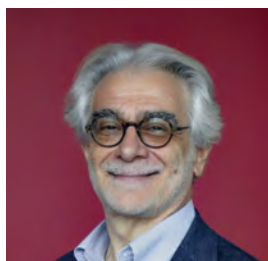
This past year has been marked by substantial intellectual and professional growth. First and foremost, I celebrated my promotion to Associate Teaching Professor. Subsequently, I had the opportunity to participate in multiple academic conferences, which served as pivotal sources of intellectual stimulation. Particularly noteworthy was the successful organization of the "Intercultural Practices in Language Teaching Virtual Conference," emphasizing the significance of global perspectives within educational frameworks.

Additionally, being elected to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) board has provided meaningful opportunities to enhance language education on a broader institutional scale. While scholarly pursuits constitute a substantial portion of my endeavors, my core professional commitment lies in pedagogy. The revamping of the "Conversation Through Cinema" course, supported by the Humanities Plus Grant, exemplifies a continuous pursuit of pedagogical innovation and excellence.

Looking ahead, I eagerly anticipate another enriching summer in Rome with the RU Rome Summer Study Abroad program, an experience that consistently aids in my personal and professional growth.

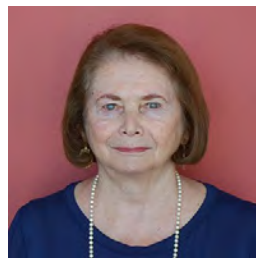


Italian Department Faculty



Alessandro Vettori
Professor

In the last year I published two edited volumes, Iacopone da Todi: The Power of Dissent and the Originality of Franciscan Poetry (with Matteo Leonardi) and La preghiera nella cultura letteraria italiana, special issue of Italian Quarterly (with Erminia Ardissino & Magdalena Maria Kubas), 4 articles, and one introduction. In April 2024 I was the Betsy-Florida International University Exile Studies Writer/Scholar-in Residence at Florida International University, in Miami, FL. I also gave 7 invited talks in Italy and the US. I am currently serving as Council Member and Vice President of the Dante Society of America. I continued to direct the Humanities Plus program.



Laura S. White
Professor

I spent the Fall semester of this year on Sabbatical and I completed the first version of my creative writing book. I also progressed in my volume on Petrarch's and Boccaccio's exchange of letters.

In the Spring semester, I taught my course 391 "Italian Food Culture" (115 students) online and 256 (Introducing Italy: Venice) in the new version face-to-face.

I continued as liaison with the alumni of our department and I continued in my role as Vice-President for IACE (Italian American Committee on Education) sponsored by the New York Italian Consulate, with regular virtual meetings. I also continued serving as member of the New Jersey Italian Heritage Commission, with meetings also conducted virtually. I participated in the in-person daylong (May, 3rd) meeting of the Advisory Board for the Departments of French and Italian at Princeton University, of which I am a member since 2002.

I received the Leonardo Da Vinci Award (May 2024) presented annually "to an individual with a record of sustained and exceptional achievement in his or her field of endeavor" by The Board of directors of the Italian Heritage and Culture Committee-NY, Inc.



RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK

School of Arts and Sciences

Department of Italian

15 Seminary Place, #5105
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

We'd like to stay in touch...

As part of the Rutgers community we invite you to join us for innovative intellectual and celebratory events. We are grateful for the generous support of alumni, individuals, and our partner Italian foundations and organizations, who have helped to positively shape our students' experience through academics, programming, and financial means. Feel free to stop by the Italian Department for a visit or visit on social media @ItalianRutgers on Instagram or @RutgersDepartmentofItalian on Facebook and our website. We welcome opportunities to collaborate.

Italian.Rutgers.edu