



# The Rutgers ITALIAN Libretto

Spring 2025



## From the Chair's desk:

We had a rich calendar of events this past academic year: 3 meetings of Food for Thought (when faculty and PhD candidates present their research), several lectures, the Ortese conference, and Porpora's docufilm screening and translation presentation (see the specific section). After Prof. David Marsh retired and Prof. Vetri Nathan left for a new position at UCLA we requested two positions and we are hoping to hire two new faculty members to replace them in future years. The very good news is that our donors have been incredibly generous. In particular, we received an unprecedented gift commitment from Mr. Tom Arlotto (RC'60) to establish the first named professorship for Italian Studies. Prof. Simona Wright, a Rutgers PhD alumna and long-time friend and supporter of the department, endowed an undergraduate scholarship that will help recruit and support our students.

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## Chair's Report *continued*

We are very grateful to all our donors and friends. Thank you all for donating during Rutgers Giving Days in March of this year. It is thanks to your continued support that we can help our undergraduate and graduate students. The sad news is that the current Italian Government Lecturer, Prof. Rosario Scalia, completed his 5 years of service in our Department and will leave the US at the end of the summer. We are grateful for all his hard work and we are sorry to see him leave. We wish him all the best in his new assignment! In May we held our usual end-of-the-year event, when approximately 60 former graduate students and friends of the department celebrated our current PhD cohort during the reunion and award ceremony on May 9th. This year we moved it to the Academic Building where our department is also housed and it was a very successful event which was attended by our Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Prof. Juli Wade, and by Assemblyman Joseph Daniels of NJ district 17, in which our campus is located.



- Alessandro Vettori

## Foundation for Innovation and Excellence in Italian Teaching (FIEIT).



Introducing FIEIT: Advancing Italian Language Education. We're proud to announce the launch of the Foundation for Innovation and Excellence in Italian Teaching (FIEIT). Through close collaboration with the Consulate General of Italy in New York, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other key partners, FIEIT is committed to expanding access to Italian language programs in schools across the Tri-State area and beyond. Learn more about our mission and upcoming initiatives at <https://sites.rutgers.edu/fieit/>.



Just days after his 97th birthday, Professor Emeritus Umberto Mariani passed away peacefully of natural causes, surrounded by family. His beloved wife of 61 years, Alice J. Mariani passed away 2 weeks after his death. His daughters, Francesca V. Mariani and AnnaLisa Mariani held a celebration of life memorial on January 25, 2025, at Rutgers University.

<https://sites.google.com/view/umariani/home>

## News



### Thank you to Mr. Tom Arlotto (RC'60)

Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Juli Wade, presents a plaque to Mr. Tom Arlotto to express our heartfelt gratitude for his exceptionally generous commitment, made in tribute to his family. His gift will establish the Arlotto Family Endowed Professorship in Italian Literature, Culture, and Language, representing a transformative investment in the Department of Italian, advancing excellence in research and teaching.

### New Jersey Italian Heritage Commission NJIHC

In January 2025, The New Jersey Italian Heritage Commission (NJIHC) announced the appointment of Vincent Maione as its new Chairman, a highly respected leader and advocate for preserving and promoting Italian American culture. In March of 2024, Margaret Fontana was appointed as the new Executive Director. Both Fontana and Maione bring a wealth of experience and a passionate commitment to advancing the mission of the Commission. Their participation in department activities and collaboration on initiatives has been mutually valuable. Thank you NJIHC for your sponsorships throughout the year. At the Rutgers Italian Department Alumni Reunion on May 9, 2025 awards were given out to doctoral students. Vincent Maione presented the Garutti Family Award for Dedication to Service to Diletta Pasetti. Margaret Fontana presented the Garutti Family Award for Excellence in Scholarship to Maria Teresa De Luca. A big thank you goes Ron and Joanna Garutti for funding these annual awards plus two others: Innovative Teaching and Best Essay in a Graduate Seminar.



## Undergraduate News

from Undergraduate Director,  
Professor Andrea Baldi



This was another exciting and enriching year for our Undergraduate Program. Many students participated in the wide range of interdisciplinary cultural events organized by the department and embraced the opportunity to explore various facets of modern and contemporary Italy through engaging intellectual discussions. In recognition of their outstanding academic accomplishments and commitment to Italian Studies, these Undergraduate students earned prestigious scholarships:

Angela Amedeo received the Anna and Angelo Soriano Sponsored Scholarship  
Alexa Perez was awarded the Anna and Angelo Soriano Sponsored Scholarship  
Gianluca Rosato was granted the Coccia Foundation Scholarship  
Massimiliano Verduci earned the Clementina and Joseph Coccia, Sr. Sponsored Scholarship

We are deeply grateful to Elisa Coccia, President of the Coccia Foundation, her brother Joseph Coccia III, Trustee of the Coccia Foundation, and their family for their generosity and unwavering support of our students!

We are also thrilled to announce the newly established Robert Donald and Simona Wright Endowed Scholarship, awarded to Bella D'Agostino, Andrew Della Fera, and Matthew Esaia. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our alumna, Dr. Simona Wright, and treasure the memory of her late husband, in whose honor she made her generous donation to our program.

We are very proud of our majors and minors who graduated in May, whom we celebrated during Senior Night. We also welcomed Gianna Simone, Natalie Tango, and Matthew Esaia as new inductees into our chapter of the Italian Honor Society, Gamma Kappa Alpha. Additionally, numerous students received prizes for their excellent performance in our language, culture, and cinema courses. Congratulations to all!



Class of 2025!

### New Course Spotlight: Italian Cooking Lab 240

This exciting new course is designed for advanced Italian students to deepen their language skills through the history of Italy's most iconic regional recipes. Under the guidance of Professor Scala, students not only explore traditional Italian recipes and regional food culture but also engage with the community. This semester, the class partnered with the Ronald McDonald House in nearby Piscataway, preparing homemade meals for families staying there—a meaningful way to combine language, culture, and service.



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[@rutgersroma](#)  
[@ruttalianru](#)

## Undergraduate Scholarships and Awards

Pictured with Rutgers Italian Dept. Alumna, Simona Wright (Ph.D.) the recipients of Robert Donald and Simona Wright Endowed Scholarships are: Matthew Esaia, Bella D'Agostino, and Andrew Della Fera (not pictured). The awardees were presented their awards at the Senior Celebration event in the Italian Department of Rutgers Academic Building on May 6th.



On May 9, 2025 at the Rutgers Italian Dept. Alumni Reunion, Elisa Coccia, President of the Coccia Foundation, along with her brother Joseph Coccia III, Trustee of the Coccia Foundation, presented scholarships to:

Gianluca Rosato, recipient of the Coccia Foundation Scholarship

Massimiliano Verduci, who earned the Clementina and Joseph Coccia, Sr. Sponsored Scholarship

Angela Amedeo, who received the Anna and Angelo Soriano Sponsored Scholarship

Alexa Perez (not pictured), who was granted the Anna and Angelo Soriano Sponsored Scholarship



## Our Graduate Graduates...



Daniel Occhiogrosso,  
RU'2025 MAT

*"Thank you so much to all of my fantastic professors at Rutgers who helped me achieve my M.A.T.! Teaching Italian to over 125 students a year at West New York Memorial High School is such a great privilege. This degree has not only made me a better teacher for my students, but it also qualifies me to teach our fourth year Italian course in the future. Grazie RU!"*

- Daniel

Federica Soddu, RU'25, Ph.D.



*In the past year, I have been busy teaching Italian classes and finishing writing my dissertation, which I successfully defended at the end of March. In March, I also participated in the NEMLA annual conference and co-organized an exciting and very well-participated panel on islands. I am also happy to say that I will spend the next three years at the University of Maryland.*

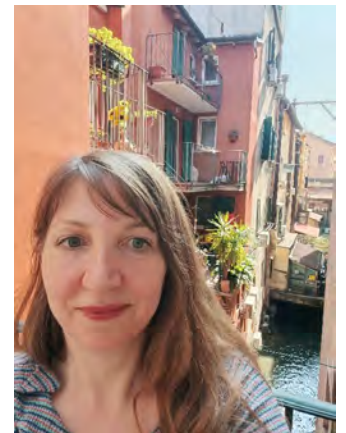
*I am deeply grateful to all the people in the Italian Department for making this time of my life not only intellectually rich, but also full of warmth, friendship, and fun!*

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Chiara Degli Esposti, RU'24, Ph.D.

*Last September I defended my dissertation on urban space in Italy and I have been working as a teacher from that moment on. I would like to thank the Department of Italian Studies at Rutgers for encouraging my professional and personal growth throughout the years. I will miss you!*

- Chiara [cdegliesp@gmail.com](mailto:cdegliesp@gmail.com)

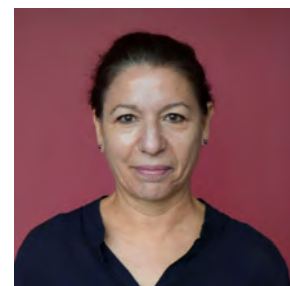


Hiromi Kaneda, RU'25, Ph.D.

*I earned my PhD in January 2025, specializing in Italian and Japanese literature and film, and in August, I will join the University of Florida in Gainesville as a lecturer in Italian Studies. This position offers an exciting opportunity to share my passion for the Italian language, literature, and culture with a diverse student body, while continuing my research and contributing to the growth and development of the program.*

## Graduate News

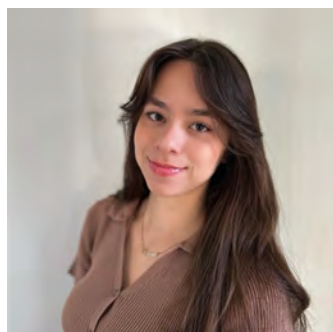
from Graduate Program Director, Professor Paola Gambarota



This past academic year we welcomed two young scholars in our PhD program, Roberta Berlingò and Erika Spadavecchia, both comparatists with impressive backgrounds and fluent in many languages. We are also very happy to welcome in our community Melissa Bertolini Rodrigues and Maria Rosaria Garofalo, who, with their expertise respectively in law, technology, and literacy, and in translation theory and futurist women artists will continue to enrich our program. We are excited to meet Melissa and Maria Rosaria in person this Fall. Among the many accomplishments, Chiara Degli Esposti, Hiromi Kaneda, and Federica Soddu defended their dissertations brilliantly, and we are looking forward to Giuseppe Grispino's defense this June. Daniel Occhiogrosso completed his M.A.T. degree this Spring with an inspiring presentation, which included his students' performance. Hiromi accepted a position at the University of Florida, Gainesville, and Federica is moving to the University of Maryland, College Park. Steven Jacobs was also offered a position at Notre Dame. As always, we are sad to see them going but happy and excited about these 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. Among the IGS initiatives, the roundtable on Italian Feminisms, with the participation of numerous prestigious scholars, was particularly successful. At the Graduate Alumni Reunion this year we celebrated our alumni as well as our generous donors, Thomas Arlotto, who was welcomed by SAS Dean Juli Wade, Simona Wright, Stephanie Laggini, Elisa and Joseph Coccia, Vito and Carolyn de Simone, Cynthia C. Capone, and the Garutti Family. Our alumna, Letizia Bellocchio presented her innovative digital project *Italian in Wonderland*, an Open Education Digital Platform designed to teach the Italian language, which received a large NEH grant. We were happy to see among our guests Vincent Maione, Chair of the NJ Italian American Commission, Margaret Fontana, Director of the NJ Italian American Commission, and Erin Flaherty, Chuck Wright, and Whitney Prendergast of the Rutgers Foundation. The Reunion was a splendid convivial conclusion to a busy and productive academic year.

We are looking forward to our students' future initiatives and to celebrating their future achievements. Congratulations to our students and Alumni on their many successes!



Serena Mancuso won the Paragano Family Foundation Endowed Scholarship for Italian Studies.

*"I am pursuing an MAT not only to further my own studies, but to one day facilitate a path for students of my own. Continuing my education is of high value to me, especially so that I may become that for others. Rutgers met my goals with their specialized MAT in Italian program."*

## Year in Review - Ph.D. Students

### Roberta Berlingo

This first year as a PhD student has been truly rewarding. I enjoyed the coursework and deepened my understanding of Italian Literature and Environmental Humanities. At NeMLA, I presented on Pugno's *Sirens* and Cutrufelli's *The Island of Mothers*. I am very grateful to the department for the opportunity to begin my PhD while also teaching. This year, I taught both in-person and hybrid classes and found the experience incredibly fulfilling. I also began working toward the World Language Teaching Certificate and joined a Teach for All fellowship. Language teaching is my passion, and I look forward to continuing it in the RU summer program!

### Maria Teresa De Luca

Over the past year, I successfully defended my prospectus and have begun work on my dissertation, which I plan to focus on throughout the summer. The dissertation is provisionally titled *Why Making a Tragedy Out of It? Italian Authors and Twentieth Century Dramas* and focuses on the uses of classical tragedy as both a genre and a world-view in the work of Italian authors of the inter- and post-war periods. At NeMLA, I presented my ongoing research on Malaparte and co-organized a panel on tragedy. I also taught three sections of Italian language at Columbia University.

### Giuseppe Grispino

This year has been both busy and rewarding for me. I continued my journey at the University of Oklahoma, teaching a variety of Italian language and culture classes. My two favorites were Italian Cinema and Italian Pop Culture. Additionally, I launched a series of micro-courses titled "Made in Italy," which focused on Italian Food, Fashion, and Mafia. I am pleased to announce that I will be defending my dissertation in the coming months, marking the completion of my doctoral studies. I want to thank everyone for their support over the past few years, and I look forward to what the future holds.

### Ariana Guzman

This past year, I had the rewarding opportunity to teach in a variety of formats—online asynchronous, hybrid, and in-person—which strengthened my ability to support diverse student learners. I also deepened my commitment to student engagement by continuing to serve as a mentor for the Honors College. Beyond the university, I organized the panel 'Mother, Mothers' for the 56th Annual NeMLA Convention—a rewarding experience that fostered meaningful dialogue with scholars from diverse academic backgrounds. At the same conference, I presented two papers: 'Other[ed] Discourses and Memory' and '(Missing) Mother(s)'. Later that semester, I also presented my paper 'Resisting Narratives: Autobiography and Testimony' at the 29th Annual Carolina Conference for Romance Studies. Looking ahead, I am excited to continue teaching and plan to complete my comprehensive exam.

### Steven Jacobs

This past year has been a whirlwind—in the best way. I've loved being in the classroom with my students, especially when teaching Italian cinema. I presented my research at NeMLA, AAIS, and AATI, and teamed up with the brilliant Diletta and Ariana to organize lively events such as our roundtable on Italian feminisms for the Italian Graduate Society. I've also been plugging away at my dissertation, most recently finishing a chapter on environmental memory, resistance, and song in the No-TAV movement (lots of protest and mud). This summer, I'll be in Cleveland for two weeks grading AP exams and stepping in as interim assistant director for Rutgers in Rome. I'm so thankful to the department and my professors for their constant encouragement—especially as I gear up for my next adventure: Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor of Italian at the University of Notre Dame. Avanti!



**Dora Labate**

As a Graduate Mentor Fellow at the Rutgers Honors College this past year, I had the rewarding opportunity to support undergraduate students in their academic development, while also making significant progress on my own research. I completed drafts of two dissertation chapters, drawing from them to present at two different events. In February, I shared my work at the department's Food for Thought event, presenting to an audience of professors, graduate students, and undergraduates from our department. In the spring, I delivered a separate paper examining how counter-memory transforms marginality into acts of resistance at the Romance Studies Conference at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which was organized under the title Existence as Resistance: Em(bodying) Counter Narratives in the Humanities. In addition to my academic research, I reviewed the Italian film *C'è ancora domani* and the volume *Forgotten Italians: Julian-Dalmatian Writers and Artists in Canada*, edited by Konrad Eisenbichler. I was also honored to be offered the opportunity to teach a graduate seminar titled Literary Relationships: Exploring Contemporary Italy. Looking ahead, I will participate in NAFSA's Virtual F-1 Student Advising for Beginners workshop this July, and I am focused on completing my dissertation in the coming months.

**Diletta Pasetti**

What a year this third year has been! The spring semester brought me back to the classroom with an incredible Italian Culture II course. It has been a fantastic experience to work on the syllabus and discuss such a variety of topics with the students. April was the month of my Qualifying Exams: no more excuses now to work on the Prospectus over the summer. Scholarly speaking, this past year has been adventurous. In October, I participated in the online conference at Trinity College Dublin dedicated to Michela Murgia—a special issue of *The Italianist* will collect all the presentations. In December, the journal *g/s/i* published

my article on Giorgia Meloni and the Virgin Mary for their special issue on Femminismi di Destra, co-authored with Nicoletta Marini Maio. My presentation on femicide and bears killing in Italy earned me one of the Graduate Student Travel Awards offered by AAIS, allowing me to participate in the conference. This summer promises to be busy and very exciting. No conferences and no RU in Rome program, unfortunately, at least not in person. As the Assistant Director, I'll keep on working and supporting the Director and the team from the Pianura Padana, since Martino is on his way – I'll keep you updated on this new service position I'm invested in :)

**Marius Rusu**

This past year I successfully took the Qualifying Exam, and defended my Prospectus. They both proved challenging, yet rewarding. The chance to have the Department professors read, comment, and engage with my work was nothing short of invaluable. These accomplishments marked my progress in academia, and paved the way for a dissertation focused on the narrative, memoirs, and propaganda in World War I. On the teaching side, in the Fall semester of 2024 I had the chance to be the instructor for the course Contemporary Italian Cinema. I had the opportunity to tune the course according to my interests, making it a deep dive into Italian horror from the 70s and 80s. Students were enthusiastic to approach the nightmarish visions of prominent Italian film directors such as Dario Argento, Mario Bava, Sergio Martino, and many more. As for what the future holds, this upcoming year I will join the Writing Program as a TA: a new and exciting experience which I am sure will broaden my horizons.

**Erika Spadavecchia**

My first year has been both rewarding and challenging. I was introduced to so many new authors and texts, while also revisiting themes and books I remain passionate about. I started working towards my Translation Certificate and Women and Gender Studies Certificate by submitting two translations, and taking a course on feminist pedagogy, which strengthened my teaching skills and my knowledge of feminist theory. I truly enjoyed the creative exercise in my Autobiography course—it pushed me to engage critically with the perspectives we were studying in the class. The readings of all my courses were thought-provoking and diverse, and they also deepened my academic interests, allowing me to feel more confident as a scholar and a writer.

## Year in Review - continued

### Maria Laura Spanedda

This second year of my doctoral program has been incredibly rewarding. I completed the requirements for the Public Humanities Certificate and related Internship by September 2024 and begun working for the World Language Teaching Certificate. Fall 2024 was my first semester of teaching at Rutgers, and I was blessed by a unique group of amazing students, who demonstrated a high level of commitment in learning and in the many events organized by the department. In the Spring 2025, I participated as both chair and panel presenter to the NeMLA and AAIS conferences. These were wonderful occasions to strengthen my public speaking skills, share the first steps of my research activities and network with other colleagues. A couple of collaborations emerged from those meetings, giving me a boost of energy for the future. I also participated in the “Andean Amazonian Symposium” at the Rutgers Spanish and Portuguese Department, sharing a part of my work that connects Italy with Ecuador. During the Spring, I joined the team of the Italian Food Culture course as a grader. I got the SGS Research and Conference Award and a Garutti Family award. I’m now studying for my Comprehensive exams, which I hope to take in the Fall 2025. Finally, I’m witnessing the launch of the documentary “Isulas de S’Isula”, made by a Sardinian filmmaker, in which I participated as scientific advisor. It's also thanks to the intellectual input Rutgers is giving me that I've been able to contribute to this project.

### Salvatore Taibi

In the fall, I presented at the conference “Strings of Imagination: Rethinking Pinocchio in the New Millenium” at Brown University, and in early 2025, my work on Pinocchio culminated with the publication of my article “A Wooden Boy and a Lesson in Free Market Economics: How Pinocchio Becomes an Entrepreneur” in the volume *Libertarian Literary and Media Criticism: Essays in Memory of Paul A. Cantor*. The reception thus far has been outstanding and has opened the door to new and exciting opportunities. I will expand my research on the intersection between economics and literature and prepare for my Qualifying Exam.



### Sean Widlake

This past year Sean successfully completed coursework. In the fall semester, he wrote a review of Alice Rohrwacher’s latest award-winning film *La chimera* for the department’s graduate journal, *La Fusta*. In the spring, Sean was invited to present at the Northeast Modern Language Association’s (NeMLA) annual conference in Philadelphia on an ongoing project entitled, “Waltzing Matelda: Penance, Redemption, and Dance in Dante’s *Purgatorio*” as part of a panel focused on Dante and Performance. Additionally, he was invited to chair and serve as a respondent for a panel at the annual Dante Society of America’s Symposium, hosted at NYU’s Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, and focused on the theme “Dante and Money.” Sean will further collaborate with the Dante Society of America in a new role as part of the Bibliography Committee, working to compile bibliographical information on recent publications related to the field. Finally, Sean was recently elected to serve as a member of the Medieval Academy of America’s (MAA) Graduate Student Committee. During this two-year commitment, he looks forward to helping organize the major conferences in medieval studies, as well as bringing in more Italian influence into the organization. Looking ahead, Sean is excited to be teaching first-year Italian next year, and working towards passing his comprehensive exams.

# ITALIAN GRADUATE SOCIETY



Over the past year, the Italian Graduate Society has proudly organized and supported a wide range of initiatives that enriched the intellectual life of our department. We started in November with a compelling talk by Ryan Calabretta-Sajder on Robert Ferro, which offered a unique look into Italian-American and queer literary traditions.

We were thrilled by the success of our Italian Writers conversation (Giulia Caminito, Paolo Nori, Ginevra Lamberti), especially appreciated by undergraduate students who welcomed the opportunity to engage directly with contemporary authors. Equally rewarding were the organization of our two Writing Days, which brought together over 60 graduate students to focus, write, and connect in a supportive and collaborative environment (yes, bagels and falafel probably helped the success of our writing process). IGS was also honored to support the two main events organized by the department: the Anna Maria Ortese conference and the Porpora Marcasciano documentary screening and discussion. Both of these offered vital spaces for exploring urgent cultural and political issues.

Finally, we are very proud to have hosted an inspiring roundtable on Italian Feminisms, featuring distinguished scholars who led a vibrant, two-hour conversation on diverse feminist perspectives. Clarissa Clò, Sara Colantuono, Laura Di Bianco, Eugenia Paulicelli, Joseph Perna, and Jacqueline Reich loved the atmosphere of our department, and we were very grateful for their participation.

It has been an incredibly fulfilling year. Beyond event planning and budget management, we learned the actual value of creating spaces for dialogue and exchange where everybody can and should participate. We are also very grateful to all those fellow graduate students who unwaveringly supported us and the faculty for being present at every event. This is not something we took for granted. We are already excited about what next year will bring!



Steven Jacobs, President  
Diletta Pasetti, Treasurer  
Ariana Guzman, Secretary



## Alumni News

### Teresa DelGiudice

**(BA French & Education, RU'96 + MAT Italian, RU'12)**

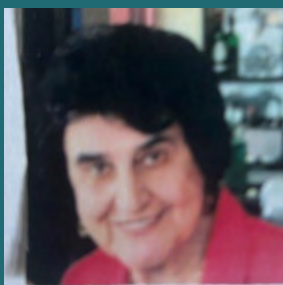
In March of this year I presented at the FLENJ Annual Conference at Rutgers University. My application was accepted in the second round of the Coccia-Inserra for Excellence & Innovation in Teaching Italian Award. For the school year 2025-26, I will be mentoring a student teacher of Italian from Montclair State University. In November, I will be presenting at the national ACTFL Convention 2025 in New Orleans.

**Johanna Rossi Wagner (Ph.D. RU'11)** This past year marks my first as the Dean of New College West, one of the seven residential colleges at Princeton. I work with an amazing team to oversee the academic progress and wellbeing of about 800 undergraduates. I hope to get back into the classroom in the next year or two to teach a seminar on Rome on the big and small screens.

**Sandra Waters (Ph.D. RU'09)**, along with alumnus **Francesco Pascuzzi (Ph.D. RU'14)** received the AAIS 2024 English Translation of an Italian Book-Length Literary Work for their translation of Porpora Marcasciano's *AntoloGaia*. She participated in two roundtables and gave a paper at the AAIS annual conference in Philadelphia this spring, and accompanied Marcasciano on a mini-tour of the Northeast to publicize *AntoloGaia* and the documentary film *Porpora. The Black Body* (Anna Maria Gehnyei), which she co-translated with alumna **Eilis Kierans (Ph.D. RU'23)** will be published this fall.



**Professor Emeritus of Italian**, this year **David Marsh** published the two-volume edition and translation of Leon Battista Alberti, *Dinner Pieces (Intercenales)*, I Tatti Renaissance Library 97 & 98, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2024; and the book chapter “Xenophon Made Simple: Bruni and Poggio as Historical Abbreviators,” in *The Reception of Xenophon*, ed. Dustin Gish and Christopher Farrell, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2025, 321-352. He wrote scholarly reviews: Martin McLaughlin, *Leon Battista Alberti, Writer and Humanist*, in *Erudition and the Republic of Letters*, and *Rassegna della letteratura italiana* 129 (2025); Alejandro Coroleu, *Latin Political Propaganda in the War of the Spanish Succession and Its Aftermath, 1700-1740*, in *Italian Quarterly* 61 (2024), 133-136; Leon Battista Alberti, *Biographical and Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Martin McLaughlin, in *Rassegna della letteratura italiana* 128 (2024), 123-126; and Leon Battista Alberti, *Biographical and Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Martin McLaughlin, in *Albertiana* 27 (2024), 176-179. And he prepared papers for two conferences: the Renaissance Society of America conference (Boston, March 2025), and the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies (Aix-en-Provence, July 2025).



**Ida Marinzoli 's (Ph.D. RU'16) family** gathers at Rutgers Italian Dept. for a visit with Ida's grandson **Alex, who is a prospective student of the Italian Dept.** His uncle Joe reminisced about the Italian classes he took back in the day. Pictured on right: Alex's parents, Anthony Roger Marinzoli, and Tamara Barnes, Professor Laura S. White, Alex Marinzoli, Sheri La Macchia, Professor Andrea Baldi, **Joseph Marinzoli, RU'99 College BA in Italian, RU'00 GSE**





The annual ITANJ Italian Language & Culture Day for middle school and high school students and their teachers took place on March 20, 2025, at Rutgers Student Center on the New Brunswick campus. Congratulations to all who participated along with the winners, noted below.

#### High School Level

1st Place: Saint Peter's Prep, Jersey City, NJ  
 2nd Place: Lyndhurst HS, Lyndhurst, NJ  
 3rd place: Red Bank Regional H.S., Red Bank, NJ  
 Honorable Mention for Best Pronunciation:  
 Elizabeth HS, Frank J. Cicarell Academy, Elizabeth, NJ

#### Middle School Level

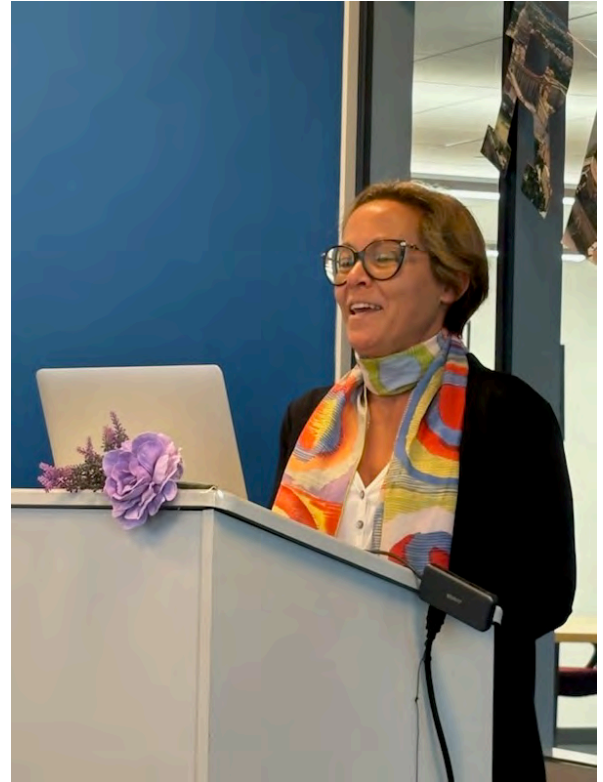
1st Place: Manalapan-Englishtown MS  
 2nd Place: Central MS, Parsippany, NJ  
 3rd Place: Brooklawn MS, Parsippany, NJ



Join the Italian Teachers Association of New Jersey (ITANJ) for Primo Incontro, our signature fall professional development event hosted by the Rutgers University Italian Department. Designed for all K–12 Italian language educators, this dynamic gathering offers the perfect opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the state, exchange ideas, and kick-start your school year with fresh strategies and inspiration. Earn valuable professional development credits while exploring timely topics—our 2024 session featured Meet Your Personal Assistant: Generative AI, presented by Noemi Rodriguez. Contact ITANJ for more information. [info@itanj.org](mailto:info@itanj.org)

## Alumni Reunion

On May 9, 2025, Rutgers University PhD alums gathered together with faculty, staff, donors, current PhD students, and award and scholarship recipients for our Annual Italian Dept. Alumni Reunion. The invited speaker, Letizia Bellocchio (Rutgers PhD 2014), Associate Professor of Practice at University of Arizona, is pictured on the right. She gave an interesting talk entitled "Italian in Wonder-land: A Curriculum Redesign on an Open Educational Digital Platform." The event was held in the Rutgers Academic Building this year.



Clockwise Steven Jacobs accepts the Laggini award from Stephanie Fiore, Alessandro Vettori with Dora Labate, Letizia Bellocchio, Reunion Decorating Crew, Staff of the University Foundation with Tom Arlotto and Dr. John Ambrose, guests at dinner, Nick Russo, in center

## Grad. Fellowships and Awards

Garruti Family Award recipients to the right:

Maria Teresa De Luca - Excellence in Scholarship

Diletta Pasetti - Dedication to Service

Maria Laura Spanedda - NEW Award -

Best Essay in a Graduate Seminar

Roberta Berlingo - Innovative Teaching

Paragano Family Foundation Endowed Scholarship -

Serena Mancuso, page 7

Dr. Vito and Mrs. Carolyn DeSimone Endowed Fellowship for

Italian Studies – Marius Rusu, center, presented by Whitney

Prendergast, Rutgers Foundation

Joseph E. & Marie E. Laggini Memorial Endowed Graduate

Fellowship was given to Steven Jacobs by Stephanie Laggini

Fiore, page 14

Italian Dept. Summer Research Fellowships:

Dora Labate, p. 14, Erika Spadavecchia, on right with

Professor Vettori. Salvatore Taibi, Sean Widlake (not

pictured)



## Italian Quarterly.

We published two issues of *Italian Quarterly* in 2024. Issue LXI 239-240 (Winter-Spring 2024) is a special issue, guest-edited by Andrea Capra and Marco Malvestio, *What is Horror? Italian Perspectives* features 6 articles and two interviews. Issue LXI 241-242 (Summer-Fall 2024) is a regular issue that features 5 articles, one translation, and 6 book reviews.

## OVOI, Other Voices of Italy

The translation series Eilis, Sandy, and Alessandro edit for Rutgers University Press published two books this year. *The Twilight of Rome's Papal Nobility. The Life of Agnese Boncompagni Ludovisi* by Ugo Boncompagni Ludovisi, translated by Carol Cofone with a foreword by T. Corey Brennan and Rita Boncompagni Ludovisi was released in March 2025. *The Black Body* by Anna Maria Gehnyei, translated by Eilis Kierans and Sandra Waters with a foreword by Igiaba Scego is ready for publication and will come out in the fall of 2025. Since the series started in 2023 we have edited and published 13 titles and we have 8 more in the pipeline. Stay tuned for more Italian books in English translation!



RU in Rome Staff 2025:  
Steven, Roberta, Carmela,  
Diletta, Sheri, and Margo



## Events

Sponsored by Italian Dept., Italian Graduate Society and NJIHC, on April 3, 2025, the Anna Maria Ortese Conference – Critical Revisions and New Perspectives, was organized by Prof. Andrea Baldi, shown in middle with Keynote: Monica Farnetti (from Italy). The panel speakers were: Lilia Bellucci (from Italy), Cosetta Seno, Rossella Di Rosa, Flora Ghezzeo, and Eilis Kierans. On April 2, Caterina Bellu, Stefania Idini, Giuseppina Piras, and Maria Grazia Spano, administrators from Sassari, Sardinia pictured in lower right, met with Sheri La Macchia to discuss operations of the Italian Dept. Thanks to Federica Soddu and Maria Laura Spanedda, both from Sardinia, for being translators at this lunch and learn information exchange.



ANNA MARIA ORTESE

10:30AM-10:45AM • OPENING REMARKS  
**Alessandro Vettori** (Rutgers University)  
 Welcome Remarks  
**Andrea Baldi** (Rutgers University)  
 Introductory Remarks

10:45AM-12:00PM • FIRST PANEL  
**Andrea Baldi** (Rutgers University)  
 "Ortese's Letters to Friends: Crafting a Literary Identity"  
**Lilia Bellucci** (Sapienza Università di Roma)  
 "Due donne verso l'India di Tagore: Anna Maria Ortese e Adriana Capozzi Belmonte"  
 Moderator: Paola Gambarota (Rutgers University)

LUNCH • Sponsored by the NJIHC

1:45PM-3:00PM • SECOND PANEL  
**Rossella Di Rosa** (University of Pennsylvania)  
 "Becoming Woman - Becoming Other: Eugenia's Nomadic Existence in 'A Pair of Eyeglasses'"  
**Cosetta Seno** (University of Colorado, Boulder)  
 "The Unseen Naples: A Story of Marginalization and Displacement in Ortese's 'La Città Involontaria'"  
 Moderator: Andrea Baldi (Rutgers University)

3:00PM-4:15PM • THIRD PANEL  
**Flora Ghezzeo** (La Scuola d'Italia, New York)  
 "Monstrous Voices and Numinous Presences: Exploring *Mistero Doloroso* Through Stilnava and Fairy Tale Archetypes"  
**Eilis Kierans** (Penn State University)  
 "I macelli sono i nostri altari": Ecofeminist Angst and Urban Alienation in Ortese's *Le Piccole Persone*"  
 Moderator: Alessandra Vettori (Rutgers University)

COFFEE BREAK

4:30PM-5:30PM • KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
**Monica Farnetti** (Università di Sassari)  
 "Ero una giuana anche io": Alcune riflessioni sulla metamorfosi nell'opera di Anna Maria Ortese (con notizie di un romanzo inedito)"

APRIL 3, 2025  
 10:30 - 5:30  
 ABW 6051  
 RUTGERS  
 UNIVERSITY



REGISTER  
HERE

THIS EVENT WAS ORGANIZED BY THE ITALIAN DEPARTMENT,  
 WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE NEW JERSEY ITALIAN HERITAGE  
 COMMISSION, THE ITALIAN GRADUATE SOCIETY, AND THE  
 GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION.





Dr. Ferdinand Visco will present his memoir of his Italian ancestry and heritage.

*Growing Up Italian American*

Thursday, February 6 4:30pm

Rutgers Academic Building - West Wing 45 Seminary Place Room 50050

RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK School of Arts and Sciences Department of Italian

Event sponsor: New Jersey Italian Heritage Commission



# PORPORA

March 24 | from 2pm  
Alexander Library  
Teleconference Lecture Hall - 4th Floor

**PORPORA DOCUFILM SCREENING**  
Directed by Roberto Cannavò, produced by Vittorio Martone and Marilisa Murgia. A Humareels production in collaboration with Maxman Coop. Distributed by Fantomatica.

**Q&AS WITH PORPORA MARCASCIANO & VITTORIO MARTONE**

**ANTOLOGAIA BOOK PRESENTATION**  
Sandra Waters and Francesco Pascuzzi present their translation of "AntoloGaia" Written by Porpora Marcasciano and published by Rutgers University Press in the OVOI series.

SPONSORED BY THE ITALIAN DEPT., THE ITALIAN GRADUATE SOCIETY WITH THE SUPPORT OF ISA, THE COMPARATIVE LITERATURE DEPT., WOMEN'S, GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES DEPT., AND THE CENTER FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES.



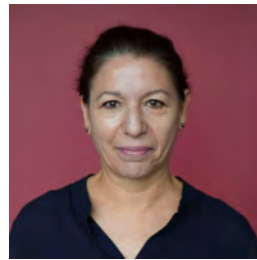
## News from the Faculty



**Andrea Baldi**  
*Professor*

This academic year has been both productive and eventful. Last September, I was invited to serve as a discussant for Lilia Bellucci's doctoral dissertation at the Seminario Dottorandi 2024, held at the Università di Roma La Sapienza. Subsequently, I delivered a presentation at an International Conference organized by the Universidad de Córdoba (Spain) and gave a talk at a Congreso Internacional, hosted by the Universidad de Seville (Spain). In January, I participated in the MLA Convention, followed by NeMLA Conference in March, where I presented papers on Anna Maria Ortese's Milanese narratives and her ethical engagement, respectively. Lastly, I organized a one-day International Conference titled Anna Maria Ortese: Critical Revisions and New Perspectives, held at Rutgers on April 3. The event drew an engaged audience and significantly contributed to the scholarly appreciation of this inspiring author.

My essay "Affinità e divergenze: Domenico Rea, Anna Maria Ortese e Mario Stefanile (con un'appendice bontempelliana)" was published in *Una Bloomsbury mediterranea. Domenico Rea nella Napoli del dopoguerra*, edited by Monica Farnetti (Federico II University Press, 2025). In the same volume, I also edited and introduced Rea's collection of reportages, *Viaggio in Sardegna*. Moreover, I had the pleasure of supervising Hiromi Kaneda's dissertation, which she successfully defended in December. I continued to serve as a member of the Academic Advisory Board of the NJIHC and chaired the panel of judges for the 2024 Coccia-Inserra Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Teaching of Italian.



**Paola Gambarota**  
*Associate Professor*

This past academic year I have been busy revising my manuscript and integrating the new research material I found in the National Diary Archive in Pieve di Santo Stefano, Italy. I also presented a few papers – at the NEMLA and at the AAIS, both in Philadelphia. As graduate program director, I am happy to say that there has been many great pieces of news in our program (read the Graduate Program News), despite the recent uncertainty concerning fellowships and research travel abroad. I am looking forward to the future successes of our students.



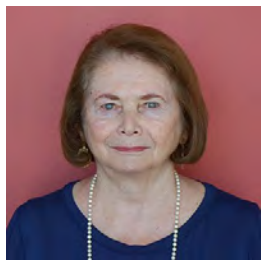
**Carmela Scala**  
*Associate Teaching Professor,*

This year brought several exciting opportunities. In May, I presented at the ACTFL Town Hall on AI and the future of language learning and teaching. In October, I led a workshop at Montclair State University on integrating AI into Italian language instruction. I also joined the Co-Intelligence Exploration Teaching Fellowship and am currently collaborating on an article based on the study I conducted through the program. A highlight of the year was co-founding, together with colleagues from our department, The Foundation for Innovation and Excellence in Italian Teaching (FIEIT)—an initiative dedicated to promoting the study of Italian through innovative and engaging approaches.



**Alessandro Vettori**  
*Professor*

Alessandro Vettori. This past year I published one article on Dante and Dance, four more articles are forthcoming by the end of 2025, three on Dante and one on Giuseppe Berto. A book review came out in *Italian Culture*. I co-organized a conference on Giuseppe Berto in Rome and one on Dante and Money for the Dante Society of America in New York City. I was promoted to Distinguished Professor and was appointed Associate Member of the Department of Classics at Rutgers. I was invited to give 7 talks in the US, Italy, and Peru.



**Laura S. White**  
*Professor*

This past year I dedicated much of my time and attention to mentoring and teaching: at the Graduate level (seminar on "Baroque") and at the Undergraduate: "Italian Food Culture" (140 students, both semesters) "Introducing Italy: Venice" and "Conversation through Current Events". It was a very satisfactory and engaging activity. I also participated in four Doctoral exams. I continued as liaison with the Alumni of our department and I served as member of the New Brunswick Faculty Council.

I continued in my role as Vice-President of 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 and I am still a member of the Advisory Board of Princeton University. I am continuing the review of my project of creative writing.

**Rosario Scalia**  
Italian Government Lecturer



The 2024–2025 academic year marked a significant milestone for Rosario. In August 2024, he completed his Doctorate in Modern Languages (DML) at Middlebury College, successfully defending a dissertation titled "Wandering Knights and Digital Frontiers: Cultural Resistance to the Mafia from street storytellers to the Web."

Throughout the academic year, Rosario enjoyed teaching two iterations of his in-person course "Mafia Movies", reaching a total of more than one hundred students. He also worked closely with Carmela Scala on the final editing of the open-source Italian textbook *Parole in azione*, which will be released starting in fall 2025. Looking ahead, the 2025–2026 academic year promises exciting new opportunities and challenges. No matter where the journey leads, Rutgers, the Italian Department, and my incredible students will always hold a special place in my heart.



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](http://Italian.Rutgers.edu)