

# SUNY Buffalo State

## PSC 390

### The Italian American Experience: Politics, Society & Identity

Satisfies Intellectual Foundations (SUNY General Education): Diversity

This course is taught online via Open SUNY, Blackboard Platform

Course is open to all SUNY students

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Examination of the experience of Italians in the United States from an interdisciplinary perspective beginning with conditions in the homeland (1870-1973) including the culture, society, economy, and government of Italy and the major factors promoting immigration to the United States, particularly during the peak years of emigration (1880-1920) when over four million Italians left their homeland for Northern Europe, South America, Canada, Australia, and the United States. In the course of our exploration, we study questions of identity, citizenship, family structure, social organization, politics, worldview, religion, and folklore. We employ case studies to illustrate the formative 20<sup>th</sup> century experiences of Italian-Americans as mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, breadwinners, artists, mafiosi, anarchists and union organizers. Although the vast majority of immigration occurred between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries, the Italian-American experience continues to evolve and in the final section of the course we explore the significance of this evolution.

## **Buffalo State's Learning Outcomes for Intellectual Foundations: Diversity**

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Critically examine the past, current or prospective influences of diverse groups on American society.
2. Analyze the ways in which social and institutional structures can contribute to privilege and injustice through stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.
3. Explore systematically the importance of understanding, respecting and valuing diverse people or cultures.
4. Critically reflect on how their values, attitudes and beliefs have developed and affect their perceptions of, and relations with others.
5. Assess the ways in which individuals, acting alone and in groups, can contribute to social justice.

### **Objectives**

*General:*

The goal of the diversity requirement is to prepare students to live and work in a multicultural society through an academic experience in which students can increase their knowledge related to one or more diverse groups; develop their inter-cultural cognizance, sensitivity, and commitment to social justice; examine their personal perceptions, preconceptions and values and understand their sources and how they affect their relationships with others.

*Specific objectives pertaining to this course:*

- Assess the conditions leading to Italian emigration in the peak years of emigration (1880-1920) and through the postwar period (1945-1973).
- Understand 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. immigration reform as it affected Italian migration to the U.S.
- Evaluate and assess the economic situation of Italian-Americans during the peak years of immigration.
- Evaluate and interpret the political and social experience of Italian-Americans, including the concepts of assimilation, acculturation, and incorporation as it relates to Italian Americans.
- Evaluate and interpret Italian-American expressive culture in the context of their historical, sociological, political, and economic experiences.
- Compare and contrast notions of identity, whether symbolic or instrumental, and the process of assimilation, acculturation, and incorporation in the contemporary Italian-American community.
- Contextualize the Italian-American experience in the history of American emigration, and to extrapolate from the particular (the Italian-American experience) to the general (immigration history, assimilation, American identity).

## Required Texts

This course adheres to SUNY’s initiative to reduce costs of book purchases for students, we have selected books that are available at public & university libraries and as used books from web sellers such as Amazon and alibris. Any edition is acceptable. These books are also available for purchase from the Buffalo State campus bookstore,

- 1) Ferraiuolo, A. (2009). *Religious Festive Practices in Boston's North End*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- 2) Mangione, Jerre (1943, original publication date) *Mount Allegro: A Memoir of Italian America Life* (any edition)
- 3) Orsi, Robert. A. (2010). *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (3rd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- 4) Puzo, Mario (1965, original publication date) – *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (any edition)
- 5) Silone, Ignazio *Fontamara* (any edition)

## Additional Readings

All additional readings are linked through our Bb coursesite (where we house cyberlectures, videos and video links, articles, book chapters, and a shared folder on Ebook Central). Each module begins with a “cyberlecture,” which run about 60 pages each and can be read online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	POINTS/%
Module Reading Quizzes (13 @ 30 points each)	390
Conferences (There are 6 conferences-one per module) (The minimum posting for each conference is one commentary/observation and three response posts.) - 30 points commentary, 10 points each response	360
Final Essay	250
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>

LETTER GRADES BASED ON PERCENTAGE											
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
≥930	900	870	830	800	770	730	700	670	630	600	≤599

## COURSE SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS

LEARNING MODULES	DATES	REQUIRED READINGS
<i>Icebreaker</i>	One week	Introduce yourself on the Internet Café and take course navigation quiz for extra credit.
<i>Module 1</i> The Homeland	Two weeks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Buonanno &amp; Buonanno (BB) Cyberlecture: Homeland</li> <li>2. <i>Fontamara</i> – Ignazio Silone</li> <li>3. “The American Aunt” by Leonardo Sciascia</li> </ol>
<i>Module 2</i> The Voyage and Arrival	Two weeks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BB- Cyberlecture: The Voyage and Arrival</li> <li>2. Jerre Mangione – <i>Mount Allegro</i></li> <li>3. James S. Pasto, “Immigrants and Ethnics: Post-World War II Italian Immigration and Boston's North End” (1945-2016) in <i>New Italian Migrations to the United States</i> (2017), Eds. L. Ruberto and J. Sciorra)</li> </ol>
<i>Module 3</i> Making a Living	Three weeks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BB – Cyberlecture: Making a Living</li> <li>2. Chapters 8 – 10 <i>Unto Thy Sons</i>, Gay Talese</li> <li>3. Mario Puzo – <i>The Fortunate Pilgrim</i></li> <li>4. “Chapter 1 Work Experiences and Opportunities: From Italy to Buffalo” in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin <i>Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930</i></li> <li>5. Yans-McLaughlin, “Chapter 6 Like the Fingers of the Hand: Patterns of Work and Family Organization”</li> <li>6. Richard Aquila, <i>Home Front Soldier</i>, pp. 55-59</li> <li>7. Jennifer Guglielmo (2010), “Chapter 6 – The 1909-1919 Strike Wave and the Birth of Industrial Unionism,” pp. 176-198</li> <li>8. Armfield, F. L. (2000). “Fire on the Prairies: The 1895 Spring Valley Race Riot.” <i>Journal of Illinois History</i>, 65(Autumn), 185-200.</li> </ol>
<i>Module 4</i> Social & Political Order	Two weeks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BB – Cyberlecture: Family, Community, Society &amp; Politics</li> <li>2. Marcella Bencivenni, “Chapter 1 – Italian American Radicalism: Old World Roots, New World Developments”</li> <li>3. Bencivenni, “Chapter 2 – The Sovversivi and their Cultural World” in <i>Italian Immigrant Radical Culture</i></li> <li>4. Yans-McLaughlin, “Chapter 4, The Italian Community in Buffalo, 1880-1930”</li> <li>5. Nicaso, A. (2017). “Organized Crime and Italian Americans.” In W. Connell &amp; S. Pugilese (Eds.), <i>The</i></li> </ol>

		<p><i>Routledge History of the Italian Americans</i> (pp. 479-492). New York: Routledge.</p> <p>6. Topp, M. (2017). "The Sacco and Vanzetti Case and the Psychology of Political Violence." In W. Connell &amp; S. Pugilese (Eds.), <i>The Routledge History of the Italian Americans</i> (pp. 286-304). New York: Routledge.</p> <p>7. Candeloro, D. (2017). "World War II Changed Everything." In W. Connell &amp; S. Pugilese (Eds.), <i>The Routledge History of the Italian Americans</i> (pp. 370-384). New York: Routledge.</p>
Module 5 Expressive Culture	Three Weeks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BB – Cyberlecture: Italian American Expressive Culture</li> <li>2. Robert Orsi – <i>The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street</i></li> <li>3. Buonanno, M. (1984). Becoming White: Notes on an Italian-American Explanation of Evil Eye. <i>New York Folklore</i>, 10(1-2), 39-54.</li> <li>4. Ferraiuolo, A. (2009). <i>Religious Festive Practices in Boston's North End</i>. Albany: SUNY Press.</li> <li>5. Cinotto, Simone. "Chapter 10 – Culture and Identity on the Table: Italian American Food as Social History" in W. Connell and S. Pugliese (2017) <i>The Routledge History of Italian Americans</i>, pp. 179-192.</li> </ol>
Module 6 Nostalgia, Ethnicity, Affirmation: The Rhetoric of Italian- American Identity	One week	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BB – Cyberlecture: Nostalgia, Affirmation, Ethnicity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</li> <li>2. Alba, R. (2017). "Italian Americans and Assimilation." In W. Connell &amp; S. Pugilese (Eds.), <i>The Routledge History of the Italian Americans</i> (pp. 495-505). New York: Routledge.</li> <li>3. Gans, H. J. (2017). "Another Look at Symbolic Ethnicity." <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i>, 40(9), 1410-1417.</li> </ol>
Critical Evaluation Period	One week	Final Essay is Due

## ASSESSMENTS

**Quizzes**—Quizzes are housed on Blackboard. There are 13 reading quizzes. The quizzes test students on required readings and may sometimes draw on conference discussion as well. Each quiz is due at 11:55 p.m. on the due date listed on course calendar poste to Bb.

**Essay**- This is a four/five-page essay that draws on your class readings. The page requirement is exclusive of footnotes, works cited, and title page. Use APA 6<sup>th</sup>. Use of an electronic citation system (such as EndNote or RefWorks) is strongly encouraged.

The essay must draw on at least four distinct course readings (three textbooks and mini-lectures). You are encouraged to draw on other sources in your essay. Your thesis statement must be the

last sentence of the first paragraph of your essay. You will be graded according to the essay grading rubric (see below).

**Conferences**—There are **SIX** conferences (discussion boards)—one for each MODULE of the course.

### **DETAILED GUIDANCE FOR CONFERENCES (DISCUSSION FORA)**

There are **SIX** conferences (discussion boards)—one for each MODULE of the course. Print out the schedule and pay close attention to the opening and closing dates of each module.

#### 1. Required number of posts per module

You are responsible for posting **ONE commentary/observation** (about ½ page TimesRoman 12 or 250 words) related to the assigned textbook readings or mini-lectures. You may also draw from outside readings. Always cite your sources. (See discussion rubric, below.)

You should formulate a “thesis” (hunch, hypothesis) based on the required readings for that module and provide two or three examples to support your idea. You should test and refine theses throughout this course. This will help you in developing and improving critical thinking skills and provide a good basis for your final essay (due at the end of the course). Ideally, your commentary posts can be refined and connected to form the basis of your final essay.

**THREE response posts** are required in each module. Discussion grading rubric applies to response posts.

**We do not grade commentaries and responses posted after the due date.**

#### 2. Roles – Student & Professors

##### *Student’s Role in Conferencing*

Conferences are primarily in the hands of the students. Create substantial posts

Always cite sources (including page number when available).

Responses to others' posts can be short, three sentences or so (about 50-100 words). Avoid criticizing others' posts when you respond to them but rather augment the information they present. We want the web discussion to occur naturally rather than to be overly managed by your instructors. Get on the discussion board. See what people have written. Post as early as possible, but no later than the date listed on the calendar posted to Bb. This gives your classmates a chance to respond to your posts. Posts clustering in the final minutes of the posting period are not very helpful to the class as a whole and will not carry much, if any, credit.

### *Professors' Role in Conferencing*

We read all posts. We will provide private feedback (via Bb discussion board grades). Do expect our comments to include “helpful” advice for improving your writing skills as well.

#### 3. Good discussion requires students to read all posts.

**Read what has been posted before you post!** Posts building on what others have said are always helpful but posts repeating what others have already said are not helpful to anyone. One of the factors we consider when grading the discussion is how many posts you have read as well as how many you have written! Think of it this way. If we were in a f2f class, we wouldn't carry on simultaneous conversations on the same subject. Instead, we would build sequentially and debate back and forth in a process of building on each others' ideas and findings. Think “discuss” not “lecture” or “soliloquy.”

**WHEN A CLASSMATE HAS INTRODUCED A TOPIC YOU WISHED TO DISCUSS:** If a student has already introduced the subject you wish to comment on (your commentary post) you must post your commentary as a **RESPONSE** to his/her post. It can still take the form of a commentary/observation and your instructors will recognize it as commentary and grade accordingly. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT**—otherwise we will have simultaneous discussions on the same topic.

Finally, though we know some of you have been instructed to copy the post you're responding to within your post, do not do so in this class. If you are responding to a specific point, summarize that point and attribute the author. Again, do not just copy an entire post in your response to it.

#### 4. Conference Grading

(See Rubric—landscaped on the last page at the end of this syllabus.)

We assign points to each of your six conferences. The grade is based on two factors: post quality (which could partially seem like word count inasmuch as use of significant detail would be a part of that but really has more to do with complexity of the content) and workload (this can only be gauged as the course progresses and entails the instructor's assessment of how much each student is putting into the discussion vis-à-vis each other: how much you post in comparison to other students, how carefully you read other students' posts, how well you respond to the topics in the course texts, on-line materials, and other posts). A high quality commentary **contains information from the** course readings and applies a concept from the text or course in a meaningful way, **or** facilitates understanding of the course material or topic. (See discussion rubric, below.)

The initial post and three responses should be considered the **minimal requirements** for accomplishing a discussion conference; more active participation may be needed to achieve a top grade and/or extra credit. Also, you will notice that we do not posit a question to start the conference; rather, you share your ideas on the topics covered in the readings and/or on-line materials.

**Finally, you will note that the discussion conferences are geared along the lines of the cyber lectures; thus, it is necessary to read each lecture before embarking upon its respective discussion; then post on whatever interests you. No questions really; no answers; just discussion!**

5. Conferencing Checklist

- **Descriptive Subject Line.** Commentary/Observation Posts **require** descriptive titles in the subject line. A good title tells something of the nature of your commentary. We deduct points from a student's post for subject lines that do not conform to this requirement. (See discussion rubric, below.)
- **Body of your commentary.** Tell us if you are making reference to:
  - Any item you read on the web (outside of the course lectures)—insert the URL and check to be sure the link is functioning properly.
  - Any item you read in the cyberlectures
  - Material from one of the texts—include the chapter/section (it's possible we will be reading from different editions)
- **Response Posts.** Your response posts can be in response to classmates' posts made to your commentary or responses to your classmates' commentaries. You can earn extra credit if you are more actively posting, so long as they aren't what many online students refer to as "junk" posts. Resist the temptation to respond if the extent of your response is "cool, dude" or "yeah, my thoughts, exactly." So, this bears repeating: responses such as: "I agree", "Good question" or "Good answer" / Any response that is just **an opinion**, or is **unsubstantiated** / any response that is carelessly typed, poorly thought-out, grammatically incorrect or confusing / any response that is disrespectful of another student or any other person, etc., **is not acceptable**. (Unacceptable means that you don't earn points.) Print out the discussion rubric and refer to it often throughout this course.
- **Netiquette**  
As discussion is of a public nature, please observe proper "netiquette"—courteous and appropriate forms of communication and interaction over the Internet (in online discussions). This means no personal attacks, obscene language, or intolerant expression. All viewpoints should be respected.

## ESSAY: Grading Rubric

<p><b>Substantive Criteria:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Cogency of Thought (50%)</i>: Central to the pursuit of critical thinking is the task of discovering reasonable beliefs that are based upon sound justifying arguments and evidence. One criterion for grading therefore is how well the author supports his/her views with <b>clearly stated</b> and convincing reasoning.</li> <li>2. <i>Insight(30%)</i>: A superior paper will demonstrate an understanding of class material and <b>goes beyond</b> what is said in class lectures, required textbooks, and discussions.</li> </ol> <p><b>Evidence of Effort/Technical Criteria: (20%)</b>: The amount of effort put into preparing the paper, insofar as it can be ascertained from the work, will be considered in grading. Signs of lack of effort include outlined below</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Paper Elements             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Typed/Double Spaced</li> <li>b. 1 inch margins (l/r:top/bottom)</li> <li>c. Citations – see instructions &amp; Use EndNote, Style-APA 6th</li> <li>d. Title Page and Works Cited Page</li> <li>e. Page Numbering</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Did student avoid the following (includes but not limited to):             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Fall short on length of paper</li> <li>b. Unexplained, unsubstantiated, irrelevant statements, unanswered questions</li> <li>c. Failing to address thoroughly all of the questions asked</li> <li>d. Unfair Criticism</li> <li>e. Paraphrasing</li> <li>f. Frequent misspellings and/or grammatical errors, unintelligible writing</li> <li>g. Long Quotations/Frequent Quotations (roughly ONE direct quote per page, otherwise “citations” rather than direct quotes)</li> <li>h. Other [see comments below]</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Additional Comments:</b></p> <p>Awk - awkward  <b>Conf?!</b> - confusing          ≠ - doesn't follow  <b>e/e</b> – expand/explain  <b>frag</b> – fragment  <b>gram</b> – grammar  <b>huh?!</b> – confusing/little to no sense  <b>¶</b> - new paragraph here  <b>proof!</b> – proofread  <b>sp?</b> – check spelling  <b>th?</b> – thesaurus/word choice</p>	

## Bibliography

Link to Italian American Folder on E-Book Central:

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/buffalostate/showSharedBookshelfFolder.action?sKey=46a34d115a5e4fdfa31d0ccfc2b7f73c&tm=1509304234499>

We have added dozens of ebooks to this folder.

Aquila, R. (1999). *Home Front Soldier: The Story of a GI and His Italian American Family During World War II*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Alba, R. (2017). Italian Americans and Assimilation. In W. Connell & S. Pugilese (Eds.), *The Routledge History of the Italian Americans* (pp. 495-505). New York: Routledge.

Armfield, F. L. (2000). Fire on the Prairies: The 1895 Spring Valley Race Riot. *Journal of Illinois History*, 65(Autumn), 185-200.

Bencivenni, M. (2011). *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890-1940*. New York, NY, USA: NYU Press.

Buonanno, M. (1984). Becoming White: Notes on an Italian-American Explanation of Evil Eye. *New York Folklore*, 10(1-2), 39-54.

Caneloro, D. (2017). World War II Changed Everything. In W. Connell & S. Pugilese (Eds.), *The Routledge History of the Italian Americans* (pp. 370-384). New York: Routledge.

Cinotto, S. (2017). Culture and Identity on the Table: Italian American Food as Social History. In W. Connell & S. Pugilese (Eds.), *The Routledge History of the Italian Americans* (pp. 179-192). New York: Routledge.

Connell, W., & Pugilese, S. (2017). *The Routledge History of the Italian Americans*. New York: Routledge.

Ferraiuolo, A. (2009). *Religious Festive Practices in Boston's North End*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Gans, H. J. (2017). Another Look at Symbolic Ethnicity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(9), 1410-1417.

Guglielmo, J. (2010). *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Nicaso, A. (2017). Organized Crime and Italian Americans. In W. Connell & S. Pugilese (Eds.), *The Routledge History of the Italian Americans* (pp. 479-492). New York: Routledge.

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Pasto, J. S. (2017). Immigrants and Ethnics: Post-World War II Italian Immigration and Boston's North End (1945-2016). In L. E. Ruberto & J. Schiorra (Eds.), *New Italian Migrations in the United States, Volume 1: Politics and History since 1945* (pp. 105-131). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Talese, G. (1992). *Unto the Sons*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Topp, M. (2017). The Sacco and Vanzetti Case and the Psychology of Political Violence. In W. Connell & S. Pugilese (Eds.), *The Routledge History of the Italian Americans* (pp. 286-304). New York: Routledge.

Vecoli, R. J. (2003). The Making and the Un-Making of the Italian American Working Class. In P. V. Cannistraro & G. Meyer (Eds.), *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism: Politics, Labor, and Culture* (pp. 51-76): Greenwood Publishing Group.

Yans-McLaughlin, V. (1977). *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

## Discussion Board Rubric[1]:

The quality of every discussion post is evaluated according to this rubric.

Points[2]	Interpretation	Grading criteria
<b>4</b>	Excellent ( <b>A</b> )	The comment is accurate, original, relevant, <b>teaches us something new</b> , and is well written. Four point comments add substantial teaching presence to the course, and stimulate additional thought about the issue under discussion. Documentation for factual information is provided. Factual information should be drawn from required readings—textbook, mini-lectures (posted to the web), and/or outside readings. The post does not repeat what another student has already posted. When this is not the first post to the board, it should be clear that the author has read other posts to the discussion board.
<b>3</b>	Above Average ( <b>B</b> )	The comment lacks at least one of the above qualities, but is above average in quality. A three point comment makes a <b>significant</b> contribution to our understanding of the issue being discussed.
<b>2</b>	Average ( <b>C</b> )	The comment lacks two or three of the required qualities. Comments which are based upon personal opinion or personal experience often fall within this category.
<b>1</b>	Minimal ( <b>D</b> )	The comment presents little or no new information. However, one point comments may provide important social presence and contribute to a collegial atmosphere.
<b>0</b>	Unacceptable ( <b>F</b> )	The comment adds no value to the discussion.
No penalty	Excellent Subject Line	The subject field is a <b>complete sentence</b> and <b>conveys the main point of the comment</b> . The reader clearly understands the main point of the comment before reading it.
1 point penalty	Descriptive Subject Line	The subject field provides key word(s) only. The reader knows the general area that the comment deals with.
2 point penalty	Subject Line is not acceptable	The subject field provides little or no information about the comment

[1] Source: This rubric is based on SUNY Faculty Resources. SLN 101, Module 3, "Facilitating Effective Online Interaction: Discussion Rubrics and Grading Scales." [2] Points—points are doubled for commentary. The maximum points a student can receive on a response post is 4 points, while the student can receive up to 8 points on a commentary. Hence, 8=100% for commentary; 4 = 100% for response. Each module has a total conferencing point value of 16 points.