



# DIVERSITY IN ITALIAN STUDIES

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RACE/ETHNICITY • GENDER • SEXUALITY • DIVERSITY STUDIES • CLASS



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# Diversity in Italian Studies

## – Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, Diversity Studies, Class –

17-18 January 2019

John D. Calandra Italian American Institute  
25 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10036

### PROGRAM

**THURSDAY, 17 JANUARY**

**4:00-4:30**

#### **WELCOME & OPENING COMMENTS**

Anthony Julian Tamburri  
DEAN, JOHN D. CALANDRA ITALIAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
Vita Rabinowitz  
INTERIM CHANCELLOR, THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
William McClure  
INTERIM ASSOCIATE PROVOST, QUEENS COLLEGE

**4:30-6:00**

**CHAIR: Nicholas Boston**

Alessia Valfredini, "Reflections of and on Diversity: (Re)Discussing Course Materials"  
Lillyrose Veneziano Broccia, "Diversity in the Italian Language and Culture Classroom: Making (Our Own) Space(s)"  
Deanna Shemek, "Diversity and Inclusion in Italian Studies Curricula"  
Sole Anatrone and Julia Heim, "Asterisk, A Taskforce of Fostering LGBTQAI+ Inclusivity Inside and Outside the Classroom"



**6:15-7:45**

**MODERATOR: Anthony Julian Tamburri**

#### **KEYNOTE LECTURE**

"Diversifying Italian Studies"  
Deborah Parker

#### **RESPONSE**

Dennis Looney

## FRIDAY, 18 JANUARY

9:30-11:00

CHAIR: Vetri Nathan

Catherine Adoyo, "Reading Dante from Space"

Nicolino Applauso, "African-Americans and the Future of Italian Studies: Teaching Italian in Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the United States"

Nicholas Boston, "Cosmopolitanizing Ethnic Area Studies: A View from Polish Studies and Italian Studies"

Mark Chu, "What's so different about 'diversity'? Reflecting (on) Plurality of Italian Experience in Teaching and Research"

11:15-12:45

CHAIR: Julie G. Van Peteghem

Elisabetta D'Amanda, "Deaf Community at Rochester Institute of Technology: Universal Design for Learning in the Italian Classroom"

Qi Chen, "Diversity and Italian Studies in China"

Mary Ann Carolan, "The Value of Cross-Cultural Studies"

Gaoheng Zhang, "From Roots to Routes: Working through Italian Studies from China to Italy via North America"

## LUNCH

2:00-3:30

CHAIR: Donna Chirico

Rosetta Giuliani Caponetto, "Fostering Communities in Class"

Kenise Lyons, "Shipwrecks, the Middle Passage, and Finding The Way Back Home: A Black American Woman's Journey To, Through, and From Italian Studies"

John Champagne, "Italian Studies' Queer Possibilities"

Ryan Calabretta-Sajder, "AIDS in the Italian & Italian American Canon: Death as Metaphor for a Profession in Peril"

3:45-5:15

CHAIR: Fred Gardaphé

Kristi Grimes, "Diversity and Study Abroad: Roma: arte, cultura, identità"

Akash Kumar, "Un uom nasce a la riva dell'Indo: Expanding the Field of Medieval Italian Studies"

Vetri Nathan, "Brown/Black Bodies in Italian Studies: An Inevitable Disruption?"

Shelleen Greene, "Race and Ethnicity within Italian American/Diaspora and Italian Studies"

## ABSTRACTS

### KEYNOTE LECTURE

#### “Diversifying Italian Studies”

DEBORAH PARKER, PhD

**M**y talk will consist of three parts. The first section, “Minority Voices in Italian Spaces,” relays a bit more of my own story and relays comments from other minorities and other hyphenated Italianists, many of which were sent to me after the publication of my article, “Race and Foreign Languages.” The second section, “Other Models: More Inclusive Spaces,” examines efforts made by Medieval Academy of America to diversity after a calamitous incident, and latest measures undertaken by the AAIS. The final section, “What can we do?”, examines data I compiled showing the composition of twenty-five (25) institutions with graduate programs in Italian by gender and race, the number of minorities hired in tenure track positions over the last forty (40) years, the situation of minority graduate students, provides an overview of Chinese universities which offer Italian, and argues the advantages of diversifying the professoriate.

DEBORAH PARKER is Professor of Italian at the University of Virginia. She is the author of *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance* (Duke UP, 1993), *Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet* (Cambridge UP, 2000), *Michelangelo and the Art of Letter Writing* (Cambridge UP, 2010) and the General Editor of *The World of Dante* website. She is the co-author, along with Mark Parker, of *The Attainable Text: The Special Edition DVD and the Study of Film* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), *Inferno Revealed: From Dante to Dan Brown* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and most recently, *Sucking Up, A Brief Consideration of Sycophancy* (University of Virginia Press, 2018). Reviews have appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Kirkus*, and *Salon*.



#### Diversity in Italian Studies: A Response to Deborah Parker

Dennis Looney, PhD

Since 2014, DENNIS LOONEY has served as director of the Office of Programs and director of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages at the Modern Language Association. He oversees projects relating to the profession, such as departmental reviews, the ongoing examination of faculty rights and responsibilities, monitoring educational and curricular changes, and the development of statements of best practices. He also oversees the Language Consultancy Service, the MLA Language Map, the language enrollment database, and other projects focused on languages other than English.

From 1986 to 2013, he taught Italian at the University of Pittsburgh. Publications include *Compromising the Classics: Romance Epic Narrative in the Italian Renaissance* (1996), *Freedom Readers: The African American Reception of Dante Alighieri and the Divine Comedy* (2011), and *Ludovico Ariosto's Latin Poetry* (2018).

## PRESENTATIONS

### Reading Dante from Space

C. S. Adoyo, PhD

The popular saying that “Italy is a museum” is tragically ironic considering the continuing vitality of a bimillenary intellectual legacy that has seeded and shaped the cultural imagination of the world we live in today. Traditionally conservationist tendencies that define Italian Literature as a national cultural monument of the Apennine Peninsula for, by, and about its people and their descendants, are also inclined to deem them its only rightful stewards. However, the poetic life of these putative monuments indiscriminately imbues the air we all breathe in every corner of the globe. Hence Classical, Medieval, and Modern Italian voices will spontaneously speak poetic truth to any attentive reader, be they Kenyan, Japanese, Caribbean, Argentinian or German. It is therefore essential, when contemplating the question of diversity in Italian studies, and particularly in literature, to consider what role such global readers play in the cultural stewardship of the Apennine Peninsula’s intellectual legacy. Unburdened by the anxieties specific to national identity, readers and scholars of a global citizenry readily, and perhaps necessarily, approach the cosmos of Italian Literature through the lens of universalizing poetic truths. Can Italian Studies emerge from its conservationist national mausoleums to embrace its potential as a culturally dynamic living legacy or will it continue to grow increasingly petrified within the bounds of national identity? Can the scholarship and pedagogy of Italian literature, history, and culture learn from the contributions of a racially and culturally variegated spectrum of intellectually diverse scholars, teachers, and students who read with new perspectives?

CATHERINE ADOYO is trained in music composition, piano performance, and literary scholarship. Her primary concern is the rational compositional methods in the poetics of literature, music, and art. Taking the Aristotelean view that the poetic arts are essentially the concrete, objective representation of ineffable subjective experience, Adoyo’s research investigates the homology of form and signification in Medieval and Early Modern poetics and her analysis focuses on the empirical elements of structural *dispositio*. Dr. Adoyo received her doctorate at Harvard University in Romance Languages and Literatures with a dissertation on, “The Order of All Things: Mimetic Craft in Dante’s *Commedia*,” in which she analyzes and correlates the musical and mathematical cosmo-mimetic architecture of the *Commedia* with the poem’s core ethical concerns and therein finds pure joy. She teaches at Georgetown University.



### Asterisk, Fostering LGBTQAI+ Inclusivity Inside and Outside the Classroom

Sole Anatrone, PhD and Julia Heim, PhD

LGBTQIA+ students in the United States report suffering from bullying and bigotry at home and in the classroom at alarmingly high rates; according to the 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report conducted by the Human Rights Campaign, 70% of LGBTQ youth have experienced bullying be-

cause of their sexual orientation, and just 27% say they are completely out about their identity in school. A mere 26% of youth say they feel safe in the classroom, and 51% of trans youth report that they cannot use restrooms that correspond with their gender identity. Our words and behaviors can significantly impact the experience these students have. As Italian language, literature, and culture instructors, we may often neglect to consider LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, labeling it as outside the framework of our course content. The normativity imbedded in our texts and the shape of our pedagogical materials, however, are both isolating to our LGBTQIA+ students, and ignore, and thus erase, LGBTQIA+ Italian literature, history, and culture, pushing it outside the bounds of “legitimate” disciplinary study. We founded Asterisk, a diversity taskforce, as a way of responding to this crisis by offering workshops and trainings that aim to promote practices of inclusivity within institutions of higher education, with a specific focus on gender and sexuality. On this panel we will discuss some of the reasons for this type of pedagogical formation, and some of the specific tools we offer for building intentionally inclusive learning spaces.

Dr. **JULIA HEIM** has a PhD in comparative literature from the CUNY Graduate Center in New York. She is a professor of Italian studies and Media studies, a communications fellow at Baruch College, and a translator of queer theory, art criticism, and the children’s book series Geronimo Stilton. She is the co-founder and an organizing member of the Queer Studies Caucus of the American Association of Italian Studies, and a Co-Investigator for the AHRC funded network QuIR [The Queer Italia Network]. Her own scholarship focuses on LGBTQIA+ representation in Italian media.

Dr. **SOLE ANATRONE** has a PhD in Italian Studies and Women and Gender Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. She has been an educator for students of all ages for over a decade; she has won awards for her teaching, and has taught in a variety of different academic environments including Wesleyan University, U.C. Berkeley, San Francisco State University, San Francisco Community College and La Scuola d’Italia. She has taught a variety of subjects, including Film, Literature, Language, History, Gender, and Migration; these topics are reflected in her research and publications. She is also a translator and an organizing member of the Queer Studies Caucus of AAIS. Her pedagogical philosophy is informed by her training in the Communicative Method, the Reggio Approach and the practice of Scaffolded Instruction, all of which aim at modeling inclusive, civic-minded educational environments, and promote the student’s sense of personal ownership in learning.



### **African-Americans and the Future of Italian Studies:**

#### **Teaching Italian in Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the United States**

Nicolino Applauso, PhD

**T**his contribution is based on the new Italian program launched in Fall 2018 at Morgan State University, one of the largest HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) in the United States. The program is of historical importance because it is the first time Italian has ever been offered in an HBCU across the U.S. (to my knowledge). I will reflect on the positive elements as well as the challenges I faced in introducing Italian to minority college students by emphasizing both the question of diversity and the reality of being “a minority” in Italian Studies.

The main positive component in teaching Italian to minority students is the creation of new trends that could revive and enrich a field that is currently stationary, and that often does not reflect the current changes in place in our modern society. New connections could be created

between Italian and African-American culture, thus energizing Italian Studies as a more inclusive and global discipline. The main challenges in teaching Italian to a student body comprised mainly of minority students is the limitation provided by the primary material of instruction that is currently available in the market. Textbooks of Italian language for English-speakers are often geared toward a less diversified representation of Italians, and scarcely represent the emerging population of young native Italian speakers who are not of European descent.

This contribution will conclude by offering some reflections about the significance of teaching Italian in an HBCU in relation to the current situation of decline in Italian Studies.

**NICOLINO APPLAUSO** is the Director and Founder of the Applauso Italian Learning Center, the first Italian language school in the Baltimore County area, which teaches affordable, weekly full immersion language and cultural courses for people of all ages. He is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Italian at Loyola University Maryland and a Lecturer of Italian and Spanish at Morgan State University, where he established its first Italian program in Fall 2018. He completed his doctorate in Romance Languages and Literatures, with a specialization in Italian, in 2010 at the University of Oregon. His main research interests pertain to history, political satire, humor, music, and poetry in medieval Italy and Europe. His current research projects include books on Dante and a study of Italians in Baltimore and Maryland.



### **Cosmopolitanizing Ethnic Area Studies: A View from Polish Studies and Italian Studies**

Nicholas Boston, PhD

**T**his talk describes a paper-in-progress which utilizes an autoethnographic methodology to explore epistemological questions and challenges that arise in producing knowledge that, by its very nature, asks an ethnic area studies program of scholarship to expand its capacity for cosmopolitan understandings which in turn necessitates a reconceptualization of that ethnic specificity leading its mission. For empirical data, the article draws on my experiences across a decade of active scholarship that intersects with Polish Studies and Italian Studies. It interrogates the institutional apparatuses and formal division of intellectual labor within the academia that organize knowledge. I address the following: the autoethnographic method's widespread deployment by scholars interrogating academic life, academic publishers' agendas resting on market exigencies (real and imagined), disciplinary hegemonies, and academic network formation. The article critically revisits scholarly negotiations into which I entered with academic structures, funding bodies, journal and book editors, and individual scholars in order to position my work within the fields in question. A project to cosmopolitanize ethnic area studies, I argue, opens portals through which scholars may view and analyze phenomena or processes that master narratives of history, society, and state formation strictly adhered to ethnos and nation have elided.

**NICHOLAS BOSTON** is Associate Professor in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Lehman College of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Visiting Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at John Cabot University, Rome. He holds a PhD in sociology from Cambridge and a M.S. from the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University. He is currently preparing a book-length manuscript, titled, "The Mahogany Paradox: Transnational Blackness in Contemporary Italy and



Italian-America,” for which he has conducted research as a visiting scholar in Modern Italian Studies at the American Academy in Rome (2015), and a participant in the Calandra Italian American Institute’s Italian Diaspora Studies Summer Seminar at the University of Calabria (2017).



**AIDS in the Italian & Italian American Canon:  
Death as Metaphor for a Profession in Peril**  
Ryan Calabretta-Sajder, DML

**W**ritten in 1901 and published soon after in 1904, Sibilla Aleramo’s *Una donna*, credited as one of the earliest feminist awakening pieces of the Western world, changed the way in which European society examined the female novelist, along with challenging the role that woman ‘is born to bare.’ I have argued elsewhere that due to her gender, her literary opus has never experienced the wealth of attention it truly deserves.

Similarly to Sibilla Aleramo, both Italian and Italian American cultures boast a critical importance when it comes to AIDS literature. Robert Ferro, an Italian American who spent most of his adult life between New York and Italy, is credited with penning the first novel to deal with AIDS in the American canon (*Second Son*, 1988), dying from complications related to the disease months after its release. Praised during his lifetime and since forgotten, Ferro’s work is critical in studying the evolution of the genre. In the same time period, Pier Vittorio Tondelli publishes *Camere separate* (1989), a novel which deals with a homosexual couple, Leo and Thomas; Thomas has issues of solitude and falls in love with a woman, who he loves as much as Leo. Thomas unfortunately dies of complications from an incurable disease, and in the end of the novel, the reader learns that Leo is also infected with it. P.V. Tondelli also dies of AIDS complications in 1991.

Utilizing Leo Bersani’s theoretical model presented in “Is the Rectum a Grave?” and Lee Edelman’s *No Future*, I intend to demonstrate the importance of these authors, these works in particular, and the thematics they introduce to world literature. By ignoring these literary works in the classroom, I argue that we are ignoring a diversity, which we should be celebrated. Moreover, I will metaphorically reveal how, as Italian and Italian Americanists, by ignoring these texts, we are consciously ‘killing off’ the faculty who can and should be teaching the next generation whom will be ‘future-less.’

Dr. **RYAN CALABRETTA-SAJDER** is Assistant Professor of Italian at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, where he teaches courses in Italian, Film, and Gender Studies. Author of *Divergenze in celluloid: colore, migrazione e identità sessuale nei film gay di Ferzan Özpetek* with Mimesis editore and editor of *Pasolini’s Lasting Impressions: Death, Eros, and Literary Enterprise in the Opus of Pier Paolo Pasolini* with Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, his research interests include the integration of gender, class, and migration in both Italian and Italian American literature and cinema. In Spring 2017 he was a Fulbright Foundation of the South Scholar at the University of Calabria. He is currently working on two authored, book-length projects, one exploring the Italian American gay author Robert Ferro who died of AIDS complications in 1988 and the second on the Algerian Italian author Amara Lakhous.



## **Fostering Communities in Class**

Rosetta Giuliani Caponetto, PhD

**M**y presentation falls into the category “Italian Culture in the Classroom: What Are We Teaching and Why?” and revolves around an uplifting project titled *Fostering Communities In Class* that brings together a team of six female faculty members from diverse ethnic backgrounds. *Fostering Communities* is an outreach research and teaching project that aims to provide foster youth residing in Alabama, most of whom are of African American descent, with cooking skills and training to grow fresh food through a community garden setting. The faculty members conduct research in the fields of Social Work, Horticulture, Nutrition, Journalism, and my own work contributes with a unique analysis of the slow food movement and its transformation from a movement catering to the privileged who can afford local, high quality, and sustainable food, to a philanthropic-driven movement that combines the aesthetical experience of enjoying the best of food with the ethical initiative of sustaining and educating underprivileged communities about culinary traditions, food production, preparation, and consumption. This project originates from a quest for alternative ways of looking at Italian culture, and an effort to provide tools that make Italian culture relevant, something that (African)American audiences living in Alabama can engage.

Born in Mogadishu, Somalia, **ROSETTA GIULIANI CAPONETTO** is Associate Professor of Italian at Auburn University. Her area of academic interests include Italian literature and cinema of the Fascist period; Italian Colonialism in the Horn of Africa; Italy’s Trusteeship in Somalia; Food and Philanthropy; as well as Postcolonial theory, Race and Ethnic studies. She is the author of *Fascist Hybridities: Representations of Racial Mixing and Diaspora Cultures under Mussolini* (Palgrave, 2016).



## **The Value of Cross-Cultural Studies**

Mary Ann McDonald Carolan, PhD

**I**nterdisciplinary studies are critical in higher education today. We seek to teach our students to think broadly as they complete their majors and minors in order to prepare them for the challenges they will face after graduation. One of the ways that we can make Italian studies relevant is to offer courses that reveal the connections between Italy and diverse cultures. While our courses typically demonstrate Italy’s enormous contributions in terms of art, fashion, politics, food, and literature, they should also analyze the role that other cultures have played in the development of Italian genius throughout the centuries. This broader perspective enlarges the scope of Italian studies by acknowledging cross-cultural currents that have previously been ignored.

In this paper, I will offer an example of a cross-cultural course that my Chinese colleague and I developed and taught in the Honors curriculum. Entitled “East/West Dialogue: China and Italy through the Ages,” this course began with a consideration of Marco Polo’s journey to China and ended with recent documentaries about the Chinese in Italy. Throughout the course of the semester, we challenged our students to consider Eastern and Western perspectives regarding the relationship between Italy and China.

MARY ANN McDONALD CAROLAN is Professor of Modern Languages & Literatures and Director of the Italian Studies program at Fairfield University. Prof. Carolan has written extensively on film in a variety of journals. She is the author of *The Transatlantic Gaze: Italian Cinema, American Film* (State University of New York Press, 2014) which documents the sustained and profound artistic impact of Italian cinema upon filmmakers in the United States from the postwar period to the new millennium. Prof. Carolan's current book-length project, *Orienting Italy: China through the Lens of Italian Filmmakers*, examines the ways in which Italian directors have employed documentary, historical fiction, and fictional narratives to represent China and its people both at home and abroad in Italy.



### Italian Studies' Queer Possibilities

John Champagne, PhD

Discussions of diversity in Italian Studies have noted the existence of the Queer Caucus of the AAIS. Committed to gender, sexual, class, and racial equity, the Caucus, a self-organized, self-sustaining body committed to interdisciplinary inquiry, suggests that Italian Studies has made some space for diversity. This paper will discuss the ways in which the term queer opens up Italian Studies to a plurality of approaches and audiences, resistance to the term queer and its implications, and concerns around Italian Studies' Queer futures.

JOHN CHAMPAGNE is professor of English at Penn State Erie, the Behrend College. Chair of Penn State Behrend's Global Languages and Cultures program, he is also this year's Penn State laureate, which involves traveling around Pennsylvania to present his talk "Art and Politics: the Case of Corrado Cagli." He has just signed a contract with Peter Lang's Italian Modernities series for his sixth book, tentatively titled *Queer Ventennio: Italian Fascism, Homoerotic Art, and the Nonmodern in the Modern*.



### Diversity and Italian studies in China

Qi Chen

Since the last century, Italian studies have received increasing attention in China. This paper aims to explore the situation of Italian studies in China from the perspective of diversity. The most significant aspects of Italian studies in China are: Sino-Italian exchange history, Italian literature research, Italian Renaissance studies, Italian philosophical political studies, and Italian language and literature teaching research.

As part of Italian studies in the world, its status in China reflects the cultural exchanges and conflicts. On how to make Italian studies develop in China, on the one hand, it relies on the joint efforts of researchers, and on the other hand, on the development of Italian related teaching in higher education. And, of course, it also depends on non-Italian researchers from all over the world to learn from each other and develop together.

Dr. QI CHEN is an assistant professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, Beihang University, Beijing, and Visiting Scholar at Harvard University. She obtained her PhD in Italian literature at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Italy. Her research interests mainly focus on

Italian literature, aesthetics, Renaissance study, and comparative study. She has published one monograph, and more than ten articles in the related fields, in Chinese and in English.



**What's so different about 'diversity'?**  
**Reflecting (on) plurality of Italian experience in teaching and research**

Mark Chu, PhD

**M**y institution, University College Cork, announced the establishment of an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Unit only on 8 March 2017, albeit building on the work of its Equality Committee and an earlier Higher Education Equality Unit. The EDI Unit's first Director was appointed to the role in January 2018. However, as the EDI Unit website states, "Equality, Diversity and Inclusion have been a core focus of teaching, research and policy activity for a wide range of UCC staff and students for decades." The EDI Unit recently carried out Student and Staff Equality Surveys, and invited Professor Kalwant Bhopal of the University of Birmingham (England), among other things, to give a presentation on the University and College Union sponsored report, co-authored with Clare Pitkin, on "Investigating Higher Education Institutions and Their Views on the Race Equality Charter" (<https://ucu.org.uk/HEIs-and-the-Race-Equality-Charter>), relating to the UK situation. This latter event provided the opportunity for a discussion, also in the Irish context, of the report's recommendations and more generally on race- and ethnicity-related issues, including white bias in curriculum. In light of this discussion, in my presentation, I examine the embedding of diversity into the Italian studies curriculum and research in my Department and, while accepting that there is still a need to acknowledge, challenge, and address inequalities, I suggest we consider the question in my title: "What's so different about diversity?"

**MARK CHU** is Senior Lecturer in Italian at University College Cork, Ireland. His research and teaching address, amongst other topics, questions of identity and migration in Italian culture. He is currently working on a book project on the representation of the Chinese in Italian culture. He served as Head of the Department of Italian from 2003 until 2018. He has published widely on Sicilian literature and was Editor in Chief of the first three issues (2011-2013) of *Todomodo*, the international Journal of Sciascia Studies published by leading Italian academic publisher, Leo S. Olschki, in collaboration with the Associazione degli Amici di Leonardo Sciascia.



**Deaf Community at Rochester Institute of Technology:**  
**Universal Design for Learning in the Italian Classroom**

Elisabetta Sanino D'Amanda, DML

**T**he Italian Program has been present at the Rochester Institute of Technology since 2002. From the beginning the instructors have been faced with the need to create courses with a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in order to promote the best practices for inclusion of the Deaf population in the city with the largest Deaf population per capita in United States. The National Technical Institute of Technology is one of the colleges within RIT and all the Deaf and Hard of

Hearing students are working across the university in a mainstream modality. Interpreters and note-takers or captioning supporters are working alongside with instructors to provide full 'access' to the diverse population. The collaboration with these access services has proven central to the success of our Deaf students in the courses of Italian, but have also become of help to the hearing students.

Various action researches have been conducted in Modern Languages and Cultures Department at RIT. Specifically in the Italian Program in 2010, in collaboration with the interpreter Kathleen Darroch, we formalized the research project, Integrated technology-based learning in foreign languages: Integration of interpreting, note taking, and online interaction to enhance hearing and deaf students communication skills in the Italian language. This work allowed us to document the prior 8 years of work and to further our collaboration. Said collaboration and research on UDL continues currently in the classroom and outside in Faculty Learning Communities at NTID. The deaf students have been also participating in the RIT Genova, Italy Work Abroad Program with tailored internships conducted in Italian and English. These students have also studied Italian Sign Language (*Lingua italiana dei segni* - LIS), and met within the Italian deaf community during their experiences.

The presentation will be focusing in reporting the experience of this action research in teaching and learning. Brief video material will support the information shared during the session. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/25/nyregion/25deaf.html>.

**ELISABETTA SANINO D'AMANDA** is Principal Lecturer at RIT where she coordinates the Italian Program and the Genova Study and Work Abroad Program. She holds a Doctoral degree from Middlebury Language Schools with a dissertation on Mimmo Calopresti and New Italian Cinema and focuses her research on film studies and pedagogy. A documentary filmmaker, she holds a MFA from RIT in film production and has screened her first documentary *As Good As Bread: Preserving the Italian Ethnicity* (2008) on RAI international in 2010 and the last documentary she produced, *Election Day 2016*, screened for Votilla at the Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester, NY, and also at *Meet the Press* AFI Film Festival in Washington D.C. in November 2017 and has screened in the Paris University Center for Political Science in November 2018.



### **Race and Ethnicity within Italian American/Diaspora and Italian Studies**

Shelleen Greene, PhD

**I**n this presentation, I discuss the study of racial and ethnic identity formations within the fields of Italian American/Diaspora and Italian Studies. Traditionally, Italian American/Diaspora Studies have focused upon the movement, resettlement and cultural production of peoples emigrating from the Italian peninsula and their descendants. Within the last twenty years, the introduction of postcolonial theory and critical theories of race have transformed the field of Italian Studies, allowing for a revised historical approach to national unification, the country's north/south division, and the legacy of its colonial expansionism in Africa and Eastern Europe. In this presentation, I discuss my research on the African diaspora (specifically African Americans) in Italy as a means to consider the theoretical and methodological frameworks offered by both Italian American/Diaspora and Italian Studies for expanding the field(s) of study.

**SHELLEEN GREENE** is an associate professor of Cinema and Media Studies in the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research interests include Italian cinema, Black European studies, and postcolonial studies. Her book, *Equivocal Subjects: Between Italy and Africa—Constructions of Racial and National Identities in the Italian Cinema* (Bloomsbury/Continuum, 2012), examines the representation of mixed-race subjects of Italian and African descent in the Italian cinema. Her work has also been published in *Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (Troubador Press, 2010), *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and is forthcoming in *California Italian Studies*.



### **Diversity and Study Abroad: Roma: arte, cultura, identità**

Kristi Grimes, PhD

A meaningful study abroad experience prepares students for leadership in an increasingly interdependent world. My presentation will draw on current literature as well as on my experience teaching in Italy. I will describe pedagogical units that I developed for “Roma: arte, cultura, identità,” an interdisciplinary course that focuses on the development of linguistic and intercultural competence.

Italy has long been a melting pot of diverse peoples, languages, and traditions. Migration into Italy has resulted in expanding Italian identities. By analyzing the observations and works by and about multi-ethnic and migrant artists/writers living in Rome (such as Amir Issaa, Kossi Kombala-Ebri and Igiaba Scego) students explore intersections among a diversity of cultures within one city. Pre-departure assignments help students develop awareness of their sociocultural identities and cultural values. In comparing and contrasting similarities and differences between American cultures and those of the Italian-speaking world, students scrutinize their assumptions about difference and Italian identities.

To conclude, I will describe strategies for creating a diversity and inclusion action plan designed to help study abroad leaders increase the participation of students from diverse backgrounds.

**KRISTI GRIMES** is Associate Professor of Italian and Co-Director of the Italian Studies Program at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. She holds a B.A. from The College of the Holy Cross, an M.A. from The University of Notre Dame, and a PhD from The University of Chicago. Her research focuses on Petrarch and the lyric tradition, interdisciplinary relations between literary and visual traditions, and the history of humanism. Her publications have appeared in *Italian Culture*, *Latomus: Revue d'Etudes Latines*, *Lectura Petrarce*, *The Medieval Feminist Forum*, and *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*.



### **Un uom nasce a la riva dell'Indo: Expanding the Field of Medieval Italian Studies**

Akash Kumar, PhD

This paper will reflect on both personal experience and new directions in research with the aim of showing how attention to the multiplicity of voices within the tradition of medieval



Italian literature can bring new life and new audiences to our work. My focus, as a scholar of Indian-American descent, will be on India as a point of reference in medieval texts such as Marco Polo, lyric poetry, and Dante; India as a source of vital cultural phenomena such as traditions of storytelling and the game of chess that can inform a reading of Boccaccio; and 14<sup>th</sup>-century India a parallel to consider through the perspectives of connected histories (via the work of the historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam) and the Global Middle Ages in a reading of Dante's polyglot poetry. I will also reflect on how these directions of research have sprung from my cultural background and experiences and how we might promote such ways of driving future research. Finally, I will outline how this intercultural approach makes its way into my teaching and allows me to forge connections with a wide range of students with the aim of bringing more and new people into the scholarly community that has given me so much.

**AKASH KUMAR** is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Italian at Indiana University, Bloomington and Associate Editor of *Digital Dante*. His research has two main strands: the crossing of poetry, philosophy, and science in early Italian poetry of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and in Dante, and the interactions between Western and non-Western cultures in popular activities like game-playing and storytelling. Some recent projects include a collaboration with Richard Lansing on *The Complete Poetry of Giacomo da Lentini* (University of Toronto Press, 2018) and the essay "Walls of Inclusivity: Dante's Divine Comedy and World Literature" for the *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to World Literature* (forthcoming, 2019). This presentation stems in part from a work in progress "Vernacular Hybridity Across Borders: Dante, Amir Khusro, and Sadow Birk."



### **Shipwrecks, the Middle Passage, and Finding The Way Back Home: A Black American Woman's Journey To, Through, and From Italian Studies**

Kenise G. Lyons, PhD

**I** have always been fascinated by the poetic voyages that abound in Italian culture. In this paper, I would like to use a selection of these as a lens through which to reflect on (and make meaning of) my journey as a black southern American woman to, through, and – unfortunately – from Italian cultural studies.

I do so for two reasons. First, I want to take advantage of the opportunity opened by Dr. Parker's publication of her essential article. A vital part of my healing journey is the ability to give voice to the silent struggle I forced myself to live in after growing weary of crying out to (tone) deaf and dismissive ears. Second, I want to share my hard-won wisdom with others that, in the words of that wise woman Audra Lorde, our silence will not save us – or the discipline of Italian Studies. We instead need to begin to articulate a program for meaningfully speaking out against – and potentially reshaping – the structures of thought and systemic supports of exclusion that make it extremely difficult for people of intersectionally – diverse social identities to make unique/relevant contributions to the discipline in the United States and in the broader world.

**KENISE LYONS** completed her doctoral studies at Yale University in 2012 with a dissertation titled "The Art of Writing with Light: The Photographic Presence in Italian Film, 1948-1978." Her article "Pro o Contro *La rabbia*: Elsa Morante, Pier Paolo Pasolini and the Work of Art in the Atomic Age," was included in the edited volume *Elsa Morante's Politics of Writing: Rethinking Subjectivity, History, and the Power of Art*,

edited by Stefania Lucamente (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2012). After leaving academia in 2013, Kenise founded The Empowered Student, a boutique educational consultancy that empowers underserved K-16 students to more fully participate in the direction of their own education through academic life coaching services and college/career advising. She is currently a Site Trainer with Global Kids, a non-profit organization focused on facilitating the self-actualization, educational access, and political empowerment of underserved secondary students through global education.



### **Brown/Black Bodies in Italian Studies: An Inevitable Disruption?**

Vetri Nathan, PhD

**T**his paper examines the consequences of the visual impact of a non-white body on the practice of learning, teaching, or undertaking research in Italian Studies. It provides an overview of some of the challenges and opportunities faced by faculty and students who are epidermally different from the normative racial expectations of what constitutes “Italian-ness.” Using postcolonial theory, it provides a cultural analysis of how the interplay of nationality, race, and intellectual authority provides pathways to new identities, or in many cases, the reinforcement of fixed stereotypes

**VETRI NATHAN** is Associate Professor and Head of the of Italian Studies program in the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures (MLLC) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Nathan received an M.A. and Ph.D. in Italian from Stanford University in 2009. His research interests include immigrant cultures and globalization in contemporary Italy, European colonialism and postcoloniality, Italian cinema, and Food Studies. He has published various articles on these topics and his book *Marvelous Bodies: Italy's New Migrant Cinema* was published by Purdue University Press in 2017.



### **Diversity and Inclusion in Italian Studies Curricula**

Deanna Shemek, PhD

**T**his paper will discuss diversity and inclusion efforts in Italian Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz (the institution from which I moved in July 2018) and those that I will be initiating at my new institution, the University of California at Irvine. Program structures in the two institutions bear significant contrasts that will be suggestive for our collective brainstorming. My paper will focus on two types of upper-division courses I have developed that illustrate how to bring diversity discussion (and students) into the Italian Studies classroom. One is a course for upper-division students of Italian on migration and Italy. The other is a course on the *Orlando Furioso*, taught in English, that offers many opportunities for discussing racial, religious, and gender/sexuality difference with students who are reading sixteenth-century literature for the first time. These courses, and the recruitment efforts for them, will speak to the theme of curricular development and the question of what we are teaching in our college-level classrooms and why, as well as how to take advantage of different sorts of program and department structures to achieve diversity aims.



DEANNA SHEMEK is Professor of Italian and European Studies at the University of California, Irvine. She is author of *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (1998). Her collaborative editing includes *Phaethon's Children: The Este Court and its Culture in Early Modern Ferrara* (2005) and *Writing Relations: American Scholars in Italian Archives* (2008). She edited and co-translated Adriana Cavarero's *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy, and the Question of Gender* (1995). Her edition and translation of the *Selected Letters of Isabella d'Este* (2017) won the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women's 2018 prize for the best translation of a woman's work. She co-directs IDEA: Isabella d'Este Archive, an online project for study of the Italian Renaissance, <http://isabelladeste.web.unc.edu>.



### Reflections of and on Diversity: (Re)Discussing Course Materials

Alessia Valfredini, PhD

The world language classroom has a remarkable potential to offer diverse perspectives; but it takes intentional scrutiny and action to actualize this potential. In fact, language instruction often risks validating inequalities through its accessibility (or lack thereof) to diverse groups of learners, its classroom practices and dynamics, and its contents. This paper will focus on the latter of the three areas: how can educators promote diversity and inclusiveness when designing the content of the language curriculum?

The author will address: the curricular representation of a variety of voices that reflect a complex and multifaceted view of Italy; the visibility of the perspectives of different groups and realities among the interpretative frameworks, so that no student feels erased due to differences in financial means, lifestyle, social and cultural capital, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, physical and mental health and ability, immigration and citizenship status, or political views; and the explicit inclusion in the syllabus of themes of inclusiveness, equality, and social justice, with examples for different levels of linguistic proficiency.

ALESSIA VALFREDINI is a Senior Lecturer at Fordham University, where she coordinates the Italian Language Program and serves as Assessment Coordinator for the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. She earned a PhD in Language, Learning and Literacy at the Graduate School of Education of Fordham University. She studies world language education in higher education contexts, with a focus on higher order cognitive functions, interdisciplinarity, and social justice/civic engagement.



### Diversity in the Italian Language and Culture Classroom: Making (Our Own) Space(s)

Lillyrose Veneziano Broccia, PhD

This contribution will showcase specific ways in which diversity can be meaningfully incorporated in all levels of Italian Language and Culture Instruction, from Beginning to Advanced. Examples of task-based, project-based modules and student work highlight how learners connect to differentiated input as the core of their experience, steadily building their proficiency not only in the specific content, but also comfortably getting to know themselves and one another while engaging with authentic materials, and making their own spaces within their learning contexts

and beyond. With knowledgeable, open, and flexible teachers as their guides, students are accompanied along paths toward higher-ordered thinking while recognizing and also drawing their own significant connections between all of their studies and interests – personal, academic, and professional. By differentiating our approach to the presentation of language and culture, in all of its multidisciplinary and infinite possibilities, we succeed at lowering the affective filters that far too often impede the development of second and foreign languages. This presentation will include examples of diversified input used at all levels; student learning outcomes; practical approaches to how these were designed; and opportunities to brainstorm original materials that can be applied for a more sustainable, long-term inclusion of diversity in level-appropriate ways. It will also present the behind-the-scenes, careful reflection that goes into the choice of materials, keeping in mind that diversity must also speak to financial considerations so that the widest range possible of learners can feel welcomed and confident in their ability to succeed in Italian Studies, without the practical or psychological obstacles that costly course materials pose even before students have the opportunity to embark on this journey with us.

**LILLYROSE VENEZIANO BROCCIA** is Director of the Italian Language Program, Undergraduate Chair of Italian, and Faculty Advisor for the Italian Club at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia - where she has been teaching all levels of Italian Language and Culture since 2007. She also teaches various levels of ESL, and regularly offers and takes part in Professional Development for and with fellow Language and Culture Educators. She earned her BA in Italian and French from Temple University in Philadelphia, her MA in Italian Language at Middlebury College in Vermont and Italy, and her PhD in Italian from Columbia University in the City of New York.



**From Roots to Routes:  
Working through Italian Studies from China to Italy via North America**  
Gaoheng Zhang, PhD

**M**y presentation reflects on various issues mentioned in the call for papers by drawing from my academic trajectory in Italian Studies from China to Italy through the US and Canada. After earning a BA degree from Beijing Foreign Studies University and a PhD degree from New York University, I worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Southern California and as an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto. Currently I am a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Italian Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. I have conducted extensive archival research in Italy, and some educational and teaching experiences in Italian universities and in an American study abroad program in Italy. This brief sketch of my academic routes indicates that the concept of “cultural roots,” often so valued in foreign language and culture education, is a rather problematic one for me. During job interviews on this continent, my fluency in Italian was often tested in a way that suggested this was a more important component than critical thinking or teaching skills. At first, this occurrence was shocking for me, coming from a very welcoming Italian department that actively pursued inclusion of graduate students of diversity (of many kinds). Chinese academics of Italian Studies were also dubious about the values of scholarship produced in English about Italy, as they seem to seek approval mainly from Chi-

nese and Italian readers. If I am not a native speaker of Italian, nor English, what place do I have in teaching Italian and Italian Studies courses in North America? My solution was to research and teach about routes — i.e., Italy's global networks and, in particular, Italian-Chinese communications—, and to focus on addressing broader critical concepts or issues (e.g., migration, gender, etc.) that would resonate with humanistic scholars and students in general. In professional and teaching contexts, despite the micro-aggressions and paternalistic attitudes towards diversity people sometimes displays, (and I keep speaking out against them when opportune), I have also received immensely insightful advice from my mentors throughout the years. We don't know what the future holds for Italian Studies, but my experience highlights the value of transculturation as a research and teaching focus for the field.

**GAOHENG ZHANG** is Assistant Professor of Italian Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. He is a humanities scholar of migration, mobilities, multiculturalism, media, rhetoric, ethics, masculinity, and meaning-making. Zhang's forthcoming book from University of Toronto Press in June 2019, *Migration and the Media: Debating Chinese Migration to Italy, 1992-2012*, will be the first detailed media and cultural study of the Chinese migration from both Italian and Chinese migrant perspectives, as well as one of the few book-length analyses of migration and culture.



Chair, **DONNA CHIRICO** is Professor of Psychology and Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at York College/CUNY. Her initial field research in Ladakh, India studying moral and spiritual development constitutes the foundation for her ongoing research program exploring the nature of imagination as it relates to aspects of psychological development. One implication is the role of the imaginative process in educational attainment among Americans of Italian descent. The objective of this work is to understand the function of esoteric or transcendent imagination in personal development, attainment of valued goals, and psychological well-being. Related to this, matters of personal identity formation are explored to understand how ethnic identity contributes to the psychological development of the self, specifically within the Italian Diaspora. She has published numerous papers on these topics and is a sought-after speaker on these matters vital to the Italian diaspora.

Chair, **FRED GARDAPHÉ** is Distinguished Professor of English and Italian American Studies at Queens College and the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute. He is director of the Italian/ American Studies Programs at Queens College. His books include *Italian Signs, American Streets: The Evolution of Italian American Narrative* (Duke UP, 1996), *Dagoes Read: Tradition and the Italian/American Writer* (Guernica, 1997), *Moustache Pete is Dead!* (Bordighera, 1997/2010), *Leaving Little Italy* (SUNY, 2003), *The Art of Reading Italian Americana* (Bordighera, 2011), *From Wiseguys to Wise Men: Masculinities and the Italian American Gangster* (Routledge, 2013), and *Read 'em and Reap: Gambling on Italian American Writing* (Bordighera, 2017). He is co-founding, co-editor of Bordighera Press, publisher of *VIA: Voices in Italian Americana*, and editor of the Italian American Culture Series of SUNY Press.

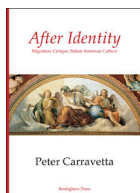
Chair, **JULIE VAN PETEGHEM** is Assistant Professor of Italian in the Department of Romance Languages at Hunter College, CUNY. She is Associate Editor of *Digital Dante* and the Editor of the Intertextual Dante project on the site. She earned her PhD in Italian and Comparative Literature from Columbia University; the Intertextual Dante project grew out of her dissertation research on Ovidian intertextuality in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. She is currently working on her first book, *Italian Readers of Ovid from the Origins to Petrarch*.

Organizer, **ANTHONY JULIAN TAMBURRI** is Dean of the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute (Queens College, CUNY) and Distinguished Professor of European Languages and Literatures. He is co-founder and co-director of Bordighera Press, past president of the Italian American Studies Association and of the American Association of Teachers of Italian. Concentrating on cinema, literature, and cultural semiotics, his later books include: *Una semiotica della ri-lettura: Guido Gozzano, Aldo Palazzeschi, e Italo Calvino* (2003); *Narrare altrove: diverse segnalature letterarie* 2007); *Una semiotica dell'etnicità. Nuove segnalature per la scrittura italiano/americana* (2010); *Re-reading Italian Americana: Specificities and Generalities on Literature and Criticism* (2014); *Scrittori Italiano[-]Americani: trattino sì trattino no* (2018), and *Un biculturalismo negato: la letteratura "italiana" negli Stati Uniti* (2018). He is executive producer and host of the Calandra Institute's TV program, *Italics*, produced in collaboration with CUNY TV. He also writes a column for *La Voce di New York*, "The Italian diaspora."

## NOTES

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# Bordighera Press on Diversity in Italian Studies



AFTER IDENTITY by Peter Carravetta

Thoughtful and wide-ranging, Peter Carravetta's *After Identity* probes the meanings inhering in cultural identity with especial emphasis on the shape-changing binomial of "Italian American." Carravetta's essays keenly examine and critique master narratives about nation and ethnicity through the elms of migration and exchange, brilliantly staking new claims for Italian American diaspora studies in the millennium.

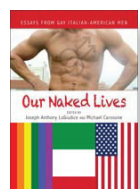
—MARY JO BONA



BOUND BY DISTANCE by Pasquale Verdicchio

Taking his cue from Pier Paolo Pasolini, Verdicchio suggests a "new way of being Gramscian." . . . *Bound by Distance* is most interesting and innovative when it points to the hybridity inherent in any creative cultural text. . . . [A] fascinating exercise in contemporary cultural studies.

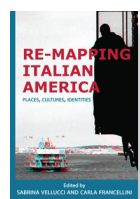
—LAURA RUBERTO



OUR NAKED LIVES edited by Joseph Anthony LoGiudice and Michael Carosone

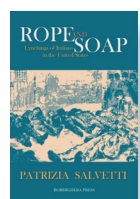
An amazing collection of essays that finally addresses an experience so many of us share. Evocative, moving, and entertaining, *Our Naked Lives* brings forth the stories of so many of us who've often felt left out in gay culture as well as in Italian-American culture, while simultaneously celebrating the richness of both.

—MICHELANGELO SIGNORILE



RE-MAPPING ITALIAN AMERICA edited by Sabrina Vellucci and Carla Francellini

[It] is high time to reformulate the notions of place, culture, and identity in order to arrive at a more dynamic definition of these concepts. This re-consideration allows for new paradigms, flexible enough to make sense of the most significant changes in the field of contemporary Italian American studies and suggestive of additional future perspectives in Italian American criticism.



ROPE AND SOAP by Patrizia Salvetti

Salvetti brings to light in her study the much broader dimensions of the lynching of Italian immigrants before 1945, from the South and Northeast to the West. None of the information included in her study has ever been explored in either mainstream American history or even in specialized studies on the subject.

—KEN SCAMBRAY



## Italian Diaspora Studies Summer Seminar™



The Italian Diaspora Studies Summer Seminar™ is a three-week summer program that takes place at Roma Tre University from June 17-July 5, 2019. It is designed to introduce participants (doctoral students and professors) to cultural studies of the Italian Diaspora from a variety of academic perspectives and to foster development of individual projects responding to the materials covered in the series of seminars in literature, film, and the social sciences. All participants will engage in a special research project of their choice.

The Seminar is open to professors and graduate students (doctorate; advanced MA students may be considered) from colleges and universities worldwide. This is a collaborative program between the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute / Queens College of The City University of New York and the Roma Tre University. Professors from these two institutions and others will comprise the teaching faculty of the entire three weeks. This is the fifth year of the Italian Diaspora Studies Summer Seminar.

The program will be accepting up to 20 participants for the 2019 summer program. Application forms are available by writing to [calandra@qc.edu](mailto:calandra@qc.edu).

Cost of room, board (breakfast and lunch), and tuition (12 Roma Tre credit hours): \$3,000. Air and ground travel are additional. For more information on the program schedule and faculty, write to the email address above.

*Fellowships of \$1,500 per participant are available.*