Information for the Preliminary Course in

ITALIAN

2019-20
This handbook gives subject-specific information for your Prelim course in Italian. For general information about your studies and the faculty, please consult the Faculty’s Undergraduate Course Handbook (https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv:modlang).

**SUB-FACULTY TEACHING STAFF**

The Italian Sub-faculty is part of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, and is at present made up of the following teaching staff:

Dr Marta Arnaldi (St. Anne’s College)  
Prof. Guido Bonsaver (Pembroke College)  
Dr. Vilma De Gasperin (Exeter College)  
Dr. Marco Dorigatti (St. Hilda’s College)  
Prof. Nicola Gardini (Keble College)  
Prof. Simon Gilson (Magdalen College)  
Prof. Elena Lombardi (Balliol College)  
Prof Francesca Southerden (Somerville College)  
Prof. Giuseppe Stellardi (St. Hugh’s College)  
Prof. Emmanuela Tandello (Christ Church)

*Language teaching*

Senior Language Instructor: Dr. Vilma De Gasperin  
Lettore di ruolo: Ms Angela Minini  
Lector: Dr. Teresa Fanco  
Language tutors: Ms Barbara Olla, Dr. Matthew Reza, Ms Valentina Tibaldo.

There are also several postgraduate students who teach on some papers.

You will have a tutor responsible for your progress and welfare in Italian, but you will not always be taught by that tutor as your course progresses. Your tutor (and indeed any of us) will be happy to help you with any difficulties you have at any stage of your course. Please do not hesitate to ask.
THE PRELIM COURSE

No matter what other subject you take in combination with Italian, the Preliminary exam papers (also known as the First Public Examination or FPE), which you will study in your first three terms in Oxford, will consist of language and literature, each weighing 50% of the Preliminary Examination. To view past exam papers, see: https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/oxam

I - Language

The language Papers are designed to cover a wide range of different language exercises each testing a different aspect of your ability to understand and use modern Italian to a high level. You will be taught grammar and given practice in all these exercises (translation from and into Italian, listening and reading comprehension, essay writing, as well as speaking) in a core of 4 hours of classes per week. Students will be streamed into four different groups according to the level of their language ability prior to starting the course at Oxford, which will be assessed by an online test that students will be asked to complete in late September, prior to their arrival at Oxford. Those without A-level (or equivalent) in Italian will be given intensive instruction and help to get their language up to the necessary level after three terms. There are two language Papers.

(I) Listening comprehension, Reading comprehension and Essay

1 weekly class of Listening Comprehension and Oral skills: you will practice listening to audio and video excerpts, including authentic TV news, interviews, documentaries. You will also practice speaking in Italian.

1 weekly class of Reading comprehension and Essay writing: you will be reading texts from a variety of authentic sources (literary texts, contemporary newspaper and magazine articles), develop your reading skills in order to summarize, answer content and stylistic questions on the text and rephrase linguistic structures in your own words. You will also develop your writing skills and practice writing essays (saggistica), creative writing (narrativa), summaries, diary notes, formal and informal letters.

(II) Prose (Translation from English into Italian) and Translation from Italian into English

(a) Prose: Translation into Italian
You will attend a weekly Prose class, where the teaching lays a strong emphasis on grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, register as well as on stylistic devices required to render more faithfully the style and structure of the original passage.

(b) Translation into English
You will attend a fortnightly translation class, where a variety of passages taken from twentieth-century literary works will be translated into English. The aim of this class is to develop and practice key translation skills in order to ensure a clear, fluent and idiomatic transfer of meaning from Italian into English.
Beginners in Level 1 will have an additional Reinforcement class per week, which will be open also to Level 2 students if they wish to attend it.

In addition to the above, students will also attend a weekly grammar class, for which the following grammar texts are recommended:

Beginners:


Post A-Level and Advanced Beginners:


The following reference grammar is highly recommended for more advanced aspects. You may wish to consult it in Libraries or purchase a copy later on in your studies.


**Oral:** In order to pass the Preliminary Examination, colleges must present, for each candidate, a certificate of attendance and active participation in oral classes. Candidates must attend and actively participate in no fewer than eight oral classes of at least one hour before the end of the fourth week of the Trinity Term of their first year. The classes may consist of reading aloud with attention to proper pronunciation and intonation, and/or discussion of passages dealing with issues in contemporary culture. The Senior Tutor of each candidate’s college is required to submit to the Undergraduate Studies Administrator, Modern Languages, Examinations Office, 41 Wellington Square a certificate endorsed by the Senior Tutor and a Modern Languages Tutor (the latter acting on behalf of the sub-faculty) stating that they have attended, and participated in, the required number of classes. Certification is required by noon on the Friday of 5th week of Trinity Term. Candidates who fail to satisfy this requirement for the June examination shall have their mark for each of the two written language papers reduced by ten marks. Candidates for a language paper or papers in the September examination who have not previously in that academic year satisfied the attendance requirement will be examined viva voce to demonstrate at least basic competence in the spoken language.
II – Poetry and Narrative Works

The literature papers are designed to introduce you to several different and perhaps unfamiliar literary forms and genres, and also to different types of literary analysis, from the strictly textual to a more contextual, historically based approach. You will have two-three hours per week of lectures on this aspect of the course. Your college tutor will arrange a combination of tutorials and seminars (between one and two hours per week) for which you will prepare and present written work in groups of two to three in tutorials, or in seminars of about eight. You will also be introduced to the study of cinema through a lecture series and an *ad hoc* tutorial and seminar.

(III) Poetry

(a) The Italian Sonnet

The sonnet was almost certainly invented in Sicily in the thirteenth century and moulded by other Italian poets, especially Petrarch (1304-74), into the most influential and important poetic form for several centuries of European literature. You will study an anthology of about 40 sonnets, from its origins to the present day, which will enable you first to get used to reading poetry if you have not done so before, and then to appreciate and analyse the complex and subtle forms of expression condensed into the sonnet's 14 lines. At the same time the range of the anthology will give you some idea of the history of Italian literature and so will help you to make more informed choices about the later part of your course. A copy of the sonnets anthology is available at the Faculty Office.

(b) Giuseppe Ungaretti and Eugenio Montale

Rather than studying a wide range of individual poems by different authors, as in (a), here you will concentrate on the work of two important and powerful twentieth-century Italian poets, Giuseppe Ungaretti and Eugenio Montale. This type of work will stand you in good stead for some of the papers after Prelims. In particular, you will study a selection of two seminal poetic collections, *L’Allegria* for Ungaretti and *Ossi di seppia* for Montale. The texts used are:

G. Ungaretti, *Vita d'un uomo: 106 poesie*, Mondadori (Oscar series) - in particular the selection from *L'allegria*.

The exam will consist of a combination of commentaries and essays.

(IV) Modern Italian Narrative and Cinema

For this paper you will study four of the most important narrative texts written in Italy since the Second World War. They have been chosen to offer a variety of literary forms, genres and techniques, of setting and of relations to the social and historical events which form their backdrop. In addition to being studied for their own intrinsic value, they will also be seen as a testing ground for different ways of writing, reading and analysing the literature of the previous century. Each will be discussed and set in context by a series of lectures. Since they are all relatively recent and approachable the close study of these texts will help a great deal in refining your language skills.

Italian Prelims information for students 2019-2020
The narrative texts studied are:

- Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo* (1947)
- Italo Calvino, *Il cavaliere inesistente* (1959)
- Anna Maria Ortese, *Il mare non bagna Napoli* (1953)
- Cesare Pavese, *La luna e i falò* (1949)

You will also study the award-winning film: Marco Tullio Giordana, *I cento passi* (2000)

This will be taught through a series of lectures and seminars in Hilary Term. You will be introduced to the basic tools of film criticism which you will be able to apply to the analysis of this contemporary film. Given the social context of the story - it is a biographical film about the life and death of Peppino Impastato, a young anti-Mafia militant - you will also be introduced to the social background of Sicily in the postwar years.

The exam will consist of essay questions on all the novels, and on the film. You will be expected to answer on at least four of these five items, and also to use background material (literary, intellectual and historical) where appropriate.

In Michaelmas Term, a series of introductory lectures on History and Society in 20th-century Italy will provide the social and historical background to the contemporary literary texts which you will study for your Preliminary Examination.

WHEN DRAWING UP THIS HANDBOOK WE HAVE TRIED TO BE AS ACCURATE AND CLEAR AS POSSIBLE.


COURSES AND REGULATIONS ARE CONSTANTLY UNDER REVIEW, SO ALWAYS CHECK ALSO WITH YOUR COLLEGE TUTOR TO CONFIRM WHAT IS WRITTEN HERE AND IN THE EXAMINATION CONVENTIONS.

IN ADDITION, DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR CLARIFICATION ABOUT THE COURSE FROM ANY MEMBER OF THE SUB-FACULTY WHO IS LECTURING TO YOU OR TUTORING YOU; WE WILL ALWAYS DO OUR BEST TO HELP.

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