

ITA 4501 – Italiensk i Vestens kultur

Course overview – module description

ITA4501 is a compulsory course for Master students of Italian Studies and allows them to delve into diverse aspects of Italian culture and understand why Italian culture has been so influential and crucial in the Western world. Among other things, emphasis was thus given to the following topics: Dante and Petrarch; Humanism and Renaissance art; important works in the European canon such as Machiavelli's *Prince* and Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*; Primo Levi and his testimony of the Jewish deportation; Italian cinema; Federico Fellini, Italo Calvino and Pier Paolo Pasolini. A historical contextualisation of the various periods under examination was also offered throughout.

Readings The reading list included academic articles on specific topics which were uploaded onto Fronter and primary texts ranging from the thirteenth to the twentieth-century were distributed in class. Primo Levi's books (*The Drowned and the Saved* and *If This is a Man*) were also a compulsory reading.

Teaching The course should have consisted of 14 seminars (this was decided before I took up my position in August). However, although students often actively engaged in the discussion, most meetings (at least 9-10) actually turned out to be lectures as a whole variety of complex topics needed to be introduced properly. Students highly appreciated this choice. See below suggestions for improvement.

Resources and infrastructure at the disposal of ITA5501 were adequate.

Examination Oral exam of 25-30 minutes with a number of questions encompassing the whole programme. A 20-minute presentation in class and a written summary of the presentation were necessary to be admitted to the final examination.

Learning outcomes and assessment Students proved to be able to express themselves in Italian with clarity and coherence also when discussing rather difficult and complex topics. They demonstrated a thorough understanding of the class's texts and concepts as well as a great capacity to discuss them critically. It was a pleasure to teach in this class as all the students attended regularly and were highly motivated and diligent. Some extra people (who did not enroll in the course) joined the class and enjoyed the lectures. Both the co-examiner and I were very impressed with the students' performance during the exam. The average grade was A and almost every parameter in the feedback was rated 5/5. All students were extremely positive about

the teaching (rated 5/5 both in the mid-term evaluation and in the feedback at the end of the course). A few comments said: 'Francesco er en eksepsjonelt dyktig foreleser!'; 'Svært fornøyd med læreren!'; and 'En fantastisk flink foreleser'.

Changes to previous ITA4501 courses Several changes have been made in the programme which has been rethought from scratch. The umbrella term of 'Italian culture' encompasses such a wide variety of periods and forms of art, etc., that a choice is no doubt necessary. New authors and themes have been successfully introduced: Primo Levi, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Renaissance art and Giorgio Vasari, Baldassarre Castiglione, to name but a few.

Suggestions for improvement Given the enthusiastic feedback received from all students, no major change is foreseen at this stage. As explained above, a number of lectures (around 9) will be introduced to replace some of the seminars.