

NYU ITALIAN STUDIES
FALL 2020

CULTURES AND CONTEXTS: ITALY IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

Prof. David Forgacs
Tuesdays/Thursdays 12:30-1:45

Almost anything one might think of as typically Italian, from pasta to pizza, neorealism to Sophia Loren, Armani to the mafia, has been made or remodeled by contact and exchange with the world beyond Italy. This does not mean that they are “not really” Italian. They are, but what has made them really Italian have been circuits of international travel and trade and the accompanying processes of naming and comparison by which non-Italians have defined certain things as essentially Italian and Italians have seen themselves mirrored in those definitions, modified them, or branded and marketed themselves through them. To look at how all this works, we start with an overview of ideas of Italy from classical antiquity to the eighteenth century. We then move to an analysis of travel to and within Italy, the internationalization of Italian food, drink, music and fashion, the Futurist assault on Italy’s cultural heritage, and the Italian film and television industries in a global system. We examine how movements of people, both out of and into Italy, have involved a remaking of collective identities. Finally, we turn to international relations and changing perceptions of Italy on the world stage as a result of foreign policies, wars, and membership of the European Union. Throughout, students are invited to reflect critically on how Italy’s culture, political identity, and icons have been produced over time, and to consider how far similar process are at work in other nations, including their own.

This course can count toward the "Culture & Society" track for Italian Studies majors/minor, Romance Languages majors, & Italian and Linguistics majors.