

School of Arts & Sciences - Spring 2025

Prospectus

Soccer Beyond the Field: Sport and Politics in Italian Culture

Course ID and 6-digit Number: ITAL 3080-401

Course Description

In recognition of the 2026 FIFA World Cup—hosted also in Philadelphia among other cities—we will explore soccer’s centrality in Italian Culture. Italy is a country where cultural traditions run deep, and among its most compelling cultural phenomena is the nation’s fervent attachment to soccer, or “calcio” as it is known in Italian. As historian John Foot claims, “You can’t understand Italy without understanding football, and you can’t understand football without understanding Italy.” Indeed, beyond its role as a popular sport, *calcio* is a cultural phenomenon reflecting and influencing political discourses, national identities, social values, and local communities. This course seeks to explore the significance of soccer in Italy, considering it not just as a pastime, but as a powerful cultural lens through which we can gain a deeper understanding of Italian society. We will analyze how *calcio* functions as a social institution that transcends regional differences, class divisions, and generational gaps, uniting diverse groups in shared experiences. At the same time, the course will investigate how soccer can also amplify differences, exclusion and racist behaviors. Moreover, we will explore how soccer relates to design, architecture, music, and soccer icons (Maradona, Totti, Messi, Zidane, etc.). By examining the cultural, historical, and social dimensions of Italian soccer, this course will provide a rich framework for exploring how soccer intersects with broader cultural narratives and social dynamics in Italy, as well as discussing crucial issues in Italian culture such as multiculturalism, immigration, and anti-racist movements. Students will be exposed to a diverse array of filmic, visual, literary, theoretical, and historical materials, including Gramsci, Barthes, Nussbaum, Pasolini, Saba, Soriano, Vázquez, Salvatores, and Sorrentino among others. **Course taught in English.**

At the end of the course, students will

- Gain a unique perspective on Italian culture and society
- Analyze the role of soccer in Italian culture, from films and literature to social media
- Understand how sports can be a lens of for examining broader cultural issues
- Develop critical thinking skills to analyze complex social phenomena

Class Structure

- Students will attend classes TR 3:30-5:30
- Students will complete out-of-class assignments as indicated by the instructor

Out-of-class activities may include

- Weekly forum discussion on Canvas

- Weekly readings
- Individual & Collaborative Research
- Short response papers

Grade Breakdown

- Attendance and Participation 30%
- Blogs/Forum 15%
- Presentations 10%
- Response Papers 15%
- Exams/In-class short essays 15%
- Final Project 15%

Essential Course Policies

- Access to Canvas
- No books are required. Course materials will be provided by the instructor

Any student may consult with [Student Financial Services](#) to find out what support they are eligible to receive to cover course costs or other items that ensure their health, safety, and secure learning environment.

Students needing accommodations of any kind should let the instructor know as soon as they are able.