

March 11, 2008

## ITALIAN DEPARTMENT RETREAT PART I

(Following the College request to implement the New Smith Design in our curriculum)

**Part I** – 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

- **Senior Faculty Members' Meeting**

In attendance: Giovanna Bellesia (Chair), Anna Botta, Alfonso Procaccini

1. Planning the Future of our Department.

Giovanna reported about the Chairs meeting which took place the day before and encouraged us to think creatively how to change department offerings in order to fulfill the goals expressed by the "Smith Design" document.

Among the issues discussed:

- How to strike an equitable balance between department service and college service
- How to strike an equitable balance between course offerings oriented to practical uses of Italian and courses which prepare students to graduate schools
- How to improve our already intense collaboration with cross disciplinary programs and possibly with the planned International Center
- How to meet the needs of the changing student population (the expected surge of Hispanic students in a few years, low income students and first-generation College students)
- Should we keep offering two majors?

Giovanna showed us how Geology Department presents its possible tracks in its brochure.

It was suggested:

- To contact the Education Department and collaborate to design a new concentration in Italian Pedagogy which would prepare the students to teach Italian in high school (although Italian is not taught in the high schools in the valley, nationally the number of schools which teach Italian is increasing)
- To devise possible tracks across departments and/or programs which students could specialize in (besides traditional tracks, such as art history, medieval studies, women studies, etc., new tracks such as immigration studies, translation studies, Mediterranean studies, etc.)
- To enhance the visibility of our collaboration across the college by designing a webpage which makes such information more readily accessible.

2. Giovanna reported about the visit that the new Dean of International Study, Leslie Hill, recently paid to our Junior Year program in Florence. It was her first visit to our Center in Florence. Apparently Leslie had a very satisfactory visit and would like to report about it to the Italian Department senior faculty members in a meeting to be scheduled soon. The students are very happy with their experience and the Fall semester courses.

Items on the agenda for that meeting:

Course offerings in Florence. Both Leslie and Giovanna agree that those courses should be better integrated into the Italian Department curriculum and there should be more continuity. Therefore the Italian Department should have a more active role in requesting courses to be taught in Florence at the Smith Center.

Course numbers. Leslie requested all courses taught at the Smith JY Center in Florence to be designed by a catalog number (like the courses taught at Smith). Those courses and their descriptions will eventually be posted on the revised Study Abroad website.

Our collaboration with Engineering. Apparently Engineering has expressed its interest in sending students to study Engineering courses in Italian universities or "politecnici". Giovanna forwarded information on The Maryland program in Genoa and we are awaiting a response.

Our collaboration with Bocconi School of Economics (Milan). Next year, for the first time, the International Study Office will send a student to study economics for a semester with another undergraduate program at Bocconi. We hope that this experience will open the way to other students in the future to study economics in Italy.

Our collaboration with Art (History and Studio Art). It was suggested to contact past JA in Florence director, John Moore (Art History), and ask for a meeting in order to discuss how to improve his department collaboration with the JY in Florence program.

Apparently there is some resistance by Studio Art (painting and drawing) faculty members to approve the courses taken in Florence as part of their students majors. Leslie Hill should also be attending the meeting. Giovanna suggested to ask Leslie to fund the visit of a faculty member from Studio Art to Florence with the purpose to draw a list of approved art studio courses.

Our collaboration with Biology. With Rob Dorit directing the JYA Paris program next year we have the ideal person in Europe who could help us set up credit-internships for our Biology majors. Rob is fluent in Italian and visit Italy every year. He is very interested in going to Florence to help science majors. He suggested teaching a history of medicine or science at the Sede. (History of Science was successfully taught when Victoria Poletto was director)

Our collaboration with other departments. Traditionally we have had strong ties with Music and Government. Possible ways of keeping and improving those collaborations were discussed.

Giovanna also reported that out of the 25 students who were admitted in next year's JY in Florence program, three students withdrew their applications (two took a leave of absence for personal reasons). At the moment, there are 22 students participating in the program.

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**Part II – 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.**

**Senior and Junior Faculty Members' Meeting**

In attendance: Giovanna Bellesia (Chair), Anna Botta, Alfonso Procaccini, Laura di Pofi, Bruno Grazioli, Maria Succi-Hempstead and Fabiana Viglione

Giovanna explained the new admission policies inaugurated this year in many colleges for financial aid students and the possible consequences such new policies might have for Smith College.

Giovanna reviewed the Department course offerings for next year in view of the final revisions to the catalog copy which are due soon.

Conversation sessions for students in intermediate level courses (ITL 220, 230 and 231). We decided to have longer sessions (45 min instead of 25/30 min) and bigger groups. ITL 220 and 230 will share conversation groups, ITL 231 will remain separate.

We decided to change the number of credits granted for ITL 220, 230 and 231 (students should receive 5 credits for each course because they meet an extra time for conversation sessions and we already grant 5 credits for ITL 110y and 111 that have an identical schedule).

We discussed different pedagogic approaches to teach the grammar at the 200 level. In particular, we decided to have tighter coordination between the survey course (ITL 250) and the writing course (ITAL 233). We reviewed different models which had been adopted in the past in teaching those two courses. Laura di Pofi presented two "schede" she had prepared as an example of how to integrate the teaching of the language with the teaching of literature. Everybody agreed that such structured approach would highly improve our teaching. We therefore decided that next year there will be only one 4 credit course ITL 250 (replacing the existing ITL 250 and ITL 233 courses), which will be team-taught by three teachers, one instructor teaching the literature material twice a week to the whole class (MW) and two instructors teaching the language portion on Fridays, with the class split into two concurrent sections, which will prepare students for the literary material analyzed the following week. The three teachers should closely collaborate in constructing a well-structured course.

Anna suggested the possibility of applying for a summer stipend to help developing such new course material (one tenured professor in collaboration with one or more non-tenure-track faculty members).

We decided to change our requirement for senior students who are majors in Italian Language and Literature (ITL) or Italian Studies (ITS) in order to give them a broader knowledge of Italian literary authors. At the moment, we require ITL students to take two semesters of the course on Dante (ITL 332 and 333) and ITS students to take only one semester of that course. Starting next year, we will require:

ITL majors: to take both ITL 332 (Dante) and ITL 334 (Boccaccio)

ITS majors: to take either ITL 332 or ITL 334.

Alfonso will prepare a new course description for ITL 334 (a previously taught course on Boccaccio has been on hold for over five years so we need to resubmit the course proposal to CAP)

Anna suggested that the Department could offer a one or two credits course (S/U), which would be team-taught by Department faculty members and outside (both College and Five College) guest speakers, on the model of the Italian Studies course offered years ago

by Alessandra di Maio at the University of Massachusetts, and on the model of Smith College courses such as AMS 102 and CLT 150. The purpose is to enhance the visibility of Italian on campus and possibly attract more students to study further courses in Italian language and literature. The proposal was accepted. Possible topics were suggested and finally we agreed, following Alfonso's suggestion, on the topic of Italian food and cuisine. Tentative titled: "Savoring Italy: Recipes and Thoughts on Italian Cuisine and Culture." Alfonso will prepare the course proposal. Anna will be the course organizer for the first time it will be offered (possibly in the spring of 2009, if the course is approved by CAP).

We reviewed and approved the revised new senior seminar ITL 348 proposal, the Construction of Italian Identity.

We reviewed and approved the new cinema courses, ITL 280 ('Style Matters: The Power of the Aesthetic in Italian Cinema') and ITL 281 (the extra one-credit class for students in Italian who are taking ITL 280) proposed by Anna. ITL 280 has already been approved by the Film Studies Board and will also be listed in the catalog under Film Studies courses.

All course changes must be communicated to Susanne Kuling and Danielle Ramdath in order to be approved by CAP.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Botta  
March 13, 2008