

The American University of Rome

ITL 502 - Multi-disciplinary Perspectives in Italian Language Teaching.

Psychology and Methodology in Italian Language Teaching

7-11 July 2025

Syllabus

This one-week seminar offers professional development for teachers of Italian. Composed of 30 academic hours, the seminar helps participants improve their teaching strategies through the study of innovative methods in language and culture instruction and creative ways to tackle learning problems.

Two credits. Pre-requisites: Bachelor's degree or 24 university credits in Italian.

Topics: motivation, creativity, social-emotional learning, intercultural competence, stress and fatigue in teaching

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Participants interested only in attending the course as auditors will receive a certificate of attendance at the end of the course

Participants interested in earning two credits will fulfill the following requirements:

Attendance and active participation in in-class activities and delivery of a written final project.

The grade for this course will be calculated in the following way:

1. Active participation in in-class activities: 50%
2. Final written project: 2,500 words in Italian: 50%
 - a) a theoretical introduction stemming from the content of the course
 - b) a teaching unit (e.g., language, literature, cinema, history) inspired by the theories and based on the practices discussed in class
 - (c) conclusion and reflections on the topics analyzed

Due by July 25

Program

Day I: Monday, July 7

Introduction to the course

The motivation

An educator's responsibility is to teach students with different talents, cognitive profiles, languages and cultures of origin, language skills, but most importantly with different expectations, learning strategies, and even emotions. Faced with such a variety of experiences, how can a teacher create an environment in which students can develop self-motivation?

Course participants will reflect on the psychological and pedagogical principles of motivation, explore strategies that stimulate it, and develop activities applicable in their school settings:

Students' motivation and interest

Teacher motivation

How to create a safe environment for students

How to develop activities that facilitate motivation

Day II: Tuesday, July 8

Creativity

A creative person loves exploration, throws himself or herself into experimentation, learns to overcome obstacles, finds solutions to new situations, generates change and transforms experiences into knowledge. Creating is a way of relating to individuals in diverse and dynamic ways.

Course participants will analyze and discuss the answers to the questions:

What is creativity?

Can we all be creative?

Why is creativity important in teaching?

What are some strategies for teaching creatively?

How to develop creative activities?

Day III: Wednesday, July 9

Social Emotional Learning (SEL: Social Emotional Learning)

Social-emotional learning is as important as any other topic in the curriculum because students learn to manage their own emotions and behaviors as well as the emotions of others through empathy and compassion. Social-emotional learning is a process designed to support students' psychological well-being and academic performance in five areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision making.

Participants will explore the principles of social-emotional learning, the role of emotions in the learning process and the basic elements of emotional intelligence:

Awareness
Self-monitoring
Empathy
Social intelligence

Day IV: Thursday, July 10

Intercultural competence

Experiences with new cultures, especially in international settings, generate surprise, discomfort, perplexity, and criticism that are followed by emotional stress and inappropriate behavior. These reactions are natural and predictable and therefore can be prevented and avoided. In reflecting on and discussing with students cross-cultural experiences that generate conflict or confusion because they are caused by a lack of knowledge or understanding of the host culture, teachers have a responsibility to provide students with the appropriate tools to understand what behaviors are socially acceptable and what type of conduct is culturally correct. Teachers are also responsible for guiding students to transition from a state of ease and familiarity with their own norms to one of initial discomfort followed by gradual acceptance of the socio-cultural values of the new culture.

Course participants will reflect on the principles of cross-cultural awareness, sensitivity, competence and communication by developing activities that promote:

Observation and description
Comparison and explanation
Investigation and reflection
Understanding and knowledge
Acceptance and respect

Day V: Friday, July 11

Stress and fatigue in teaching and how to avoid them

It is important for teachers to develop ways to cope with stress and strategies to maintain personal well-being, cope with change, and promote a positive work environment for themselves and their students. In the words of American historian Henry Adams 'A teacher influences eternity: no one can tell where his influence ends.' A stress-free teacher is the key to unlocking the full potential of every student.

Participants will examine the causes and effects of stress, learn to deal with conflicts and difficult situations, and turn professional fatigue into professional accomplishment by focusing on their strengths.