

Italian Department Online TA Handbook

I. Departmental Best Practices

- Attend departmental meetings.
- Collaborate in the creation of didactic materials with your colleagues teaching the same course.
- Reply to the emails sent by colleagues, administrators and coordinators as soon as possible.
- Maintain respectful, cordial and collegial relationships with colleagues.

II. Preparation at the Beginning of the Semester

A. Class assignment

- Instructors will receive a letter from the departmental administrator informing them about their teaching assignment.
- Instructors will receive their syllabus and textbook from their course coordinator.
- Instructors can find out the location of their classroom from the directory of classes: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/bulletin/uwb/>.
- Not all classrooms assigned by the Registrar are smart classrooms. It is the instructor's responsibility to check his/her own classroom early enough to be able to request a substitution if necessary. In this case, instructors should contact their course coordinator.

B. Class Policies

- All students in your language class should be officially registered for credit. There are no auditors permitted in language classes. If you are unsuccessful in or uncomfortable with conveying that to a potential student, please send them to the departmental office for clarification.

Go over the syllabus on the first day or in the first week of class, to reiterate the course expectations, policies on absence and grading, and to avoid any claims of "I didn't know I didn't see/get/read the syllabus"

- Instructors should clearly state at the beginning of the semester whether students are allowed to use technological devices in their classes. If they are, the instructor should

ensure that all technological devices are always used for pedagogical ends.

- Food policy: Food is not permitted in registrar-controlled classrooms.
- Students can miss class because of a religious holiday. Visit for more information <http://www.college.columbia.edu/facultyresources/religiousholidays>. Students would nevertheless remain responsible for the material covered in class on that day.

III. ADMINISTRATION OF YOUR COURSE

A. Student Textbooks

- Federal law requires that the University provide students with information on the textbooks their instructors expect or recommend that they purchase. The information must be posted online in time to help students choose the courses for which they will register. Instructors should use the tool we have created within CourseWorks to meet this requirement. To access that tool, simply log into CourseWorks at: <http://courseworks.columbia.edu>. The "Textbooks" tool can be seen as a tab on the left-hand panel within each course website.

It is important that each instructor enter textbook information into CourseWorks for every course taught. One of the features of the tool is a box that can be checked off if an instructor does not require or recommend that students purchase any textbooks for a course. Using that feature fulfills our obligation to inform students of the books expected or recommended for purchase if they do enroll in the course

- If the textbook comes with an online component, all students' textbooks should be new: A used textbook does not allow access to the textbook's online resources.

B. Canvas

- Canvas can be accessed via the following link: <https://cas.columbia.edu/cas/login?service=https%3A%2F%2Fcourseworks2.columbia.edu%2Flogin%2Fcas>
- Canvas contains a roster tab that allows you to visualize your class roster and download an excel version of it.
- In the roster section you can also find contact details of the Dean of each student. This information is important in case the student is underperforming or does not come to class (see section E below).
- Canvas offers a mail tool (in the menu, look for "New mail tool") with which you can send letters to all of your students at once.

IV. Teaching Practices

A. Best Practices

- Instructors should always get to class five minutes before the beginning of class, in order to set up the classroom equipment and begin right on time.
- Instructors should assign new homework to their students before, during or at the latest immediately after class. It is however suggested to assign homework at the end of each class.
- Instructors should grade students' assignments as promptly as possible. (See section VI on "Grading").

B. Sickness and Substitutions / Canceling Class / Make up Classes

- Classes should only be postponed due to an emergency.
- Please avoid scheduling medical appointments or conferences that overlap with your teaching duty (including reading days and the final exam period).
- If a TA has an imperative commitment such as a medical appointment or a conference and has to miss class, he/she should alert his/her course coordinator as early as possible in order to find a substitution.
- If a class was missed, a make-up class should be organized. Please contact your course coordinator and the department administrator to reserve a room for the occasion.
- If an instructor wants to have a review session after the last day of classes, they have to schedule it by early October for the fall semester and by early February for the spring semester (check with the Department for the actual date).

C. Teaching Methods

- Instructors are encouraged to foster collaborative learning among their students by utilizing instructional practices that facilitate students' interaction and collaboration.
- Instructors should strive to make students practice grammar points communicatively in order to improve their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.
- Listening and reading exercises beyond the ones offered by the course coordinator should be carefully chosen on the basis of their difficulty and meaningfully embedded in the lesson plans.
- Instructors should also appropriately convey cultural content through their classes. The use of *realia* (authentic objects/movie clips/songs/etc.) is often valued as being an efficient vehicle for such a learning goal.

- It is strongly recommended that, during each class, the instructors use a great variety of materials (videos, audios, power point presentations, games) to stimulate the attention and motivation of the students. For more specific information, please contact your course coordinator.

D. Conveying Italian Cultural Material

- Instructors are required to observe the principles of inclusive teaching, the respect for pluralism and differences in and outside of the classroom (see https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EiwxNNbCm6g1KPnvz9cwD33yIfNI8ctIMwVn9IW_A32Y/edit).

E. Underperforming Students

- In case a student is consistently receiving grades below B, instructors are encouraged to compile the Academic Difficulty Report, which is sent out to every TA right before mid-semester via email.
- If a student consistently misses classes, instructors are invited to contact the student's Dean and alert him/her of the situation. The name and email of the Dean can be found in Canvas (see section III, B).
- In case a student breaks the honor code and is found cheating during an exam or using online translators for the homework, instructors should contact their course coordinator as soon as possible to decide a course of action (see section VI, B).

F. Students with Disabilities

- Students with disabilities, who are requesting accommodation, have to alert instructors of their condition(s) at the beginning of the semester. Instructors can contact The Office of Disability Services for further assistance and their level coordinator for suggestions and support.
- There are official guidelines how to handle students' disability accommodation requests. In all cases, students have to register their condition with Disability Services, and should have the instructor sign a consent form at the beginning of the semester. The instructor will then receive a confirmation email from Disability services that will inform him/her of the requested accommodation.
For more information, please visit: <https://health.columbia.edu/disability-services>

G. Dealing with a Disruptive or Confrontational Student

- A possible first way to handle the situation could be to have the student come to office hours and ask him/her if there is something that the instructor could do to improve his/her learning experience.

- It is strongly recommended to have a witness during such office hours, for instance a fellow graduate student who is present in the graduate office during the meeting. This measure would allow to avoid escalation, and to have an objective third person account of the conversation.
- If the disruptive behavior continues/escalates, the instructor should contact the course coordinator immediately.

H. Instructors' Professional Relationship with Students

- Instructors should not entertain personal friendships or romantic relationships with their current students.
- Physical contact and inappropriate humor should be avoided.
- It is similarly discouraged to accept Facebook friend requests of one's own current student: An 'online friendship' might interfere with the instructor/student dynamic and the impartiality of the final grade.

I. Sponsoring departmental courses, major and minor

- All instructors are encouraged to suggest and invite the best students in their class to take Italian as a major/minor. It is suggested in these cases to also consult with the course coordinator and the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
- All Intermediate Italian instructors should be familiar with the Italian department's course offerings in order to be able to encourage students to take more advanced classes. It is suggested in these cases to also consult with the course coordinator and the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
- Instructors should be aware that the Language Resource Center offers Language Maintenance Tutorials open to all undergraduate students and designed to maintain and advance students' skills in various languages, among them Italian. For more information: <http://www.lrc.columbia.edu/lmt-for-students/>

V. OFFICE HOURS

- Office hours are usually held in the graduate office, Hamilton 504.
- During office hours, instructors explain the material covered in class, offer extra practice, and explore more advanced topics with their students.
- A typical office hours meeting should last around 15-20 minutes, less if other students are waiting.

- In case students require continuous attention, a TA should suggest to the student to study with a private tutor.
- The office door should always be kept open if no other colleague is in the office while the instructor is holding office hours.

VI. ASSESSING AND EVALUATING STUDENTS

A. Grade Rubrics and Grading Standards

- Instructors are encouraged to use the rubrics offered by the course coordinator for the grading of the written and oral performances of their students. The rubrics are to be found in the appropriate folder of the dropbox group related to the section taught.

- Grading Scale

95 - 100	A
90 - 94	A-
87 - 89	B+
83 - 86	B
80 - 82	B-
77 - 79	C+
73 - 76	C
70 - 72	C-
66 - 69	D+
65 - 1	F

B. Academic Honesty

- All students are bound by the university's honor code. If one of the students is cheating or not doing his/her homework on his/her own, instructors should contact their course coordinator to decide a course of action.

- Columbia's honor code can be found here:
<https://www.college.columbia.edu/honorcode> .

- Students should not be allowed to use Google translator or receive consistent help from their friends for their homework.

VII. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Support / Improving your own teaching

- Contact: Your section coordinator, your colleagues, or the Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning for pedagogical consultation.

- All instructors are highly encouraged to attend workshops held at the CTL for their professional development. Please visit: <https://ctl.columbia.edu/> for more information.
- All instructors are highly encouraged to attend workshops held at the Language Resource Center for their professional development. Please visit: <http://www.lrc.columbia.edu/> for more information.
- Instructors can at any time request a teaching observation for one of their classes in addition to the one that takes place in their first year of teaching. Email your coordinator and an observation will be scheduled. External observations can be scheduled through the CTL. See <https://ctl.columbia.edu/support/teaching-observations/> to schedule an observation.
- The CTL also offers small group teaching trainings, called microteaching sessions. To sign up visit <https://ctl.columbia.edu/graduate-instructors/programs-for-graduate-students/microteaching/>
- TEACH: <https://www.teachworldlanguages.org/about-us/>

B. Resources on PhD requirements

- For an overview of requirements, rules and regulations: <https://italian.columbia.edu/content/graduate-programs-0>
- For a worksheet that allows you to track the progress of your required course credits: http://italian.columbia.edu/files/italian/pdf/Italian%20studies%20degree%20requirements%20overview_3.pdf