ITAL 224: Constructing Today's Italy through the Lens of the Media

It is no longer possible to think about what Italy is today by reflecting on a handful of fixed topics and static images. In this world of a 24-hour news cycle where what is famous today is forgotten tomorrow, the Italian reality presented by the media is in constant transformation. So how does one engage with the media and come away with real meaning about the culture?

This course is an investigation into how Italians consume media not only to construct an understanding of the world in which they live but to acquire the tools and the skillset to continue their engagement with contemporary society. Factoring in students’ personal interests and tastes, discussions will address first their own culture’s habits and self-constructions in various media and then will consider the similarities and differences between Italian and American cultures as viewed through the lens of their respective social media.

Students will examine all forms of media: social media, advertising, music, television, newspapers and magazines. Their explorations will begin with conversations with native Italians living throughout Italy (online service TalkAbroad). Summaries of these conversations will be posted in their blogs on Blackboard and will allow other students to interact with them. At the end of each inquiry, students will present their findings in class presentations. They also will create advertisements, YouTube clips, music posts, and news blogs that reveal what they have learned about Italian media and culture. Vocabulary and grammar pertinent to the topics discussed will be integrated in all topics of conversation.