

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

Isabella Bertoletti

FIT, SUNY

My teaching experience has allowed me to develop a comprehensive curriculum vitae, as well as defined me as a committed language and literature professor to undergraduates. I have taught all levels of Italian at the Fashion Institute of Technology and a wide range of literature courses (both in English and in Italian), at C.U.N.Y. and at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art.

SPECIAL MULTI-MEDIA PROJECTS

While I continue to hold many aspects of traditional methodology of teaching foreign languages in high esteem, technologically based activities as those described below have enriched my classroom, my understanding of the possibilities for making our instruction more exciting, fulfilling and timely for our students and for ourselves as educators. This dimension of my growth and development as a teacher reflects also one of the focal points of F.I.T.'s Strategic Planning Initiative.

WEB SITES

Milan Web Site: <http://ibertoletti.com/Milan/> (Teaching Institute Grant, Summer 2006)
Italy Web Site: <http://ibertoletti.com/Italia/> (Teaching Institute Grant, Summer 2008)

Today's global framework requires students to develop a broad set of linguistic, cultural and interpersonal skills, including managing international professional relationships. To that end I endeavor to provide my students with tools that enable them to work with Italian speakers in a professional context and to broaden their skills in intercultural communication, to expand their awareness of the different values, cultural norms, history and world-views pertinent to the Italian workplace.

Two grants from the Teaching Institute have enabled me to spend time in Italy and to construct two original Web Sites for use with my classes and to share with my colleagues. My goals were two-fold: I wanted to address how to successfully communicate the values of Italian culture to students in a classroom far removed from the culture they are studying and to integrate technology into the learning environment, as I believe it significantly enhances students' attention, interest, and overall performance.

I began with the city of Milan because it is ideally suited to entice my students at F.I.T. into learning more about Italy, while also acquiring useful, practical information about a city that is so central to the international fashion industry.

The Milan site customizes real, tangible information and imagery and makes them available to be seamlessly integrated into my curriculum. During the summer of 2006 I photographed Milanese landmarks, surveyed all principal neighborhoods as well as weekly outdoor markets with hundreds of samples of goods and prices, storefronts and transportation around the city. I then built a website organizing all the images thematically and placing them next to a detailed map of the city of Milan, so that students could locate the images/landmarks, etc. I designed a series of class/homework activities that students would complete using materials posted on line. My students are asked to participate in virtual activities that take place in Milan and to get acquainted with the city, its neighborhoods, institutions, transportation, history and, by extension, with the history of Italy. The level of linguistic difficulty is adjusted to the individual needs of the classes I am teaching (from beginning to advanced). Students are asked to take up residence in an

apartment building in Milan. Activities range from exploring their new neighborhood (located within walking distance from the Romanesque Church of Saint Ambrogio, the University of Sacro Cuore and the Renaissance church of Saint Maria delle Grazie, which houses Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece *The Last Supper*), to furnishing their apartment, shopping for a new wardrobe, looking for a job, shopping for food, throwing a dinner party, going to the cinema, to a bar, restaurant and to *La Scala* to see an opera, planning and taking a business trip to another city in Italy of their choice, etc. Through these exercises (which employ my web site as well as the World Wide Web) students familiarize themselves with practical issues: cost of living, money exchange, schedules/business hours, holidays, the metric system, culinary history, climate, customs, literary and social history of Italy.

This project was followed up during the Summer of 2008 by the creation of a second website. This new website has discrete sections for Milan, Rome, Venice, Florence, Siena, Fiesole, Lake Como, Lake Orta and Cinque Terre. Each of the main cities is further organized by neighborhood/ landmark. Each section is linked to Google maps, which will enable students to find addresses, map itineraries and view satellite pictures down to the detail of each street. The main page of the site also has links to information on festivals, folklore, and special events.

I designed original exercises in which the imagery (with the support of the World Wide Web) will become an integral component of teaching. Through these exercises students will familiarize themselves with Italian geography, traditions, and history, as well as practical issues such as cost of living in Italy, money exchange, schedules/business hours, holidays, the metric system, culinary history, climate, habits, literary and social history.

Since the web sites have been running they have become a point of reference for my classes as well as for my colleagues in Italian. I have also been asked by Dr. Georgianna Appignani to share them with students heading to Milan and Florence to attend classes at the *Politecnico* and *Polimoda* to enable them to be better prepared for their departure. I myself use the site to recruit students (and for pre-departure orientation sessions) for the classes my department currently offers in Florence during Winterim and during the Summer.

iPod pilot-project. (Coordinated by the Center for Excellence in Teaching).

Upon the approval of my proposal by the CET, iPods were made available by the Center for Excellence in Teaching to my students and myself in an advanced Italian Conversation class. This was a group of fifteen students, four of whom had spent at least one school year in Italy (two in Florence at Polimoda, one in Rome at the American University Campus and one in different locations training as a classical violinist).

Those students who had not studied in Italy prepared a series of questions for their classmates about their experiences in Italy. The class was then divided into four groups, each of which interviewed one "expert." The Q & A was digitally recorded and distributed to the whole class.

Students participated quite enthusiastically and I was very pleased with the recordings. I have also utilized their interviews for activities in the FIT Foreign Language Multi Media Center with other Italian classes.

Fordham University.

I participated in the creation of the first audio CD of readings from the works of women poets in the Italian Renaissance. The CD accompanies Dr. Irma Jaffee's *Shining Eyes, Cruel Fortune. The Lives and Loves of Italian Renaissance Women Poets* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

**INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS-COURSES TAUGHT IN FLORENCE (Summer 2007,
Winterim 2009, Summer 2009, Winterim 2010)
Use of Blogs as a pedagogical tool.**

<http://fitfirenze2007.blogspot.com/>
<http://fitfirgen09.blogspot.com/>
<http://fitestate09.blogspot.com/>
<http://firwin10.blogspot.com/>

At F.I.T. I pioneered my Department's "Italian in Florence" and "Italian Conversation in Florence" courses in Italy (both in the summer and during the winterim session in January). In Italy, my responsibilities have extended beyond the classroom to include planning for and taking my students on cultural walks throughout the city (e.g., "Dante's Florence"); field trips and cultural excursions (e.g., "Following Boccaccio's footsteps from Santa Maria Novella to Fiesole"), taking students to the theatre (e.g., "Maggio Musicale"), etc.

For my Italian 132 and Italian 122 (taught in Florence in May/June 2007, January 2009, May/June 2009 and which I will teach It 122 in Florence again in January 2010) I used blogs as a pedagogical tool. The rationale behind the use of blogs in these classes is to make information and communication technologies an integral component of an experience that was meant to be "global" in scope.

The blog is an excellent tool since it is a personal Web log that allows the owner to write entries and display them to the world via the Web. The entries are posted in reverse chronological order such that the most recent one appears first. These entries can include hyperlinks and images; readers can submit comments, which are then available to other readers.

On the first day of class with my help, my students set up personal blogs on Blogger.com. These blogs are linked to my class-blog, which functions both as a central hub and a repository of content for our cultural explorations (museum visits, cultural and literary tours) with links to cities, images, virtual museums, texts by Dante and Boccaccio (with audio files), practical information about Florence, etc. Blogs are used throughout the course in Florence as electronic "learning/experience journals" to stimulate the student reflection on the course content and to make the students more explicitly aware of their own Italian experiences and learning. By having students articulate what they had learned through writing regularly in an electronic log or journal, these blogs offer them the opportunity to save and share with one another a significant body of knowledge and experience, and to keep their families back at home informed on a regular basis of their experiences and progress abroad.

**TECHNOLOGY PRESENTATIONS/WORKSHOPS/ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED FOR
THE FIT FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**

From 2001-2003 I conducted significant research on behalf of my department on various state-of-the-art foreign language multimedia centers. In the New York area I visited the language laboratory at Stony Brook, Hunter College and Marist College. I had ongoing consultations with Dr. Ledgerwood, Ms. Marino and Dr. Tazari, Directors of the language laboratory at Stony Brook, Hunter College and Marist. I wrote extensive reports on this research for my colleagues.

In Spring 2001 I received a grant from the Teaching Institute of FIT to arrange for the visits to our department by two of the multi media specialists I met during my research: Dr. Mohamed Tazari, Coordinator of Instructional Technology at Marist College and Ms. Anna Marino, the director of The Leona & Marcy Chanin Language Center at Hunter College, CUNY. Each was invited to conduct a faculty workshop on the following themes: "The Internet: A Goldmine of Foreign Language Resources" and "Creating Web-based Activities for the Foreign Language Classroom."

I conducted a two-hour orientation (March 9, 2001) open to all foreign language faculty. I prepared a questionnaire and a series of handouts and began sharing with my colleagues up-to-date information on what the Internet has to offer to students and teachers of foreign languages. I highlighted some of the features available on the World Wide Web for enhancing foreign language instruction and provided colleagues with examples of Web assignments used in Italian language classes. Materials, handouts for the workshop and my research reports were given to all full-time colleagues.

HTML/Cascading Style sheet workshop. Through the Teaching Institute I invited Professor Patrick Writt (Department of Science and Math) to conduct an all-day workshop on web design for the department "Basic Features of HTML and CSS": March 24, 2001 10am-6pm.

BLOG FOR ITALIAN INSTRUCTORS

Since 2001 I have created (and maintained) a blog for all Italian instructors which is a repository of our exams, syllabi, grammar drills, class activities (for Italian 111, 112 and 122) and best practices. This has proven a very effective way of coordinating some of the day to day activities and assessment of our first year courses.

I believe that the activities outlined above have helped the Department of Foreign Language in its delicate transition from traditional, analogue technology to a cutting-edge multimedia mode of language instruction and contributed to the planning, coordination and successful implementation of our Foreign Language Multimedia Learning Center and its accompanying Multimedia Faculty Development Center. This center, in turn, has revolutionized our course delivery and greatly impacted the underlying pedagogy of our language courses.

NEW COURSES CREATED AT FIT

Created a new Italian elective course IT 3XXX *Writing Women of the Italian Renaissance*. (Course approved by the college in Fall 2009).

Created a new Italian elective course: Italian 311 *Italian for Business*. (Course approved by the college in Spring 2009 and for Gen. Ed. Certification in the Foreign Language Category in Fall 2009).

Created, in collaboration with the Department colleagues James Cascaito and Andrea Casson, a new department course offering in Italian: IT 132-*Italian in Florence* (course approved by the college in Fall 2001).

Created, in collaboration with the Department colleague James Cascaito, a new department course offering in Italian: IT 223-*Italian Conversation Two* (course approved by the college in Spring 2000).