



Visiting Professor: Fraser Ottanelli  
Activity report on my stay as visiting professor, April 20-May 26, 2022  
Laurea Magistrale in Scienze Storiche  
Storia Culturale dell'età contemporanea, 2021-2022

During my stay I carried out my teaching duties as specified in the invitation letter issued by the Direttore di Dipartimento. Specifically, I taught mainly within the framework of the Storia culturale dell'età contemporanea in the LM course. With my colleague Prof. Patrizia Guarnieri, we agreed to offer a class on migration history in the context of the United States, which allowed us to provide students with a dual concentration: the first dealt with the general history of mass migration. Focusing on the years from the onset of mass migration at the end of the 19th century to the present, the class explored the connections that link migration and the development of national and ethnic identities. The second concentrated on the experiences of the small group of intellectuals that crossed the Atlantic to flee Nazi and Fascist persecution. All the classes were team-taught with Professor Guarnieri and were divided between brief lectures, PowerPoint presentations, and class discussion based on common readings. We made extensive use of the Moodle of Corso di Storia culturale

My part of the class was organized around the following topics:

1. Discussion of new theories, approaches, and patterns in migration history
2. Different patterns of migration (voluntary and involuntary) during the British Colonial period
3. Industrialization and migration from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East from the early 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries
4. African American migration from the South to the industrial north, 1900 to 1945

5. Immigration from the end of World War II to the present
6. Finally, an overview of the evolution of US migration policies with a specific focus on nativism, and xenophobia from 1882 to the present.

At the end of the class--based on the lectures, PowerPoint presentations, readings, and class discussions--students were expected to comfortably address broad issues relating to the following questions:

- 1) Looking at the period extending from colonial days to the present, explain the various reasons that lead migrants to leave their countries of origin and chose to settle in English North America and (later) the United States.
- 2) Focusing on the years between the late 19th and early 20th centuries and looking at both sides of the Atlantic: a) describe the changes taking place in Europe and in the US that encouraged increased migration; and b) where did most immigrants come from and why did they choose to emigrate
- 3) From the onset of World War I to the end of World War II, what were the economic, social, and political circumstances that led African Americans to flee the South as well as the challenges and opportunities they encountered in the North.
- 4) Taking a comparative approach to mass migration and specifically to the experience of global Italian migration, what role did labor, unions, and working-class parties have in shaping the identity of immigrant workers?
- 5) Using the experience of Italian migrants as a case study, how has the fear of foreigners and the desire to define and protect "American" identity evolved from the late-1800s to 1924?
- 6) Explain the relationship between the post-1945 Cold War rhetoric and passage of the Displaced Persons Act in 1948, the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952.

7) Some claim that it is impossible to distinguish between refugees and immigrants--that they are often one and the same. Based on the materials presented and discussed in this course, provide an explanation as to whether you agree or disagree with this statement.

8) Compare immigrants from the early 20th century to those arriving now. Synthesize the differences and similarities in their reasons for leaving their countries and their choice of destinations.

Lectures were delivered in English. Class discussions were conducted mostly in Italian. All classes were jointly taught with Professor Guarnieri for a total of 36 hours. In addition to class-time, I gave a two-hour *Lectio Magistralis* in English titled “Monuments, Memory, and the Italian American Community: Christopher Columbus, Italo Balbo and Beyond,” part of the “percorso di eccellenza.” I have since been informed by Prof. Guarnieri that a student selected this argument for her thesis. Consequently, I shared with the student additional bibliographical information. I also spoke and communicated via email with several students from the class who wanted to pursue research project related to the relationship between migration, politics, and memory.

Finally, I was available to other Professors in the department for invited lectures. Unfortunately, no one chose to avail themselves of this opportunity.

I wish to conclude by thanking Professor Guarnieri and the Department for the invitation. From a pedagogical perspective this opportunity provided the stimulus to reframe my teaching in ways that would account for different cultural assumptions and references. One thing is to teach migration history in the U.S. (a receiving country), the other is to engage with the same subject with students from a country that is at the same time a place of origin for migration (several students had emigrants among their family members) and is dealing with the challenges typical of multi-cultural societies. The class benefited greatly from being team-taught with Professor Guarnieri. Our separate concentrations fully complemented each other allowing us to transition seamlessly from the general to the particular in ways that students clearly found enlightening. However, the best part of the class were the students. The ones I interacted with were terrific. While the course was taught mainly in English, required a significant amount of reading along

with frequent class discussions, many students excelled. I found them to be active and penetrating commentators all the while engaged, discerning, and open to new ideas. Their questions showed a thoughtful consideration of the materials presented as well as attention to larger issues.

Sincerely,

*Fraser Ottanelli*