In this course we will study cultural exchanges between Italy and other countries through a discussion of Italians' journeys of exploration from the Middle Ages to the 1700's, as well as through the analysis of modern colonialism and migration. These themes will be connected to a more general consideration of intercultural relations and cultural Otherness.

Students will be encouraged to reflect upon such questions as: How does the cultural background of the traveler influence her/his perception of the new place? How does the contact with a different culture influence the traveler's own identity? How can cultural exchange help fighting stereotypes? What is the price of integration? Finally, in the case of the Italian migration to North America, what is the evolution of Italian American culture in the United States?

The first part of the course will discuss the experience of Italian famous travelers, including Marco Polo's journey to the Far East and Casanova's description of his wanderings throughout Europe. The second section of the course will be devoted to discuss literary works and films on the Italian American experience. Particular attention will be given to autobiographical writings by Italian American authors and to Francis Ford Coppola's film trilogy inspired by Puzo's The Godfather.

Students in this class will write three short essays, a final exam, and participate in an oral presentation.

Textbooks (all available at IMU, TIS, and Eigenmann Bookstores):
Giacomo Casanova, The Duel (Hesperus Press)
Ennio Flaiano, The Short Cut (Northwestern University Press)
Pascal D’Angelo, Son of Italy (Guerinica Editions)
Pietro di Donato, Christ in Concrete (Signet Classic)
John Fante, 1933 Was a Bad Year (Black Sparrow Press)
Leonardo Sciascia, The Day of the Owl (New York Review of Books)
Albert DeMeo - Mary Jane Ross, For the Sins of My Father (Broadway Books)

Attendance is mandatory. Unless you have a documented illness or serious family emergency, your absence will be considered as unexcused. For each unexcused absence beyond two, the final course grade is lowered by 5%. Arriving after the door is shut results in a “late”. Three “lates” equal one unexcused absence.