Excavating Language: Linguistic Connections across Latin, Italian, and English
ENG 3343/ LNG 3813 / ENG 3323 / ENG 6033

In this course we will explore the linguistic influence which Latin and Italian have had on English through time, and, briefly, the influence which has flowed from English to Italian, as well. After an introduction in Rome, we will begin with an examination of the Proto-Indo-European roots of both the Italic languages and the Germanic languages, and what the two language families share because of their common heritage from their ancient linguistic ancestor. We will examine the archaic layers of Latin and its “cousin”, Umbrian, spoken in territories near to Urbino in ancient times. We will then visit one of the most notable sites of the Umbrian language, Gubbio (Iguvium), where a number of ancient bronze tablets were found. We will proceed to study the linguistic effect of the spread of the Roman Empire, the role of Christianity in the diffusion of particular trends, and the linguistic implications of the decline of Roman influence and increase in the role of Germanic tribes such as the Goths and the Franks. We will then focus on the influence that the Romance languages and Latin itself had on the Germanic languages, and English, specifically, during late medieval and Renaissance times. We will examine Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet for its linguistic content, particularly the influence of Latin on Shakespeare’s language. After a brief look at the role of academies and linguistic prescriptivism springing from classical studies, we will end with a look at the influence that English and Italian have exerted on each other in recent years.

Books:
Devoto, Giacamo. 1978. The languages of Italy.
Crystal, David. Think on my words.
Shakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet. (any edition)

Thursday, March 15 Introduction (in Rome)
Ancient Roman remnants of Indo-European

Monday, March 19 Foundations: Indo-European connections among Italic, Germanic, and Celtic languages

Tuesday, March 20 Osco-Umbrian and other Italic varieties
Wednesday, March 21 Spread of the Roman Empire and Christianity

Thursday, March 22 Ancient Germanic remnants of Indo-European; Grimm’s Law
Friday, March 23 Day trip to Gubbio (ancient Iguvium) to visit the Bronze Tablets and the town

Monday, March 26 Germanic influences on the Empire and their effect: Visigoths and Ostrogoths; The division of the Roman Empire into East and West

Tuesday, March 27 The formation of the Romance languages; The Charlemagne
Sprachbund; The mutual influences of Germanic and Romance languages

Wednesday, March 28 Medieval Latin; The linguistic effect of Christianity on Europe, and on Old and Middle English

Thursday, March 29 The Normans in England and in Italy; Effects on Middle English and Italian

Friday, March 30- Monday, April 2
Trip to Florence and Siena
Lecture in Florence:
The Renaissance: A return to classical learning and language;
The Renaissance in Italy; Linguistic effects of the Renaissance across Europe

Tuesday, April 3 (in Urbino) The Renaissance in England: Early Modern English
Wednesday, April 4 Shakespeare’s reliance on Latin as a resource: *Romeo and Juliet*
Thursday, April 5 The establishment of Academies and the Age of Reason:
Prescriptivism in Language

Monday, April 9 Modern mutual influences of Italian and English
Tuesday, April 10 Short field work project: interview Italians to explore English influence
Wednesday, April 11 Presentation of research for term papers
Thursday, April 12 Final exam

Monday, May 7 12-page term paper due for undergrads,
16-page research paper for senior seminar students
18-page research paper for graduate students
(submitted on-line or in hard copy)