ITALIAN STUDIES COLLOQUIUM
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BROWN UNIVERSITY - UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA
DOCTORAL EXCHANGE
"HUMANISM, NEO-HUMANISM, POST-HUMANISM IN THE AGE OF MEDIA"

Gian Mario Anselmi, "Rinascimento, tradizione umanistica e radici della modernità"

"The Renaissance Humanist Tradition and the Roots of Modernity"

G.M. Anselmi is Professor of Italian Literature at the University of Bologna and the chair of the Department of Classical Philology and Italian Studies. He is the author of several influential studies of Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Tasso and the humanistic tradition. He collaborates with several Italian publishing houses and directs various scholarly journals, including Ecdotica and, with Elisabetta Menetti, Griseldaonline. Among his recent publications:
**Abstract:** I will focus on the connections between the humanistic and Renaissance tradition and the origins of modernity, trying to understand how this periodization was born and what narrative and historiographical forms helped consolidate it. My main frame of reference will be provided by the work of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, understood as archetypes of our modern attitudes toward "reality" and "realism," as they are nowadays conceived, at the center of a renewed philosophical debate after the crisis of postmodernism and critical relativism. This will also allow us to discuss the new anthropology emerging from the Italian Renaissance tradition, from Petrarch to Alberti, which aims to establish a new human identity, in dialectical relationship with classical culture, critically reviewed since the time of Dante and Medieval juridical thought. My frame of reference, therefore, will not be exclusively "literary" but will be linked to contemporary debates, such as: passions as the true engine of our ethical choices (Nussbaum); the body and its affordances (Camporesi); the exercise of arms and the tension toward peace in the formation of the modern "gentleman" at Court and in the Academies, since Boccaccio (Quondam). Our analysis will obviously take into account the peculiar centrality of Literature in the Italian tradition, and of literary education as a fundamental gateway to knowledge.

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**Humanism, life defense, tumults in late 16th century Italy (and beyond)**

Angela De Benedictis is Professor of Early Modern History at Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna, School of Arts, Humanities, and Cultural Heritage, Department of History and Cultures.

Abstract: "Insurrection" has been a particularly hot topic since the Spring of 2011, against the backdrop of the so-called “Arab Spring,” also referred to as “tumult” and “revolt,” and the widespread transatlantic “Occupy” movements. In a talk at the Brera Academy in Milan entitled Teaching Insurrection, Bolognese philosopher, media scholar and political activist Francesco Berardi, internationally known as “Bifo,” elaborated on the standard dictionary definition of the word “insurrection”: "the word insurrection means to rise up, it means to take on ourselves our dignity as human beings, as workers, as citizens in an uncompromising way. But it also means something else. It means to fully unfold the potency of the body and of collective knowledge, of society, of the net, of intelligence. To entirely unfold what we are, in a collective way." For a scholar interested in European and Italian Early Modern History, as I am, the possibility of being an eye-witness to these movements and their evolution offers the challenging opportunity to reconsider the timeless scholarly topic of “early modern revolts, riots, rebellions” from a variety of new perspectives. One of these perspectives aims to discover the early modern meaning of the word “uprising” (“sollevazione”) since “insurrection,” its closest equivalent, was not yet in use then. In early modern Italy and Europe people who took part in an uprising (even if it were an entire city or a town, as a multitude) were usually charged with the crime of lèse-majesté. Those who were taken, arrested and imprisoned as personally responsible for the crime of uprising had to undergo examination by a judge. In most cases, their answers to these examinations represented a narrative of the facts. It is in these narratives that we historians can find the explanation of the word (and of the meaning) of “uprising” and “insurrection.” My specific case-study focuses on an uprising which took place in Urbino (then under the Lordship of the Montefeltro) in the year 1572. The story is interesting also because of the pronounced contradictions between, on the one hand, the citizens with their political and social needs and, on the other, the Court which included well-known Renaissance humanist “intellectuals.” Both this case-study and the general issue (the crime of lèse-majesté) are a topic on which a distinguished Brown University Professor of History, William F. Church, worked in the last years of his life, according to the records kept in the archives at the Hay Library. Quoting the words of one of the historians (Ralph E. Giesey) who discussed the topic with Church a few days before his death (1977), the case-study of Urbino 1572 could be "a new-fashioned way of doing those old-fashioned things like legal and political history," a new way that takes into account suggestions coming both from the “Law and Literature” movement and the new philosophical trend of “Italian Theory.”

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Abstract: My paper focuses on the process of modernization in Contemporary Italy. It is well known how in this process economic factors (such as industrialization, development, GDP and consumption growth) interact with civic factors (democratization, political participation, individual and collective freedoms) and social factors (education, welfare, etc.). Within each European country, these factors have combined in different ways, contributing to the specific profile of each individual society. Twentieth century Italian history is largely characterized by a difficult modernization in a country at the periphery of Europe, economically underdeveloped and weighed down by often archaic social relationships. I will analyse the specific characteristics of Italian modernization, focusing in particular on the post-WWII period, in which Italy experiences extraordinary economic growth and social transformation, closing the gap with the most advanced and modern countries of Western Europe, from a particular point of view: the changes in diet and alimentary habits and tastes. Food, both in its specific typologies (pasta, meat, cold cuts, vegetables, dairy products, sweets, etc.) and also in its equally relevant modes of consumption (domestic, in the street, as part of family or community rituals, etc.) is one of the most significant indicators of social and cultural change in a given country. This observation is still more relevant in light of the striking contrast between Italy's reputation for culinary and gastronomic excellence, famous around the world, and the poverty of the Italian diet until the very recent past.