



La Tavola Italian Club

created by La Tavola Executive Board

LE ORE DI CONVERSAZIONE

WRITTEN BY NICO EDWARDS-TESTOLIN

La Tavola Italian Club hosted two conversation hours a week, Tuesdays at 2pm and Wednesdays at 12pm in the Language Commons in STV 227B. Italian students and other members of La Tavola gathered to play Italian themed games, paint, hold holiday themed events, and most importantly practice and study their Italian outside of the classroom! We value our tight-knit groups at conversation hour, and we look forward to more fun, themed conversation hours next semester!



LANGUAGES WEEK

WRITTEN BY LUKE FAULKNER

For Languages Week, each language club was tasked with decorating the hallway with something special to the culture. Additionally, events were hosted throughout the week by the clubs. The Italian club worked hard to recreate *I Portici*, *The Fountain of Neptune*, and *the Two Towers*. The Portici, are walkways throughout the city of Bologna that are a staple of culture in the city. Having been there for centuries it is part of what Bologna is known for, and has evolved over time. We created them by cutting cardboard into the shape of the Portici and then covering it with paper over and painting it. Our president, Leah, designed the Fountain of Neptune! The Fountain of Neptune was then covered with paper maché by the club. The Fountain of Neptune is also a well-known sculpture found in Piazza Maggiore in Bologna. Finally, with cardboard, we created the two towers in Bologna. Although hundreds of years ago there were many towers in Bologna, these were the two tallest and most famous towers that still stand to this day. During the same week, we had a Carnevale celebration, and hosted a mask painting night where we learned about Carnevale and how it is celebrated around Italy. We snacked on Italian sweet treats and painted masks. It was a wonderful time!



ISU IN BOLOGNA

WRITTEN BY ROSA BAKER

Studying abroad, specifically in Bologna, was the best experience of my life. To this day, I am extremely grateful that I was able to spend three weeks in Italy, learning about Italian language and culture. The ISU in Bologna program was and is an amazing program that allows students to completely immerse themselves in a new culture that betters your understanding of the world around you. I took classes at a school called Academia Lingue that was filled with students from different countries which allowed me to meet new people and step out of my comfort zone. The teachers, including Dr. Edwards and Dr. Sciubba, were amazing and helped us adapt to the new environment with ease. They provided us with great knowledge and made learning fun and exciting. Being abroad improved my skills immensely, and I became more confident in the language every day. While we weren't in the classroom, we spent time exploring Bologna and learning the rich history of the city. We went on multiple tours and mini trips to nearby cities like Florence and Rimini, and even went to a Gelato University and learned to make gelato from scratch. There was also plenty of time for us to be independent and do things ourselves or with friends we made along the way. My friends and I went to dinner multiple times a week, sat out on the terrace to enjoy aperitivo, and even took a weekend trip to Monterosso in Cinque Terre. I will never forget my experience while studying abroad and I recommend it to anyone and everyone who is able to do so! For more information: <https://lan.illinoisstate.edu/study-abroad/bologna/>

CERIMONIA PER I NOSTRI LAUREATI

WRITTEN BY LEAH BRECHEISEN

During the last week of class for the spring semester, La Tavola Italian Club gathered together to honor the students graduating with their Italian Studies minor. After a welcome by the upcoming new presidents, Luke and Rosa, Dr. Edwards congratulated graduates on completing their studies in various majors, with a shared secondary focus on Italian, also highlighting that many experienced Italian culture firsthand in Bologna. Dr. Edwards celebrated their deepened understanding of Italian traditions, values, and love for life, and concluded with the gifting of a laurel crown.

Three poems by Gianni Rodari were read by Dr. Edwards, Dr. Ferrari, and Rosa. These were *Che cos'è la felicità*, *Filastrocca dell'amicizia*, and *Una scuola grande come il mondo*. Our exec board spent the evening the night before making corone di alloro, and these were presented to our graduates during the ceremony. Italian flag chords were also presented for them to wear with their robes at commencement!

The awarding of a *corona di alloro* (laurel crown) traces back to ancient Greek and Roman tradition. Laurel branches are a sacred plant in Greek mythology, symbolizing the honor and immortality of Daphne, a nymph. The Greek and Roman traditions associated laurel with victory, triumph and honor, presenting these *corone di alloro* to successful military commanders, athletes, and emperors. The tradition of presenting these crowns to university graduates was formalized by the University of Padua several centuries ago, and today they represent the hardwork, dedication, and achievement of the graduate's intellectual success.

The *Cerimonia per i laureati* was such a sweet way to celebrate our graduates and their hard work, and to particularly honor their involvement with La Tavola and the Italian program! Congratulazioni a tutti i nostri laureati! Vi auguriamo il meglio per la vostra prossima avventura.



WHY SHOULD YOU DO AN ITALIAN MINOR?

WRITTEN BY COURTNEY CAIRO

As an Italian American with an immigrant nonna, I have had the privilege of experiencing traditional Sunday dinners with my family at her home. These occasions were an opportunity to be immersed in both the language and culture, as my nonna would speak to us in Italian, and we would share in the rich flavors of our heritage. I come from a large family; my father's mother comes from Cosenza, Calabria, while my mother's grandmother is from Sicily. Both of my parents grew up as Italian Americans, deeply surrounded by this cultural influence.

During my childhood, I never had a strong desire to learn the language or explore the cultural aspects I had already experienced. However, this perspective changed when I traveled to Italy for the first time with the National Italian American Foundation. I was one of only 24 college students selected from thousands of applicants for this unique opportunity. The purpose of the trip was to reconnect with one's roots and better understand the history and heritage that shaped our identities. We journeyed across Italy, experiencing not only the culture and cuisine but also gaining a deeper appreciation for our history.

Now, as I am a student pursuing an Italian minor, I can confidently say that this decision has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my college experience. What started as curiosity sparked by that unforgettable trip has grown into a genuine passion for the language, history, and traditions of Italy. Studying Italian has given me the tools to not only connect more deeply with my heritage but also to communicate more meaningfully with my nonna and extended family members.

One of the most transformative experiences in this journey was participating in the *ISU in Bologna* study abroad program. Living and studying in Bologna not only improved my Italian language skills, but also gave me the chance to fully immerse myself in everyday Italian life. Walking through the historic streets, shopping at local markets, connecting with students from across the world, and even struggling through moments of cultural misunderstanding all of it changed the way I saw the world and myself. The program challenged me to step outside my comfort zone and adapt to new environments. It deepened my understanding of Italian culture beyond what I had known from my family traditions, showing me the diversity within regions, dialects, and ways of life. Studying abroad gave me a new sense of independence, resilience, and perspective. It reaffirmed why I chose the Italian minor in the first place: to honor my roots, challenge myself, and keep discovering who I am in the process.

I feel a renewed sense of pride in my heritage and a stronger desire to carry forward the traditions that have shaped my family for generations. Choosing the Italian minor wasn't just an academic decision it was a way of honoring where I come from, and embracing where I'm headed.





SANREMO 2025 - MANIA MUSICALE

WRITTEN BY ROSIE CHAPPELL

La Tavola's Instagram Sanremo is a March Madness style bracket containing a multitude of new songs from different Italian artists. La Tavola gathered all of the songs from the official Sanremo Music Festival, a very popular song contest in Italy in its 75th year, broadcast back in February. Sanremo this year had a very wide group of musicians, with 29 different artists in total. Italian students listened to songs in class from the likes of Moda to Massimo Ranieri during the first part of the bracket. Students then, every Monday through Thursday throughout Sanremo, voted for their favorite song. Each winning song advanced until both sides of the bracket each had one song that competed against the other in the final two. It was a pretty close battle between Giorgia's "La Cura Per Me" and Willie Peyote's "Grazie Ma No Grazie." In the end, La Tavola's Sanremo/Mania Musicale crowned Giorgia's "La Cura Per Me" as its Spring 2025 winner! Ecco una playlist delle canzoni per cui abbiamo votato durante Mania Musicale questo semestre. Godetevi ad ascoltarle durante l'estate!

PASQUETTA

WRITTEN BY BELLA MITCHELL

Pasquetta is a holiday that takes place on the Monday after Easter. On Pasquetta people go to the mountains or the sea and have picnics with friends and family. In honor of that, La Tavola hosted an event where students were invited to a picnic dinner and scavenger hunt. It was a beautiful warm evening complete with some delicious pasta, caprese salad, tiramisu and a Riganella that Professor Ferrari's mother had made and sent from Italy for us to enjoy. After our picnic we got into teams and went on a scavenger hunt eggs across campus. Each egg had hints in Italian to help find the next spot. The winners had the choice of a selection of prizes which included two Baci giant eggs, pasta, sauce, and Nutella cookies. This event was so much fun and I would highly recommend coming next year!



SAN VALENTINO

WRITTEN BY BELLA MITCHELL

San Valentino was a fun arts and crafts event hosted during two conversation hours. Each one was dedicated to learning phrases in Italiano that one might say on Valentine's Day. Students ate biscotti called *Cuoricini* while writing and decorating valentines.

ITA 112 COURSE REVIEW

WRITTEN BY LUKE FAULKNER

In Italian 112 we furthered our understanding of the Italian language this semester. We learned an array of concepts and vocab. Technology, food, clothing, health, using the past tense of avere/essere, how to talk about our daily routines, and so much more. It has been great to see everyone go from what we knew in Italian 111 to how much more we know now! Additionally, we have learned so much about Italy which might be one of the best parts. With Sanremo, we got into the music and learned more and more about Italian culture. Overall, it has been a successful year of Italian 111-112 for all!



ITA 116 COURSE REVIEW

WRITTEN BY SOFIA LINK

Italian 116 is the fourth and last standard language class here at ISU. In this course my classmates and I continue to refine the skills we have learned, while also learning more advanced grammar concepts such as the subjunctive mood and hypothetical phrases. We also learned how to talk about theatre, art, and music, professions and work in Italy, and nature and caring for the environment. This class has been a wonderful way to culminate all the things I have learned in previous semesters and enrich my cultural understanding!



ITA 221A01 COURSE REVIEW

WRITTEN BY NICO EDWARDS-TESTOLIN

Italian Conversation and Contemporary Society is a wonderful, culturally enriching class. The lesson is based around reading and discussing Italian themes in contemporary society. I had so much fun learning about the evolution of Italian media, as well as Italian society surrounding their healthcare, relationships, food, politics, gender issues, music, pop culture, and having good Italian conversations about it! The class is much more centered around speaking and listening, but as a result I have gained so much confidence and have honed my speaking and listening skills. This class is a change of pace compared to the previous Italian classes, and I know you'll enjoy it as much as I did!



FLORENCE STUDY ABROAD: A REVIEW

WRITTEN BY ROBERT D'EGIDIO

My name is Robert D'Egidio, and I'm a second-semester junior studying abroad in Florence, Italy to immerse myself in this rich culture and history while improving my ability to speak and understand Italian.

Studying abroad isn't just about the classroom; it's also about immersing yourself in a new culture, exploring new cities, and experiencing life in a completely different way. During my time here I've travelled to different countries and cities across Italy. I went to Nice, France, where I went to the beach and explored amazing towns like Èze. I also visited Athens, Greece, and saw the Parthenon, spent time at the beach, and enjoyed delicious food. One of my most moving travels was visiting WWII monuments, like Auschwitz in Poland, which offered a deep, reflective look into history.

Back in Italy I get to experience the magic of Florence every single day on my walk to class as I pass by famous landmarks like the Duomo or the David. My favorite thing to do is to walk up to Piazza Michelangelo to watch the sunset while eating gelato and watching people perform! Typically, there is a band there singing and everyone is singing and dancing all together, and the view of Florence and the hills is amazing. I've also visited other cities in Italy like Rome, where I saw the Colosseum, Pantheon, and the Trevi fountain in real life. Every day feels like a new adventure; something is always going on! But it's not just the sights that make this experience unforgettable; it's the people I've met, like my roommates and classmates. These are connections and friendships that I'll cherish forever.

When I first arrived in Florence, it felt like it was the first day of college all over again. But I adapted and started to love my new life more and more every day. I live in an apartment with five other guys. We all get along very well, and we spend our weekdays hanging out in our apartment or exploring Florence, and we spend our weekends traveling together. In Florence we do entertaining activities, such as signing up for cooking classes with chefs at a local restaurant or winery tours and tastings, which have been so much fun.

I'm enrolled in five classes at Lorenzo de' Medici: History of the Italian Mafia, Food and Culture of Italy, Italian Language, Italy's Contribution to Modern Science, and Palaces of Florence, all fascinating classes I would never be able to take back home. The class format here is a little different from Illinois State University. Each class only meets once a week, allowing me flexibility for travel and helping me immerse myself in Italian culture outside of class. My schedule is honestly a perfect balance between study and adventures!

My biggest takeaway is realizing how lucky I am to have this experience. I've gained a whole new perspective on life. There is more to life than just Illinois. I moved to a whole new continent and learned more about myself than I would've if I had just stayed at home! I took a risk, and I'm glad I did. Being an international student is completely different than being a student in the States; change and different perspectives are all around you.

LA TAVOLA EXECUTIVE BOARD

WRITTEN BY ROSIE CHAPPELL

The 2024-2025 academic year executive board all come together once a month to plan events and learning opportunities for our students in the Italian program. This year's board is:

Co-Presidents Leah Brecheisen (Art History and Spanish double major, Italian Studies minor) and **Nico Edwards-Testolin** (Music major and Pre-Health pathway, Italian Studies minor);

Co-Treasurers Rosa Baker (Financial Accounting major, Italian Studies minor) and **Bella Mitchell** (Horticulture major, Italian Studies minor);

Co-Secretaries Luke Faulkner (History major, Political Science and Italian Studies double minor) and **Sofia Link** (Psychology major, Sociology and Italian Studies double minor);

Co-Social Media Chairs Rosie Chappell (Mass Media major, Italian Studies minor) and **Courtney Cairo** (Public Relations major, Italian Studies minor).

It has been an absolute pleasure and honor working with this board this academic year. We wish our senior Executive Board members, Nico and Leah, all the best after graduation. We look forward to planning many fun and exciting new events for the next academic year!

Advisors: Dr. Laura Edwards and Dr. Francesco Ferrari

If you are interested in joining La Tavola Italian Club, find us on Instagram @latavola_isu and become an official member at Redbird Life!

If you have interest in adding the Italian Studies minor, reach out to Dr. Edwards at Lcedwar@ilstu.edu to talk about how it fits into your schedule and see website: <https://tinyurl.com/azbz8yfk>



Exec Board at Cerimonia per i laureati



Exec Board dinner at Lucca Grill
in Bloomington!