



## NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

### **Narrative Section of a Successful Application**

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs Notice of Funding Opportunity at the appropriate resource page ([Awards for Faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#), [Awards for Faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#), [Awards for Faculty at Tribal Colleges and Universities](#)) for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Research Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

**The application format has been changed since this application was submitted.** You must follow the guidelines in the currently posted Notice of Funding Opportunity (see above links).

Project Title: *Memoria Presente: The Common Spanish Legacy in Italian and Latin American Cultures*

Institution: Montclair State University

Project Director: Teresa Fiore

Grant Program: Awards for Faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions

***Memoria Presente:***  
**The Common Spanish Legacy in Italian and Latin American Cultures**  
**Dr. Teresa Fiore**

**Narrative: Premises and Content**

“Italian for Spanish Speakers” courses around the country leverage the similarities between Italian and Spanish in vocabulary and grammar in order to accelerate the Italian language acquisition of Hispanic students.<sup>1</sup> My equivalent class at MSU (ITAL 111 “Comprehensive Beginning Italian for Spanish Speakers”) has been developed along the same lines and utilizes the vast body of literature on intercomprehension and trans-linguaging, which leverage the knowledge of two or more languages, and hence cultures, to fast-track learning in the classroom. Yet, my class also strives to regularly embrace humanities content which has thus far not been systematically integrated into courses of this nature. Specifically, my approach to teaching Italian to Spanish speakers consistently emphasizes the cultural commonalities between Italy and Latin America as the result of a shared colonial and migratory experience which has affected numerous aspects of life on different continents from architectural styles to religious practices. Between the mid-1500s and the early 1700s, Southern Italy, Sardinia, and Milan were under the same Spanish imperial control as Latin America, while since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Italians have chosen Latin American countries as destinations for their migratory routes. This network of connections has been further enriched by the formation of Latin American immigrant communities in Italy in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The intriguing cross-pollination that these circuits have produced has resulted in multiple cultural expressions that constitute a rich base for the acquisition of Italian language and culture by Hispanic students. ITAL 111 introduces students to the history of the Spanish Quarters of Naples, the Aztec chocolate bars made in Modica, Sicily, and Tiepolo’s frescoes glorifying colonial power in Madrid, while inviting them to produce a final project about Italians in Latin America and Latin Americans in Italy to enrich their understanding of migrant trajectories.

My initial exploration of this vast galaxy of cultural influences for the development of ITAL 111 has coalesced into a broader project called *Memoria presente* (i.e., “present memory”, which translates into exactly the same expression in both Spanish and Italian) because it activates a shared historical legacy and makes it viable to Hispanic students today by valuing their trans-national affiliations. *Memoria presente* intends to create a long-term learning path for such students based on the current experience with ITAL 111, which, even in its relatively short existence (two semesters), has demonstrated the viability of accelerated learning for students and has also generated a desire to learn Italian beyond the beginning level within the same framework. Ultimately, *Memoria presente* aims to provide Hispanic students with the opportunity to achieve higher levels of fluency in Italian in a shorter period of time thanks to metacognitive learning and infusing targeted humanities content in “Italian for Spanish Speakers” classes.

The present phase of *Memoria presente* is focused on the creation of ITAL 211 “Comprehensive Intermediate Italian for Spanish Speakers,” based on the materials initially gathered for ITAL111 and adapted to the second-year level through a careful calibration of humanities content and language acquisition objectives. For the purpose of this application, I wish to further develop *Memoria presente* by extending the humanities framework of the Beginning and Intermediate “Italian for Spanish Speakers” courses to the advanced level. ITAL 311 “Comprehensive Advanced Italian for Spanish speakers” will allow students to interpret historical and literary texts, as well as films, more deeply by making specific cultural connections. At the same time, the expansion of complex vocabulary due to increased exposure to Latin-derived cognates will enrich their expository writing and interpersonal speaking as they delve into

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<sup>1</sup> Of particular note are the courses offered at California State University Long Beach, where an NEH project has provided tools to explore inter-linguistic acquisition involving Italian in many directions (the textbook *Juntos*, K-16 collaborations, applied research). See [NEH grant for French and Italian for Spanish Speakers Initiative](#).

new meanings through more sophisticated linguistic structures ranging from hypothetical thinking to the use of varied past tenses.

For the NEH proposal, I will be:

**A.** Gathering and organizing new and more complex materials from interdisciplinary sources that connect the linguistic and cultural experiences of Italy, Spain and Latin America. Examples include: archival documents related to the figure of Charles V who reigned over a global empire including Italian regions and the Spanish colonies in the American continents; the representation of the Spanish dominion in Alessandro Manzoni's classic novel *The Betrothed*; Gabriel García Márquez's newspaper articles about his inspirational stay in Rome; the cultural status of Italian pop singers in the Latin American music scene since the 1970s; Laura Pariani's novels about Italian immigrants in Argentina; and documentaries about Latin American refugees and laborers in Italy.

**B.** Creating an initial set of oral histories from students with both a Hispanic and an Italian background (for ex. students with families from Argentina, Uruguay, Venezuela, etc. where there is a long history of Italian immigration and recent history or relocation in the U.S.). I have already taught several students with that type of trajectory, and I see great potential for the analysis of family histories that still remain largely untold. Once articulated, these stories have the potential to transcend an ethnic and bi-national approach to migration by revealing a number of shared migratory experiences.

The NEH Award would allow me to fulfill my vision for *Memoria presente* which in its final form will consist of (1) a 3-semester sequence embedded in the Italian BA for Hispanic students that designs an accelerated path enriched with humanities-content to cover the material of 6 semesters; and (2) a digital repository that makes a rich collection of humanities texts broadly available to other teachers of "Italian for Spanish Speakers" classes at all levels, so that they can repurpose this material.

### **Goals and Contributions**

My attendance of conferences and my current knowledge of the existing literature on the subject has revealed a growing interest in the intercomprehension method based on language similarities, while also registering a deficit in targeted humanities content, which is the gap that my proposal seeks to address. As mentioned above, the materials created under Points A and B for ITAL 311 and more generally for *Memoria Presente* are intended to serve two goals. First, the accelerated 3-semester sequence aims at engaging the growing Hispanic population on campus (currently 30% of the student body) through a coherent pedagogical approach rather than through isolated courses. In this sense, the proposal is wholly in line with the new Strategic Plan of Montclair State University which intends to "capitalize on the historic strength of diversity in the institution and continue to grow that strength as the State expands its diversity" (Objective 2.1). With a focus on transnational mobility and the transcultural/translingual environment it has created over time, the humanities content integrated into the classes I am developing represents a concrete intervention towards addressing and enriching this diversity, thus truly serving the Hispanic population within a trans-national vision that leverages bi-lingualism/culturalism towards tri-lingualism/culturalism. The second goal and contribution of my project will be the creation of a digital space where audiovisual materials, texts, maps, and timelines can be easily accessed. In this respect, the project should be of great use to the community of teachers offering "Italian for Spanish Speakers" around the country, which, beside CSULB, now also includes: UC Santa Barbara, Georgetown, Pepperdine, and CSULA. Over time, my plan is also to involve NJ community colleges designated as HSI in a 2+2 program focused on Hispanic students learning Italian. Finally, I intend to reach out to high school teachers in order to offer dual enrollment classes leveraging the presence of bi-lingual teachers and double programs (Spanish and Italian) in the public school system. Thus, while focusing on a specific subject and methodology central to the mission of an HSI, *Memoria presente* as a whole contains broader educational and community goals at once.

### **Dissemination among different audiences**

The first audience that this project will reach is the Hispanic students on campus, as part of an effort to

further internationalize the curriculum. Given that MSU has roughly 5,000 Hispanic students, and that so far I have taught two classes for a total of 30 students, there is substantial potential for growth based on an untapped audience for classes (such as the ones I have proposed) that fall under the language requirement on my campus. Next, the creation of a digital space seeded with focused humanities content automatically nurtures the potential to reach a very large and diverse audience. The repository will be part of the Inserra website I manage, and its launching will be featured in a calendar of cultural programs (which I run as part of my responsibilities as Inserra Endowed Chair). At the same time, in connection to future offerings of the class/es, I plan on having public events that in focusing on the relationships between Italy and Latin American countries serve the community at large. Examples range from the screening of Nanni Moretti's documentary *Santiago, Italia* about Chilean political refugees in Italy to a one-day seminar on Italy-Latin-America-U.S. migratory trajectories which would involve students and scholars. Programs of this nature reach the broader community off campus along with students, faculty and administrators linked to MSU.

### **Relevant experience, competence and skills**

While the exploration of the Spanish colonial and imperial period constitutes relatively new research terrain for me, I have experience in all the linguistic and thematic areas linked to this application, starting from my fluency in Italian, Spanish, and English, as well as an established scholarly agenda focused on transnational migrations and trans-cultural/linguistic/historical experiences, including an award-winning book (*Pre-Occupied Space: Re-Mapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies*). Additionally, I have been heavily involved in course development as part of several efforts at curricular innovation in the fields of Translation, Business/Made in Italy and Italian American Studies, besides "Italian for Spanish Speakers." For example, I developed a class, "Italian Americans in Film", that is now regularly taught to 35 students a semester, and even 100 in lecture format. I am also quite familiar with video-interviewing, including IRB regulations, as I am in the process of completing another project which highlights video-interviews (see "[Food and WWII in Sicily](#)"). The site for these edited interviews will be a section of the MSU website linked to my cultural programming (Inserra) activities, which I have individually managed using WordPress for almost a decade. A preliminary space for ITAL 111 is already accessible online: [tinyurl.com/ISSatMSU](http://tinyurl.com/ISSatMSU). I also have a professional presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) in order to bring attention to new scholarly and teaching projects, as well as to cultural programs, reaching thousands of people on a regular basis. Finally, I have a substantial body of experience as director of cultural programming on campus in my role as Inserra Endowed Chair in Italian and Italian American Studies (80 cultural events in 9 years and one-of-a-kind summer intensive language program for high school students) with a proven interest in creating interdisciplinary collaborations and innovative educational endeavors ([montclair.edu/inserra-chair/](http://montclair.edu/inserra-chair/)).

### **Work Plan**

I am applying for a \$10,000 full-time award extending over two summer months (July and August 2021) to develop ITAL 311. I have chosen the summer when I am free from teaching in order to fully devote myself to this phase of the project, which requires a deeper level of research in order to develop authentic level-appropriate materials.

- For Point A, I will curate a collection of printed texts and media files that link Italian and Spanish/Latin American cultures through my access to the Columbia University, NYU and CUNY libraries, and also develop teaching materials related to them. One specific objective is to upload an annotated bibliography along with images such as maps or photos, and audio and video files of songs and films (for copyright expenses I can rely on MSU funds via the Inserra Endowment).
- For Point B, I will video-interview 2 students who can contribute stories of transnational migrations with the specific multi-trajectory Italy-Latin America-U.S. This phase entails video-taping, selection of relevant sections, editing, and uploading.

#### Post-grant period:

- I will submit the official course proposals for ITAL 311 in Fall 2021 in order to offer it in Fall 2022.
- The interview collection will be expanded as part of future phases of the project.

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