

Kathleen C. Boyle, PhD**Personal Statement – Promotion to Full Teaching Professor Review**

As I begin my sixth academic year as a part of the Italian Studies program at the University of Notre Dame, I treasure being an important part of, arguably, one of the foremost Italian Studies programs in the country. During the last five years, I have made robust contributions across the Italian curriculum designing and implementing new offerings including language courses at all levels, advanced seminars on Italian culture, outreach courses, and, more recently, a class at the graduate level. I have aspired to be a reliable and conscientious colleague, as I am actively involved in all aspects of the Italian Studies program and the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. Since my arrival in 2016, in my role as author and editor of the bi-annual Italian mailing and the *Lingua Italica* online newsletter, I have actively promoted undergraduate courses and the initiatives of the Center for Italian Studies across campus, and have strengthened the visibility of the program. These experiences, both in and out of the classroom, furthered my understanding of the inner workings of the program and the department, and demonstrate my role as an integral member of the Notre Dame Italian Studies faculty.

I have a genuine passion for languages that began in my Latin and Greek classes at a Jesuit high school in Chicago and has continually evolved as I progress in my teaching career. As an instructor of Italian, I have a strong desire to pass along this passion to my students and to make the study of foreign languages more than a mere requirement. I believe strongly in the idea that for students to succeed in today's globalized, diverse world, they need to have the tools necessary to be active participants in a multicultural society. The College of Arts and Letters at Notre Dame could not have been more accurate when they chose their slogan, "Study everything. Do anything." Learning a new language provides one with exposure to the people, customs, traditions, and different ways of thinking of an ever-expanding community whose center is in Rome but whose diaspora includes large populations in the United States. Watching a student develop an entirely new interest in some aspect of Italian society because of a cultural lesson covered in class brings me one step closer to unlocking the world of Italian language and culture to my students. To see a student who came into class with the idea that they were not a "language person" put together a sentence or have a conversation in the target language, no matter how basic, is a very rewarding experience for me as an instructor.

Over the first five years at Notre Dame, I have been responsible for the redesign of the intermediate-level language courses in Italian (ROIT 20201- Intermediate Italian I and ROIT 20202 – Exploring Italian Culture), as well as the creation of three entirely new courses (ROIT 20111 – Beginning/Intermediate Intensive Italian – 6 credits, ROIT 20612/30612 – Genesis of the Italian-American Identity and ROIT 64050 – Online Italian Graduate Reading Course). From my first semester at Notre Dame, I was given permission by my coordinator, Dr. Alessia Blad, to update ROIT 20201 and personalize the course as I saw fit, and the changes that I have made have yielded some very significant positive results. Salient among these transformative changes was the introduction of ePortfolios as the final assessment of the course, in lieu of a traditional written final exam. This was a project that I originally developed in consultation with the Kaneb Center after attending one of their workshops on alternative assessment organized by Alex

Ambrose and my dear colleague Elena Mangione-Lora. Implementing ePortfolios in ROIT 20201 allowed for a noticeable increase in the level of difficulty, in the level of engagement with the language and students' cultural competency, and in the amount of reflection done by the students throughout the semester. The impact of this new form of assessment was such that I followed this model as I redesigned other courses, most notably ROIT 20202. In this class, which I taught for the first time in Fall 2020, students work towards obtaining linguistic fluency while exploring Italian culture through the films of five contemporary directors. Each film is presented in its historical and cultural context, which provides us with the starting point of our class discussion. Cultural readings and literary excerpts of great works of Italian literature drawing upon the themes and the elements of Italian culture presented in each film supplement our discussion. In this class, I also focus on formal and informal registers in our written and oral communication, as students write both blogs and more formal essays analyzing our units, in addition to creating informal vlog conversations and more organized in-class debates. With the incorporation of ePortfolios as the means of final assessment in 20202, students finish our intermediate courses with a link to a website displaying two semesters of intermediate-level work in Italian. As I say to my students, it is one thing to say that you have an intermediate level of Italian on a resume, but it is something entirely different to include the link to your ePortfolio on the resume. The first iteration of this course was very well received by students during the fall of 2020, and I taught three sections of 20202 in the spring of 2021 (from what I understand, was the first time in recent history that we have needed a third section to meet the student demand). Anecdotally, students have shared with me that their ePortfolio link had become a key component of their applications for study abroad, internships, jobs, and even Medical School.

The three courses that I have developed from the ground up all responded to a specific need in the Italian program at different curricular levels, and contributed greatly to our course offerings, to the recruitment of majors and minors, and to increase our visibility on campus. I must credit and thank my wonderful colleague, Dr. Tiziana Serafini, for the incredible idea of offering an accelerated class that would allow students, who began in the regular track enrolled in ROIT 10101 during their first semester, to progress through our lower-level language courses at a faster pace. Tiziana generously turned this idea over to me and I designed the class offered for the first time during the Spring of 2018. The result is ROIT20111: a course that compresses into one single semester the content of both the second and third levels of Italian language, and has helped students advance more quickly into our upper-level courses with the objective of definitely minoring, and potentially completing a supplementary or full major in Italian. Besides serving as a recruitment course for our program, students who enroll in 20111 are often likely applicants to the Rome International Scholars Program at the Rome Global Gateway.

As a proactive strategy, I was offered the opportunity to design a course that could serve the ND undergraduate community at large, while also serving as a magnet course to actively recruit students to our program. The outreach course I developed, which the Italian program had long identified as a key offering, focused on Italian American studies. I designed the course in such a way that it would respond to the requirements for the History designation as a part of the Ways of Knowing Core Curriculum, thus increasing our program's visibility on campus. This designation helped the class fill at 100% capacity in the Fall semester of 2020, drawing students

from programs ranging from Electrical Engineering to Neuroscience, from Political Science to Mendoza. I was pleased to see that one of those students decided to explore our program further, enrolling this past spring in ITAL 10101 and opting for my accelerated 20111 course this fall.

The third and final new class I developed is an online course of Italian for reading knowledge, specifically targeted to graduate students from any discipline or field, which has now been taught in both the 6-week summer session and during this past winter's experimental J-term 2021. Designed with reading for research purposes as the central aim, we focused on the reading and writing skills that graduate students in the humanities or social sciences would need in order to conduct a portion of their research reading primarily documents or accessing secondary bibliography in Italian. This course continues to evolve as I fine tune the assignments and course requirements each semester. Unlike in other Romance Languages, a definitive textbook for an Italian Reading course is no longer in print nor easily accessible, so I have created all my own materials for the course, available to students through our Canvas site. This grants me a flexibility that I would not otherwise have if I were constrained to following a textbook. Since I first offered this course, during the summer of 2019, 38 graduate students across 12 different programs have successfully completed the course. In fact, my online graduate reading course has been used as a model for developing similar courses in other programs in Romance Languages and Literatures. Late in Spring 2021, I was generously invited by ND Learning's Summer Online Course Coordinators, Sonia Howell and Judith Lewandowski, to lead an informal workshop attended by colleagues in my department to discuss developing similar classes for reading knowledge of French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and offer them for the first time this summer. I also met informally with a few of my colleagues to answer individual questions and share my experiences. I look forward to hearing about the success of these new courses across Romance Languages and Literatures that contribute decisively to the mission of the Graduate School.

This fall I have been afforded the very rare chance to teach for the first time my own version of ROIT 30310 – Passage to Italy, a fifth-semester course which surveys the rich panorama of Italian culture from its origins to the present. While this course is usually reserved for T/TT faculty only, I was generously invited to consider teaching this course by my senior colleagues in Italian, Alessia Blad and Ted Cachey. After consulting with my colleagues, Christian Moevs and Charles Leavitt, who have previously taught the course and who generously shared with me their experiences and syllabi, I have spent the summer developing the content and specific assignments for this course, which is already enrolled at 100% capacity, and where I will meet again students who successfully completed my three sections of 20202 last spring. Seizing the rare and distinct opportunity to teach an advanced course like ROIT 30310 means that my fall semester will be as unusual as it will be challenging, since I will be devoting extensive time to preparing three different contents (one of them completely new to me) for my regular 12-credit hours of teaching. However, I am more than happy to fulfill such a critical curricular need in my program, and to contribute in any way that I can.

It would be hard to write this personal statement and not reflect upon my teaching during the past two and a half semesters affected by Covid-19. During Spring 2020, when we received the communication about moving online for the remainder of the semester, I embraced the

challenge. The Kaneb Center/ND Learning began organizing workshops about best practices, and I attended three workshops during the week granted by the university to redesign our courses for an online format. It was undeniable that my courses would have to adapt, but I was committed to find a way to preserve or even enhance the interactive nature of the courses and the number of opportunities to speak for the students. For some students, I knew the transition would be seamless. For others, I knew that the transition home with familial responsibilities and moving to remote learning would provide additional challenges. I considered students with different learning styles and how remote learning would affect their level of comfort in a language class. I found small ways to address different learning styles through the new course material that I prepared. Perhaps the clearest yet simplest strategy consisted of configuring PowerPoint slides in such a way that, when doing a grammar exercise from the book, besides having a student provide an answer verbally, I programmed the answers to pop up directly on the PowerPoint slide on the screen. This simple yet tremendously effective strategy allowed visual learners to see the answer written and not rely solely on their comprehension of the answer provided orally by myself or a classmate. Using Zoom breakout rooms, daily pdfs of the material I would have handed out in class, and detailed PowerPoints, allowed my classes to run as smoothly as they did in person. I am proud to say that my CIF scores for every semester affected by Covid remained consistent with my previous scores (5.0/5.0 in each course) and the comments were overwhelmingly positive. Students in my Spring 2020 ROIT 20111 courses commented “I was surprised by how easily this course transitioned to online learning” and “The course functioned largely the same as it did in person. The transition was almost seamless.” (For more student comments, please consult my [ePortfolio](#)) With so many elements out of my control, I could control one thing: the quality of the instruction in my courses and the enthusiasm and care that I would bring to our meetings. Their comments in the course evaluations show me that students recognized that.

Last summer provided me with the time to reflect on how best to organize my courses for the fall when facing an uncertain situation. Looking back at my Google Calendar, I also took advantage of roughly ten different workshops offered by ND Learning on a variety of topics related to Resilient Teaching. This past academic year involved the additional and unique challenge of dual mode delivery, meaning teaching students in person in the classroom *and* online for those students in quarantine or isolation because of Covid. Strongly committed to meeting my students’ needs, during academic year 2020-2021, I would estimate that I offered roughly 90 – 95% of my lessons in the dual mode delivery format because of one or more students needing to be online for health reasons. Once again, I was determined to find the most effective practices for offering a language course in the dual mode delivery format and to engage those students participating online. I found several ways to accomplish this. One of them may seem banal, and yet was particularly crucial to maintain student engagement: if only one student were scheduled to be online one day, before class I would find a classmate with a computer and headphones to do the pair activities with the online student through the use of a Zoom breakout room. It may seem unimportant, but that organization in a language course meant that the online student was not sitting idly by as his or her classmates discussed and debated the day’s topic. Furthermore, I discovered new online resources, such as Padlet, which allowed students in class and online to participate in some collective notetaking, as the website updates in real time and can be seen on the big screen in class and on the personal screen of the student at home. By the

end of the semester, I started bringing in my tablet and logging onto Zoom with a separate account so that I could pop into the Zoom breakout rooms and provide feedback and interact with the students online for the day, just as I would have if they were in class. Online students appreciated these small efforts to include and engage them in the day's lesson. I had so much invaluable experience with the dual mode delivery format by the end of last year that when my wonderful colleague, Alessia Blad, was approached by the language departments at the University of Illinois at Chicago about offering a workshop on dual mode delivery, she very generously suggested that I take the lead on our joint presentation.

What the previous examples from Covid-19 times demonstrate about my approach to teaching is that I constantly re-evaluate and fine-tune my methods to assure that I am maximizing the learning opportunities. I take each class period, each assignment and each semester as a chance to evaluate what was effective and in what ways things could be improved, regardless of the circumstances. Every class is different and has their own style of learning; an activity that worked well with one group of students might not be the most beneficial for another, and that is before you add in a global pandemic.

In preparing this personal statement, I have also appreciated the opportunity to reflect on my teaching evaluations (CIFS – Course Instructor Feedback; all available in my [ePortfolio](#)) from my time at Notre Dame. I obviously read through these evaluations very carefully at the end of each semester, and I was able to print out my composite history and reflect on those results. I am incredibly proud of my strong teaching performance at Notre Dame. In looking at my composite ND history, I have received a perfect 5.0 / 5.0 composite score for 33 of the 41 courses taught so far, with an additional five courses receiving either 4.8 or 4.9 out of 5. The comments from my students at the end of each semester are very consistent and tend to recognize the clear amount of time and preparation I put into each lesson plan and the course design as a whole. Several students comment on my superior organizational skills with the help of our course management system, which I use throughout the semester to communicate with the students and share resources. I am consistently a week ahead in my preparation so that students, who have ever more demands on their time because of full course schedules, work hours or other activities, are able to plan ahead to meet my demanding course requirements. My students consistently speak about how engaged they felt during class, my clear desire to help all my students do well, my enthusiasm and passion for the Italian language and culture, and the number of resources I provide them with. I sincerely take pride in these acknowledgements from the hard-working and impressive students at ND and in the Italian program, specifically.

In addition to my work inside the classroom, I greatly value the opportunity to contribute to my section, the department and the college. As stated earlier, I am the editor of both the Italian mailing, which serves to promote the program and upcoming course offerings to students, and the *Lingua Italica* online newsletter for the Center for Italian Studies. I have learned so much about the inner workings of the Italian section, about leadership, and about how to be a steward to the program. I am also actively involved in all extra-curricular activities organized by the section, such as the monthly coffee hours or volunteering to present a film. In addition to activities on campus, my colleagues and I in Italian have co-organized visits to a local elementary school to work with the 2nd graders of Darden Primary Center as a form of community outreach and engagement. During these visits between our Notre Dame elementary

Italian students and the 2nd grade-students of Darden, we teach a famous Italian children's song, often made famous by *lo Zecchino d'oro*, an international children's song competition televised on Italian TV. Lesley Marcantonio and I planned all the activities and lessons to prepare the Darden students for their performance in our Italian spring concert. Allow me to add that music is also the foundation of another important initiative in our department to which I gladly contribute. While my musical talents are far from those of my incredibly talented colleagues, I have enjoyed being involved in the logistical aspects of the concert preparation in previous years and will once again collaborate in any way that I can with my dear colleague and driving force behind the concert, Prof. Lesley Marcantonio this coming spring.

In the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, I am an active participant and co-organizer of events created by the Teaching Professors, such as the annual Romance Languages Week. The collaborative nature of the TP Faculty across the languages in our department is one of the most enjoyable aspects of my job. When Covid hit and we transitioned to remote learning in Spring 2020 and to a hybrid format in the Fall 2020, the Teaching Professors met via Zoom every other Tuesday to stay connected. We did not always "talk shop" but instead just checked in with each other for community support. And if someone did have questions about teaching in the new normal, the free flow of ideas and suggestions was so beneficial. During our recent search for a new Teaching Professor in French, this is something that every candidate commented on and could tell from our informal meet and greet via Zoom.

I have several other departmental service responsibilities that have afforded me immense growth as a departmental citizen, as a member of the Notre Dame community, and as a mentor who seeks to uplift students at both undergraduate and graduate levels. I currently serve on the CSRLC, a very rewarding experience which has provided me the opportunity to discuss issues such as hybrid learning in Covid times, issues related to assessment, student mental health problems, and much more. At our final meeting last spring, we discussed upcoming initiatives that we would like to focus on this year (AY2021-2022), including the integration of international students into the Notre Dame community and graduate student well-being and mentoring, such as the creation of a job placement committee, additional orientation ideas and more. When the opportunity presented itself to offer a course during the winter session of the Spring 2021 semester, I jumped at the opportunity to offer my online reading course for graduate students who have been equally as affected by this year of Covid-19, and who I thought would welcome the opportunity to address one of their degree requirements during the winter session. This spring, I was thrilled to be elected by my fellow Teaching Professors to represent our cohort during the upcoming academic year on the Chair's Advisory Board in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. It will be a wonderful honor to represent such a dedicated group of colleagues and to work directly with our wonderful Chair, Dr. Alison Rice.

In the College of Arts and Letters, I am currently serving a three-year term on the College Council and was elected this spring to the Advisory Committee on Women in Arts and Letters. I value these opportunities and committee assignments, not only because I was elected by my colleagues in the College of Arts and Letters, but also as a chance to learn more about the college, and the university from colleagues across campus and at different stages in their careers.

While I am unsure still of my responsibilities in the Committee on Women in A&L, as it is a new assignment to begin this fall, it is another opportunity to represent a diverse body of women in academia who are integral to the success of the College and the University. This past spring, I volunteered to participate in the Learning Management System Pilot program for Canvas, for which my students and I provided feedback to help the university select a replacement for Sakai. Knowing how integral the LMS is to my own course design, I welcomed the opportunity to liaise with OIT about technological decisions that benefit the ND community. I was pleased to hear that Canvas was chosen and have already transitioned all my courses over to the new platform.

In addition to my teaching and service, I have taken advantage of many professional development and research opportunities throughout the last five years that have profoundly enhanced my teaching interests. Some of these opportunities have introduced me to an entire new group of professional colleagues, such as my participation in The John D. Calandra Italian American Institute's Italian Diaspora Studies Summer Seminar in Rome, which led to a presentation in an international conference in Genoa, Italy in June of 2019. I have presented, in both Italian and English, on my ePortfolio project as a means of alternative assessment in the intermediate language curriculum at two pedagogy-focused conferences in New York and Washington D.C. My participation in all three of these conferences was supported by generous grants received from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts at Notre Dame. In the past year, I have been invited to present during workshops and round tables related to best practices in teaching foreign languages in the online, face-to-face and socially distanced classroom, both at Notre Dame and for a nearby university. Most recently I gave an invited lecture as a part of the year-long Dante in America @ Notre Dame lecture series commemorating the 700th Anniversary of Dante's death, and I look forward to the publication of a version of my presentation in an upcoming edited volume by my senior colleagues Ted Cachey and Zyg Barański based on this series. Currently, I am working on an introduction and commentary on 20th-century Neapolitan singer and musician, Renato Carosone, to be published this fall in the online database curated by Georgetown Professor Francesco Ciabattoni. With this selection of research and professional development opportunities outlined above, I hope to have demonstrated the breadth of my research interests, from Dante to the 20th-century Italian-American experience, from innovations in technology in the classroom to the modern Italian song. I have been lucky to explore a variety of fields and interests through the generous support of the Center for Italian Studies and ISLA.

Coming from my previous institution, where I was the program director and where the entire Italian program consisted of just four people, I know of no other way to work than to dive in and find ways to contribute, as I have done here, both in and out of the classroom. My position at Notre Dame -- in a large, collaborative, innovative and energetic program -- is the most rewarding professional experience of my career. The support and mentorship from my Italian colleagues and department leadership have allowed me to grow as an instructor and scholar, branch out into new areas of teaching, and pursue opportunities to present my work through professional development funding. I hope this narrative and the work shared in my [ePortfolio](#) demonstrate my ongoing commitment to my students and my colleagues, the Italian program, the Department of Romance Languages, and the University of Notre Dame. I would like to thank you for your time and consideration of my request for promotion to Full Teaching Professor.

7 Internal Letters of Recommendation

Not applicable