

BUS 367-I: Doing Business in Europe, Italy Focus (Oral Focus)
UHM Study Abroad Program in Florence, Italy, Spring, 2026

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Introduction

This course introduces students to European culture and business contexts through cross-cultural analysis of values, governance, economic activities, and environmental conditions that shape business opportunities, practices and policies. We examine the formal business structures and typical business practices of Europe generally and then zoom in on Italy as a place to live, work, and do business. Drawing contrasts between Italy and other European countries, with the U.S., and among different regions of Italy will help students understand Italy holistically as a place to “do business”. The course will also consider the influence of history and culture on modern business styles and practices in Italy. The course is designed to fulfill the oral communication focus designation and will rely on student research, presentation and discussion to enhance learning of the course contents.

Prerequisites for this course:

None.

Course Materials (*All materials will be available electronically or on the Internet.*)

1. Europe in 12 Lessons. (online resource published by European Commission)
<https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/eu-in-12-lessons/en/>
2. The European Union. (online website with multiple topics)
https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en
3. Top Differences Between USA and EU Business Culture
<https://europe-hr-solutions.com/resources/usa-vs-eu-business-culture/#>
4. International Business Culture and Business Etiquette.
<https://businessculture.org>
5. Doing Business in Italy: Advantages & Disadvantages
<https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/expert-insights/doing-business-in-italy>
6. Doing business in Italy: A comparative guide
<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Legal/dttl-legal-doing-business-in-italy.pdf>
7. Passport to trade: Italian business culture
<https://businessculture.org/southern-europe/business-culture-in-italy/>
8. Regional and local government of Italy (selected sections; good overall resource)
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/Daily-life-and-social-customs>
9. Top Italian Regions by GDP: A Comprehensive List
<https://weirditaly.com/2023/01/22/top-italian-regions-by-gdp-a-comprehensive-list/>

Additional / Suggested Sources for student research projects

Students will use local resources and the Internet to do targeted research projects and will bring additional materials into the class discussions to share. Some sources to get started:

1. International Trade Administration
<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/italy-market-overview>
2. International Monetary Fund IMF Country report
<https://www.imf.org/en/countries>
3. World Trade Organization WTO
<https://www.wto.org/index.htm>
4. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
<http://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/country-profiles.htm>
<https://www.oecd.org/en/countries/italy.html>
5. Transparency International
<https://www.transparency.org/en/>
6. World Happiness Report
<http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2018/>
7. The World Bank Business Ready site
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/businessready>

Each EU country discussed has websites managed by the government that provides information and statistics for student research and reporting as well.

Learning Objectives

- Describe and discuss the diversity of business and interpersonal styles, particularly as it relates to Italy and Europe, through presentations, role play, and discussion.
- Communicate appropriately with culturally diverse individuals and groups with sensitivity to European business settings.
- Analyze information on social and business opportunities with consideration of culturally and economically diverse settings and organize/present findings and proposals in oral presentations.
- Acknowledge your own cultural values and biases and how these impact your work with others generally and in business settings abroad.
- Demonstrate knowledge of formal and informal expectations for working successfully in Italy, emphasizing verbal and non-verbal communication norms in this context.
- Contrast the social and business expectations of Italy with other nations in the European Union and with the United States and present analysis orally and visually in presentations.

Class Structure

The class will be divided into three sections. Each will involve background reading, classroom discussion and in-country observation, and active student participation through research and reporting. At the close of each section, students will prepare and present a summary of research to solidify their own learning from that section and to share information with other students.

- **Part I – The Business Environment of the European Union (EU)**

The first section of the course surveys formal and informal business practices in the European Union. I provide an overview of the history and current status of the European Union, including the UK's "Brexit", discuss topics such as EU trade, immigration challenges, the "one digital market", and AI regulation. I encourage students to compare the EU business context to the U.S. context they are familiar with. Students will use online resources from the European Commission and other online resources to develop an overview of the business environment, practices, culture and industry structure of one of the 27 EU countries. Students will develop a 2-page "info sheet" to highlight key information and present a well-organized, 15-minute presentation in class. (OL01, OL04)

- **Part II – The Business Environment of Italy**

In the second section of the course, I provide an overview of economic and political developments in Italy from post-World War II to the present day. Through in-class discussions and readings, we will highlight Italy's role in developing trade relationships that lead to the European Union and examine in detail current economic situations in Italy, including leading industries, labor markets, population trends, and educational systems. Students will do short in-class participation assignments to answer questions such as, What work permits are needed to work in Italy? What types of taxes do Italian workers pay? How do Italian workers get healthcare services? What are typical benefits for employees (e.g., days off, vacation, child care)? Students will talk with host families, other international students, business people and local resources, and use internet searches to answer these questions. Students will be expected to provide brief, informative explanations to other students in class discussions. (OL2, OL4). Students will also develop a profile of one industry, economic sector, or major employer in Italy (e.g., high fashion, olive oil production, wine production, tourism, education, manufacturing, high-tech, etc.), and compare Italy with the US. Students will be expected to draw on their experiences in Italy in this analysis. Students will develop a 2-page "info sheet" or small poster, and present a 15-minute presentation in class and lead discussion on the topic. (OL01, OL04)

- **Part III – The Diverse Regions and Business Settings of Italy.**

In the last section, students will choose one of Italy's unique regions to research in detail, including the history, cultural differences with other regions of Italy, economic drivers, and lifestyle of that area. Students will be encouraged to watch/observe popular culture relevant to the region by reading fiction and/or nonfiction (news stories) about the region (and Italy generally), watching television or going to Italian movies, visiting local attractions, and so on. Students will prepare a report on the region (5 – 8 pages), focusing on how the history and culture of that region has influenced its modern business environment and will present their report to the class. (OL01, OL02, OL03, OL04)

Class participation

Attending class is mandatory. Students who miss more than one class without acceptable excuse (e.g. sickness) will lose 5% of course grade per class missed. Classes will involve discussion, information seeking and sharing, presentations, and group analysis. Students are responsible for preparing for each class by reading assigned texts and doing assigned short exercises, working with other students to find / share information, participating in class discussion and presenting information in class activities, and completing assignments on time. Students present reports in class to stimulate discussion, information sharing, comparison, and involvement.

Active engagement and verbal communication skills are very important to business success, including the willingness and ability to present and support your ideas and to help others develop their own ideas. Participation points will be assessed based on the relevance and quality of oral contributions to class discussion. Students will be provided with individual feedback on presentations and contributions throughout the class, with the expectation of learning and improving through class assignments.

Final exam

The final exam will be based on in-class lectures, assigned reading materials, materials brought into the classroom through participation exercises, and discussions during class sessions. The format will include multiple choice, short answer, and brief interpretive open-ended questions.

Course grade

The class grade is based on:

Class participation	15%
Research reports with in-class presentation (3/25% each)	75%
Final Exam	10%

Only students who satisfactorily complete the oral communication assignments will be allowed to pass the course with a “D” or better.”

The letter grade will be based on a sum of points earned as follows:

A+ (96 and above)	B+ (86-89.9)	C+ (76-79.9)	D (60-69.9)
A (91-95.9)	B (83-85.9)	C (73-75.9)	F (less than 60%)
A- (90-92.9)	B- (80-82.9)	C- (70-72.9)	

Detailed class schedule (Draft; dates and assignments will be refined by August, 2025)

Class session	Topics	Readings (see references above)
Part 1 --The Business Environment of the European Union (EU)		
Weeks 1 - 7	40K view of the culture and history of Europe; Cultural and Geographic regions of Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe in 12 Lessons. • The European Union website (selected portions) • Top Differences Between USA and EU Business Culture • International Business Culture and Business Etiquette. <p>○ Country report due at end of section.</p>
	Development of the EU, growth and change; What the EU does	
	Digital markets, general data protection regulation (GDPR), AI regulation	
	Europeanization of business and Euroskeptics; BREXIT	
	In-class presentations	
	Review and recap; comparing EU and US	
Part 2 The Business Environment of Italy		
Weeks 8 - 11	History and legacy of Italy (20 th – 21 st century focus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing Business in Italy: Advantages & Disadvantages • Doing business in Italy: A comparative guide • Passport to trade: Italian business culture <p>○ Italy (industry, sector, or company) report due at tend of this section.</p> <p>○ In-class and homework exercises assigned as needed.</p>
	Spanish business climate and economy today	
	In class presentations and discussion	
	Review and recap; comparing Italy, US and other EU	
Part 3 The Diverse Regions and Business Settings of Italy		
Week 12-14	Spanish Regional differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and local government of Italy • Top Italian Regions by GDP: A Comprehensive List <p>○ Region reports due before final exam.</p>
	Student presentations	
Week 15/16	Final exam	○ In class during finals period

BUS367-I Learning Outcomes Rubric

Goal	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Demonstrate knowledge of diversity of business and interpersonal styles (2)	Identifies and anticipates cultural implications of decision-making and interactions	Identifies primary effects of these influences on business decisions	Fails to identify cultural and interpersonal differences and/or their effect on business transactions
Demonstrate awareness of own cultural values and biases and how these impact their ability to work with others. (1)	Demonstrates sensitivity to cultural norms in developing recommendations and presenting analysis to clients.	Incorporates cultural sensitivity into understanding and proposing solutions to business problems.	Fails to demonstrate understanding of cultural values and biases in a business problem. Applies only a single decision model.
Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups (3)	Demonstrates sensitivity to others in communication of ideas and opinions. Listens with understanding to opinions of others.	Takes differences in communication style into consideration in communicating with others	Fails to communicate appropriately in class discussions
Compare the effects of business environments in Europe and US (4)	Demonstrates an in-depth understanding of business environments within European countries, particularly Italy, and contrasts with US context.	Demonstrates general understanding of the business culture of Europe and the US	Does not identify differences in the business environments and is unable to contrast or compare across EU or with US
Discuss complex ideas regarding business with others with cultural sensitivity and awareness (4)	Actively participates in discussions, articulating his/ her positions and conclusions. Responds appropriately to unexpected queries regarding the issues	Actively participates in discussions, articulating his/her positions and conclusions.	Does not actively participate in discussions. Is not able to articulate his/her position.

Mapping to study abroad objectives:

1. Demonstrate awareness of own cultural values and biases and how these impact their ability to work with others.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on the population or topic of interest in the specific Study Abroad program.
3. Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups.
4. Demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints.

Oral Discussion Rubric for student preparation, feedback, and grading

The purpose of oral discussion is to learn and explore ideas through verbal exchange.

	Professional	Proficient	Threshold
Preparation for discussion	Student has prepared the material and is ready to lead in the discussion. Student has used personal observation or further research to develop a deeper understanding of the subject.	Student has studied the background material and is well prepared to discuss and raise questions based on the material	Student is prepared to discuss the case. Participates in the discussion.
Discussion of findings	Student accurately characterizes own opinions, appropriately queries others regarding. Assists others in understanding complexities of issues. Introduces issues from outside the case that have bearing on the issues.	Student accurately describes own opinions and responds to questions/challenges. Demonstrates understanding of implications of material. Identifies issues to be tested or explored.	Student accurately describes own opinions such that others can understand his/her process.
Organization	Ideas are well organized, prioritized, logically and cogently presented. Presentation of information is clear, cohesive and consistent. Transitions assist in understanding the order of thought.	Reporting is clear, well organized and logically presented. Method of presentation of ideas aids understanding.	Reporting is accurate but may be fragmented or without consideration of priority of issues.
Presentation	Student is a discussion leader in the discussion. He/she presents own position and encourages others to respond. He/she engages and responds to alternate positions and contrast/compares with own.	Student volunteers his/her position on the subject. The position is presented clearly and supported by adequate explanation.	Student presents his/her position when called upon.

Oral Communication Hallmarks (for submission of 1-semester OC focus)

O1. Each student will conduct or participate in a minimum of three oral communication assignments or a comparable amount of oral communication activity during the class. At least 40% of the final grade for a 3+ credit course will be a function of the student's oral communication activities	Three 15-minute presentations in class for each section of course, graded based on above rubric. Worth 25% each for total of 75% of grade.
O2. Each student will receive explicit training, in the context of the class, in oral communication concerns relevant to the assignment or activity.	Discussion of intercultural communication, professionalism in presentation.
O3. Each student will receive specific feedback, critiquing, and grading of the oral communication assignments or activities from the instructor.	Students will record/review first presentation; instructor gives detailed feedback on how to improve for successive assignments.
O4. Class size limits of 20 (individual) or 30 (group).	OK
O5. The course will be numbered at the 300- or 400-level.	OK

Written Communication Rubric (for written reports, in conjunction with the Oral rubric)

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing.

	Professional	Proficient	Threshold
Context and Purpose for Writing	Clearly identifies the purpose and intended use of the report, with consideration of the audience giving sufficient detail to inform the reader. Explains potential complicating issues in sufficient detail.	Clearly explains the purpose of the report in a manner consistent with the audience.	States the purpose of the report. Demonstrates some attention to context, audience and purpose.
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant and compelling content to support conclusions and shape the report. Excludes irrelevant materials.	Uses appropriate, relevant content to explore ideas through most of the report.	Uses appropriate content to develop some of the ideas in the report.
Logical progression	A logical and compelling argument is well constructed through elegant use of language.	A logical argument is well constructed that ties the development of the report together. Ideas are presented in a logical succession. Transitions and links are used successfully to develop a logical progression. Paragraph organization aids understanding.	Ideas are presented without fully developing a logical progression of ideas.
Sources and evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas appropriate to business writing	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and relevant sources to support ideas	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to business readers with clarity and fluency. Report is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that conveys meaning to business readers in a respectful and serious tone. Language has very few errors.	Shows emerging awareness of business writing style. Rarely uses language that impedes meaning. Report has few errors in usage.