

Fall 2022: ITAL-GA 2165

Topics in Italian-American Culture:
**Converting the Italians, Saving America.
Missionaries, societies, and religious
conflicts in Little Italy**

Tiro a Segno Visiting Prof. Massimo Di Gioacchino

3:30-6:10 Thursdays (Room 201)



When the troops of the Kingdom of Italy put an end to the existence of the Papal States by entering the city of Rome on September 20, 1870, American Protestant denominations triumphantly welcomed the event as one of the most promising developments in modern history. As a consequence, they thought that the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church would collapse, and Italy would eventually become fertile land for the Reformation. As Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians alike started to form their plans and strategies to convert Italians, Italians started to emigrate to the United States during the 1870s in order to gain a better standard of living. While that monumental project of conversion encountered many obstacles in Italy - which the course will discuss - the presence of Italian immigrants in the United States came to be considered a unique and historical chance to realize it. Catholic hierarchies in Rome, aware of the risks and threats that Protestant missions posed to the Italians, tried to do anything they could in order to preserve their ancestral faith. The course, which covers the period from 1848 to 1948, employs methods and perspectives of numerous social sciences in order to examine the US Little Italies as a place of interactions and conflicts among global religious players. Students will learn how to decipher primary sources and connect historical archives across the globe in order to map such projects of conversion and the migration of individuals and groups that tried to realize them. The result will be an inner, unknown, and global history of the religious life of Italian immigrants in the United States.

The course will be delivered in a seminar mode and host contributions from notable external scholars. Students will be invited to give presentations, comment on the readings, and be actively engaged all the time. Attention will be paid to the original Italian documents or their translation. Knowledge of Italian language is not required but desirable.