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Avanti! Beginning Italian.

New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007. ISBN 978-0-07-321206-7. Accompanied by Workbook/Laboratory Manual, Audio CDs, Video/DVD, Online Learning Center Website: www.mhhe.com/avanti, Instructor's Manual and Testing Program, Instructor's Resource CD, *Quia* online learning center.

Avanti! is a brand-new, energetic and innovative beginning Italian text consisting of sixteen chapters that can comfortably accommodate the curriculum of a two- to three-semester sequence of Italian language study at the college and/or university level. The text consistently follows and fully integrates the interactive/multimedia approach to language learning that is so crucial in maintaining a high level of student performance.

The organization of the text is logical and precise without being rigid. Each chapter begins with *Scopi*, an outline of the material that will be learned. The most important aim of each chapter is to elicit immediate conversational feedback from the student. The first chapters focus on greetings, expressing likes and dislikes, asking how someone is, where one lives, one's nationality, describing people and things, etc. Gradually, the conversational goals become more complex and more challenging, and the student learns how to talk about work, plans for the future and vacations, expressing wishes, discussing the Italian language, and the regions and historical figures of Italy.

All sixteen chapters consist of four main sections focusing on conversation, vocabulary, grammar, and culture, all of which will provide the student with a thorough introduction to the Italian language. These sections, entitled *Strategie di comunicazione*, *Lessico*, *Strutture* and *Cultura*, are followed by a vocabulary list of all the words and expressions used in the chapter. *Strategie di comunicazione* uses the video that comes with the text to present the conversational forms that the student is expected to master. These are reinforced by practice exercises throughout the section that focus on working with partners, an important strategy in encouraging students to actually communicate in the target language. *Lessico* is the vocabulary section and deals with pronunciation and the introduction of new words and expressions. In Chapter One this section begins with the alphabet, innovatively presented through bright letters and corresponding pictures, and continues with groups of words and expressions used to describe people, daily activities, family, food, restaurants, weekend activities, clothing, holidays, education, professions, parts of the body, houses and furnishings. The *Lessico* section in Chapters Twelve through Sixteen skillfully ties in the vocabulary and expressions to be learned with information on the geography, his-

tory and culture of Italy, the Italian language and Italian society, information that comprises the cultural material discussed in those chapters. The grammar portion of each chapter is presented in *Strutture*. Grammatical topics are always manageable and clearly explained through precise examples and uncomplicated charts. The text is organized so that every fourth chapter provides a review of the structures studied in the preceding chapters. Further information on and expansion of the grammar is added at the end of the text in a component entitled *Per saperne di più*, which allows the instructor to make additional grammatical comments as time permits.

Cultura, the final section of each chapter, is divided into five subsections: *Ascoltiamo*, *Leggiamo*, *Scriviamo*, *Parliamo*, and *Guardiamo*. In *Ascoltiamo*, the student listens to presentations prepared by the instructor dealing with a variety of topics that include information on Italian surnames, the Italian family, the Mediterranean diet, fashion, music, education, health and holidays, among other subjects. *Leggiamo* requires the student to read a selection based on what was learned in *Ascoltiamo*. The selection may be a literary excerpt, an advertisement or part of a magazine or newspaper article that, once read, will be used as the foundation of the writing exercises in *Scriviamo* and the discussion and conversation practice in *Parliamo*. The *Cultura* section in each of the sixteen chapters of *Avanti!* ends with a movie clip taken from an Italian feature film that ties in with the particular topic under discussion. In Chapter Four, for example, the information on the Italian family leads to a reading and discussion of the Gonzaga family and culminates in a scene from Ettore Scola's *La famiglia*. The *Cultura* section is further enriched by *Tanti saluti da...*, information on important Italian cities given in a postcard format that continues on the video/DVD that comes with the text.

The ancillary components are carefully structured so that they integrate purposefully with the text. The Workbook/Laboratory Manual offers both oral and written exercises grouped under the same headings as those of the textbook chapters. This is an excellent organizational technique that promotes continuity between the material in the text and the extended practice exercises in the Workbook/Lab Manual. There is an answer key for the written exercises, and the audio program provides a corrected model after the pronunciation selections. The Workbook/Laboratory Manual also includes oral and written exercises that are related to the *Per saperne di più* section of the text. The audio program is an excellent tool for practicing pronunciation and reinforcing grammar. It is composed of fourteen audio CDs covering the textbook chapters, the *Per Saperne di più* section, and the end-of-chapter vocabulary lists. Putting the vocabulary lists on CDs is a particularly useful idea since knowing how to pronounce words correctly is the key to memorizing them and remembering their meanings. Here students are given the opportunity to listen to words and repeat them as often as necessary, an activity that is never given its due in the classroom because of time constraints. The *Avanti!* video/DVD is refreshing in its presentation of text-specific material. It is based on a question and answer format that is directly linked to the themes of the *Strategie di comunicazione* section of each chapter so that students are immediately familiar with the conversations. The *Avanti!* video is also very engaging from a cultural standpoint since it was filmed entirely on loca-

tion in Bologna, Rome, Naples, Siena (these cities are highlighted in the *Tanti saluti da...* segments), and their surrounding areas, and the characters are warm, friendly Italians of various ages and backgrounds. The *Avanti!* Website, www.mhhe.com/avanti, reflects the continuity of the text while offering interesting interactive material for both students and instructors. There are numerous self-correcting quizzes based on the *Lessico* and *Strutture* sections of the chapters, an online audio program, extensive vocabulary practice and links to other Websites. The *Avanti!* Website also provides instructors with the opportunity to create their own course Websites via a software program called PageOut, which includes ways of tracking students, as well as an online grade book. Last, but not least, in the large selection of *Avanti!* materials, the authors have created a very complete Instructor's Manual and Testing Program, which provides lesson plans, review games, additional activities, scripts for *Ascoltiamo* and the video, chapter tests and answer keys for the textbook exercises and the chapter tests.

Avanti! is not only an exciting and pedagogically sound textbook, but one that is visually attractive as well. The authors are to be commended on their ingenuity and resourcefulness concerning the layout and the look of the text. From the outset one is greeted by brightly colored page backgrounds (very effective in the table of contents), borders, drawings, and information boxes. Especially appealing is the idea of introducing each chapter with a painting or some form of artwork that reflects the designated theme of the material to be studied. All the attributes of *Avanti!* and its various components create a well thought-out, reliable, user-friendly beginning Italian language learning program that will be appreciated by both instructors and students. Using the *Avanti!* package can only promote a positive language teaching and language learning experience.

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Publisher's Response

It is with pleasure that we respond to Professor DeGregorio's comprehensive and glowing review of *Avanti! Beginning Italian*, a new introductory Italian textbook published by McGraw-Hill. *Avanti!* is the result of significant market research, editorial development, and of course, the passion, expertise, and creativity of the author team. It is gratifying to see that the end product is a textbook that has resonated so beautifully with Italian instructors across the country, including Professor DeGregorio.

Professor DeGregorio has adeptly described the guiding philosophy of *Avanti!*, in addition to providing a detailed outline of the textbook organization and content. Of particular note, Professor DeGregorio states in her review that the *Avanti!* video/DVD is "refreshing in its presentation of text-specific material," and describes how the video/DVD coordinates with the *Strategie di comunicazione* section of each chapter. We are delighted that she has made this observation as a great deal of thought went into the development of the supporting video program, filmed on location throughout Italy. Likewise, she has commented on the rich array of instructor and student ancillary support materials available

with *Avanti!*, including the Instructor's Manual Testing Program and student Workbook/Laboratory Manual. This information will no doubt be particularly useful to readers of *The NECTFL Review*.

We would like to thank Professor DeGregorio for her very complimentary review of *Avanti! Beginning Italian* and for sharing it with the readership of *The NECTFL Review*. McGraw-Hill World Languages is delighted to publish this exciting and innovative new introductory Italian textbook program.

William R. Glass, Ph.D.
McGraw-Hill