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The Teaching and Learning Center is pleased to present the *Ten Questions For Faculty* series. The series is dedicated to helping faculty to stay connected with one another while working remotely. Every week, a faculty member will have the opportunity to answer ten questions about themselves and about navigating the changes brought about by COVID-19. This week, we are pleased to feature Dr. Alessandro Cesarano, Professor of Foreign Languages.



Dr. Alessandro Cesarano
Professor of Foreign Languages

Where are you from?

I am originally from Italy. I was born in Milan and I grew up in Varese, a city in the Alpine foothills about an hour from Milan, in the Italian Lake District, close to the border with Switzerland. My family still lives in that area. I also have extended family in Abruzzo, Lazio, and Sicily. I try to go back and visit my family and friends in Italy every summer.

Which college or university did you attend?

For my undergraduate studies, I attended the University of Milan. I wanted to study humanities and liberal arts and I graduated in 2003 with a Laurea (B.A.) in Philosophy. One summer, I travelled through Spain and I fell in love with the language, the culture, and the lifestyle. For this reason, in 2006, I moved to Málaga, Andalusia to pursue a new degree in Spanish language and culture. Then I decided to move to the States. I spent the following 2 years studying and teaching at the University of Virginia and in 2009 I received a Master in Italian Studies. My passion for teaching world languages led me to the University of South Florida, Tampa where in 2018 I earned a Ph.D. in Second Language

Acquisition and Instructional Technology.

When did you begin teaching at FSW?

In Fall 2019, I joined the School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at FSW. I am very proud to be a part of such talented, passionate, and dedicated group of faculty, staff, and administrators. As a Professor of Foreign Languages, I am committed to fostering an appreciation for world languages and cultures, both in and out of the classroom.

What is your favorite food?

My favorite food is fresh, natural, homemade and mostly plant-based. Growing up in Italy, good food has always been very important to me. That is the reason why I am a big fan of the local farmers markets where you can find organic produce, fresh baked goods, and artisan food vendors. Apart from that, my favorite grocery store is Trader Joe's. I take my time to read the food labels and I stay away from food that contains ingredients you can't even pronounce.

If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be and what would you ask them?

Interesting question! Well, there are so many historical figures I would have dinner with. If I have to choose only one, I would probably say Bob Marley, since he was not only a great songwriter and musician, but also an influential artist. He inspired people from all over the world with his universal message of love, peace, and social justice for all. I would not ask a specific question, I would rather engage in a free exchange of ideas on how to make a difference in a positive way and leave the world a better place.

What is your favorite local restaurant?

My favorite local restaurant is Made in Italy, in downtown Venice. Great food, good service, plus live music on the weekends. They also have vegetarian and vegan options.

What new things have you learned or done as a result of COVID-19 & working remotely?

First of all, let me tell you I am very proud of my students. I did my best to support their academic goals during this challenging time. They worked very hard to complete this semester and did an excellent job. I admire them for their resiliency, work ethic, and perseverance.

Now, I am not new to online teaching. However, the emergency transition to remote operations in the spring semester has been challenging for everyone. This truly was an unprecedented situation, which required all of us to adjust our normal practices. As a result, I have learned some valuable lessons and I am committed to improve the design of my future language courses by making them even more student-centered. I also believe quality online course development is today more important than never. That is the reason why I completed the DEV 101 class and I became Online Course Development Certified. I have to say I really enjoyed the course, since it was a great learning experience.

To further enhance my teaching in online and remote environments, I am currently enrolled in all five Summer Faculty Institutes that the Teaching & Learning Center is coordinating. The Teaching & Learning Center, the eLearning department, and the instructional designers' team at FSW are very knowledgeable and helpful. We are very lucky to have this wonderful team of dedicated faculty, staff, and administrators who truly care about students' success. I also have to say thank you to my FSW colleagues who have kindly offered me support in this journey through remote operations.

How do you think COVID-19 has changed the way we do things or has changed your outlook on life?

First and foremost, my heart goes out to all those impacted by COVID-19 during this uncertain time. This is an unprecedented global health and economic crisis. Let me also say I am very proud of my mom, a family doctor, and my brother, a cardiologist, who have been working at the frontline, dealing with coronavirus cases since last February in Italy's hardest-hit COVID-19 area.

It is clear that the pandemic has changed the way people work, study, learn, and communicate. That being said, I think there is something positive that may come out of this crisis. For instance, pollution levels went down due to the lockdown measures around the world. As a result, we all experienced better air and water quality. In Venezia, the water of the canals (notoriously dirty) became clean. Furthermore, an international ban on the consumption and farming of wild animals has been recently

introduced, a step in the right direction.

I believe scientific collaboration between countries will speed up the discovery of a vaccine. Crisis moments like this one also present an opportunity: hopefully we as society will come together and learn some valuable lessons as we overcome this crisis. A global problem needs global solutions.

What are you doing (exercise, cooking, reading, etc.) to take care of your mental and physical health during social isolation?

To take care of my mental health during social isolation, I kept in touch with my family and my close friends. I also kept myself busy. I love cooking so I challenge myself to try new recipes. I also enjoy reading a good book, watching a good movie, especially the classics, and listening to good music. I recently bought a used guitar and I am teaching myself how to play. Furthermore, I decided to adopt a rescue dog. I went to the Humane Society of Tampa Bay and I came back with a 2 year-old, black lab-mix, who loves long walks, belly rubs, and afternoon naps.

To take care of my physical health, I have been exercising regularly. I love nature and the outdoors. When the beach in Florida was finally re-opened, it was a great stress reliever to be able to enjoy activities consistent with social distancing, such as walking, swimming, and surfing.

What advice do you have for your colleagues on how to navigate social isolation and changes from COVID-19?

To stay safe, positive, and healthy. And to take care of each other. We are in this together. We are indeed living in unprecedented times and we as educators need to support each other in learning how to navigate this new world. It is also essential to keep doing our best to avoid getting sick and keep doing our part to slow the spread of the coronavirus. I really hope things get better soon.

If you would like to be featured in the *Ten Questions for Faculty Series*, please contact Kelly Westfield, Coordinator for the Teaching and Learning Center: kwestfield@fsw.edu