



# Teaching Concerns

Newsletter of the Teaching Resource Center for Faculty and Teaching Assistants

Hotel D, 24 East Range \* (434) 982-2815 \* [trc-uva@virginia.edu](mailto:trc-uva@virginia.edu) \* <http://trc.virginia.edu/>

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## *Cristina Della Coletta, NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor*

by Clarissa Caldwell, CLAS 2005

In 1994 the Teaching Resource Center won a Special Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This grant, together with gifts secured by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, enabled the creation of three rotating U.Va. Distinguished Teaching Professorships. Each endowed chair recognizes excellent undergraduate teaching in the humanities. Cristina Della Coletta is the 2002-2005 Horace W. Goldsmith NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor of Italian. Cristina Della Coletta has come to conceive of her instructional mission at U.Va. as an "ever-expanding and continually renewed conversation" extending to colleagues, students, and the community. Consequently, she has transformed her Italian studies courses into occasions for discovery, analysis and growth. She encourages students to adopt an unbiased outlook on a "different" culture and incorporates their personal interests into the curriculum. According to Della Coletta, this

assimilation of multiple perspectives forms "the dialogic principle that lies at the core of intellectual action." In Fall 2002, Della Coletta commences a three-phase project on cooperative learning that focuses on team-teaching, team-learning, and technology. She seeks the most effective methods to incorporate "teams" into the learning process: What is the best way to select teams and design course material? How can instructors unify various interdisciplinary perspectives and integrate approaches? Della Coletta will also examine the role of technology in the planning, implementation, and assessment of interdisciplinary team-based courses. She plans to organize panels on each aspect of her research, involving faculty members from different disciplines. The culmination of her project will be an interdisciplinary team-taught course, devoted to the adaptation of texts into films across cultural lines. Through these endeavors Della Coletta aims to promote consideration of how collaborative learning can diminish disciplinary barriers and heighten students' ability to engage in critical thought.