**ECON 2260**

**Entry 7 (07/04/19)**

We spent the majority of class discussing immigration — in particular, we discussed the influx of Chinese workers in Prato that was mentioned in the reading. The Chinese immigrants found ways around the law to stay in Prato, and eventually formed their own community. I had no idea about this and I was both shocked and amazed by how the Prato-Chinese community developed and changed over the last few decades. However, what really struck a chord with me was how the article repeatedly touched on what a “Made in Italy” label really meant.

*Here our student gives a brief description of what we talked about/read about, and then writes about “what was new to her.”*

A couple days ago, when my parents were still in Italy, we stepped into a clothing store, and I pointed out to my parents that the store reminded me of a typical shop you would see in the streets of Hong Kong — except that there was a rather large “Made in Italy” tag hanging on the front of each rack. When we were leaving, we noticed the lady who owned the store was Chinese. I distinctly remember my dad saying, “No wonder this looks like a shop in Hong Kong. The people from Wenzhou just made these clothes and stuck the ‘Made in Italy’ label over it.” At the time, I was barely listening to him, but it came back to me as I read the article. However, it’s made me question the value we place on things like the “Made in Italy” labels on bags here and why we do that. When I first read the article, I felt scammed when I found out how many brands, including even the most high-end fashion brands, were using the Chinese workers in Prato as an easy way to lower costs while still being able to claim that their bags were made in Italy. Of course, labels like these would not be completely false, but I’m sure many would agree that something about them just isn’t quite right either. The more I thought about it, however, the more I wondered if we as a whole are undermining the efforts and diligence of Chinese workers. I think that the tendency for Chinese manufacturers to cut corners and “cheat” (as well as the sheer quantity of things being produced in China) has caused the “Made in China” label to have a bad rep. For many, “Made in China” means lower quality, and less delicacy. In many cases, perhaps it is true. I’ve seen wealthier Chinese people travel to buy regular things, like shampoo and baby formula, because they believe that as long as something is sold outside of China — even if it’s just across the border in Hong Kong — it is immediately of better quality. To some degree, even the Chinese don’t trust their own products. However, I feel that both the article we read about the Chinese in Prato and *Travels* havedescribed Chinese workers as exceptionally diligent and hard-working, and I have to question if cutting corners and being the cheapest option is the only reason why Chinese workers, including the immigrants in Prato, have continued to succeed and win the favour of large corporations across the world. While some factories and mills in Prato seem to have poor conditions, the writer of the article also described factories like the ones owned by Arturo and Luigi that were clean and organized and worth being proud of. Shouldn't owners who have worked hard to build factories with good conditions and assimilate into Italian culture be able to state that their bags are made in Italy without the backlash or doubt? In fact, shouldn’t the efforts of Chinese workers, no matter where they are producing, receive more respect and credit? I obviously don’t have answers to my questions, and I honestly don’t really know where I’m trying to go with this entry, but overall I just wish that there will come a day where Chinese workers and what they produce are more respected and valued. Yes, the labour may be cheap and there will always be people trying to cut corners and sacrificing quality in the process, but just because so many things are produced in China, I don’t think the words “Made in China” should always hold less worth than “Made in Italy.”

*This topic caught her attention, and she relates her own personal experiences to what we were learning in class*