



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Literary Representations of Florence: Space, Self, & the Other

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: FLOR 3010W

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: Mariarosa Mettifogo, Ph.D.

Course Description

The course looks at American and European literary representations of Italy and Florence mostly from a 19th and 20th-century perspective. Through the reading of texts in a variety of genres, from letters to travel writings, from poems to novels and short fiction, and the study of other cultural productions especially in the visual arts, we will analyze how the Italian urban and rural landscape as well as the Italian character have been and continue to be constructed by external observers as a sort of Other embedded in European and Western culture. After becoming acquainted with the history of foreign travels to Italy and setting the context for understanding the place that Italy and Florence have long occupied in the European and Anglo-American imagination, we will narrow down our analysis to works by British and American authors, highlighting how discourses of nation, religion, gender, desire, and identity inform their literary constructions of the Italian landscape, the Italian city, and the Italian people, up to our days.

The course fulfills the University of Minnesota Writing Intensive requirement. Students will be engaged in frequent and progressively more complex writing assignments culminating with a term paper on a topic of their choice. During the semester they will work on their composition skills and will revise a significant portion of their writing.

The course is cross-cultural in scope and methodology, and students are invited to interrogate their own position as travelers and residents in Italy as well as their own expectations, assumptions, and observations on the local culture in relation to the texts read. Our ultimate goal is to cultivate a critical awareness of the individual and collective implications of travel and of intercultural encounters as central to the literature analyzed in class as well as to the students' learning experience in Florence.

Course Goal

The course will train students to:

- Recognize how stereotypes are culturally constructed and perpetuated
- Identify mechanisms of cultural appropriation
- Acknowledge a variety of perspectives in interpreting data and behavior
- Read texts and cultural phenomena critically
- Understand the collective and subjective role of travel in different eras and cultures
- Recognize the impact of cultural difference on the definition of one's identity
- Reflect critically on their own intercultural skills

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students will be able to::

- Read and analyze literary texts in a variety of genres
- Integrate the reading of primary sources with secondary materials
- Read cultural artifacts in historical and sociological context
- Formulate original theses in analyzing literary works and cultural phenomena
- Support an original thesis by using secondary sources and textual evidence
- Compare texts from different authors, time periods, and literary traditions
- Recognize distinctive features of European and American literature from the 19th through the 20th century

Methodology

Much of our work will be based on the close reading of texts and on guided reflections, both in writing and in class, on the social, political, and cultural context in which the works were produced. Our analyses will be integrated by secondary sources and other cultural productions, including movies and artworks. The students' active and informed participation in class discussion will be supported by short lectures, study guides, and presentations and will constitute the core of the course. Indeed, much of the course will be an exercise in close reading, reflective writing, and critical analysis. Writing will be very much used as a tool to express and dissect students' responses to the readings and to their own Florence experience. Site visits and walks to places of relevance to the texts will deepen our understanding of the context in which cultural constructions of the Italian / Florentine space and character were produced.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for the course.

Required Reading / Materials

- Joseph Addison, Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, etc., in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Casa Guidi Windows (Part I)
- Madame De Staël, Corinne, or Italy (excerpts)
- Johann Wolfgang Goethe, The Italian Journey (excerpts)
- Constance Fenimore Woolson, "A Florentine Experiment" from Dorothy and Other Italian Stories
- E.M. Forster, Where Angels Fear to Tread; A Room with a View
- Margaret Fuller, These Sad but Glorious Days (excerpts)
- Henry James, Italian Hours (excerpts); Daisy Miller; "The Madonna of the Future"
- D.H. Lawrence, "Sun"
- Bernard Malamud, "A Pimp's Revenge" from Pictures of Fidelman
- Hester Lynch Piozzi, Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of A Journey Through France, Italy, and Germany (excerpts)
- Mark Twain, Innocents Abroad (excerpts)

Other readings referenced during the course

- George Eliot, Romola
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Marble Faun; Passages from the French and Italian Notebooks
- Henry James, Portrait of a Lady; Roderick Hudson
- Sinclair Lewis, World So Wide
- Mary McCarthy, The Stones of Florence
- John Ruskin, Mornings in Florence
- Vasco Pratolini, The Girls of Sanfrediano
- Stendhal, Rome, Naples and Florence
- Marco Vichi, Death in Florence

A class reader is available for purchase at *Lory* copy store. Other primary and secondary sources will be provided in electronic format.

Grading

Participation

Thorough individual reading of the texts and active, informed participation to class discussion based on the study questions provided weekly. Participation in a panel on one of Forster's novels.

In-class writings

In-class written responses to assigned topics and study questions.

Paper and revision

A comparative analysis of at least two texts with revision (final grade will average paper and revision). Four to five pages, double spaced.

Midterm exam

Short questions and longer open questions (2 hours).

Final paper

Original analysis of a topic of the student's choice pre-approved by professor. Six to seven pages, double spaced. A detailed outline comprehensive of a fully developed introductory paragraph and original thesis will be factored into the grade for the paper.

Students are responsible for printing out their papers and turning them in at the beginning of class.

Late work (including revision and outline): one third of a letter grade off for each working day.

Final papers must be turned in on the last day of class. Late final papers will not be accepted.

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation	20%
In-class writings	10%
Paper and revisions	20%
Midterm exam	20%
Final paper	30%
Overall grade	100%

Class Schedule

Week 1

- Introduction to the course
- Setting the context: literary and cultural constructions of Italian spaces
- The idea of Italy and the myth of Florence
- The city as text, the writer (and student) as reader
- The traveler as intercultural learner – stages of intercultural development

Writing in the streets: Observation and reflection workshop: describe, interpret, evaluate spaces

Week 2

- European travels to Italy since the late 18th century.
- An open-air museum: Italy and Florence during the Grand Tour and at the dawn of mass tourism.
- Tourist guides and travelogues

Readings: Addison, Piozzi, Goethe

Visits: San Miniato

Week 3

- The Northern and Southern character in European culture.
- Italy as “empire of stereotypes”: Italophilia and Italophobia through the ages.
- Literary and cultural constructions of the Italian character.
- Writing cultural difference.

Readings: Madame De Staël

Writing workshop: basic notions of composition

Week 4

- Caring more about Giotto than Cavour? 19th - and 20th-century British circles in Florence and Italian politics: between spectatorship and participation.

Readings: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “Casa Guidi Windows”

Visits: Casa Guidi

Week 5

- 19th-century transatlanticism
- Italy and Florence in the American imagination: pre-Civil War perspectives
- The intercultural journeys of Mark Twain and Margaret Fuller

Readings: Fuller, Twain

Week 6

Midterm (2 hrs)

Writing workshop: writing about literature

Week 7

Spring Break

Week 8

- Italy and Florence in the American imagination: post-Civil War perspectives
- “It relates to my youth and to Italy: two fine things!”: Henry James’s international theme and Italy.
- James’s American girl in Italy.

Readings: James, *Daisy Miller*; *Italian Hours* (excerpts)

Week 9

Paper Due

- *Blooming in the Garden of Italy: American women writers and artists in Florence since the 19th century*

Readings: Fenimore Woolson, “A Florentine Experiment”

Visits: Walk to Bellosguardo

Week 10

- On art and artists in Florence and Italy.

Readings: James, “The Madonna of the Future”

Visits: Galleria Palatina

Week 11

Paper Revision Due

- Light and shadow: 20th-century views of Italy and Florence.

Readings: Lawrence; Malamud

Week 12

- Italy as the Other

Readings: E.M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*

Week 13

Final Paper Outline Due

- Italy as Fate

Readings: E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View*

Visits: Santa Croce, walk to Piazza della Signoria and other sites from the novel

Week 14

Final Paper Outline Due

- The Italian perspective
- Closing discussion

Policies

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (i.e. readings) and participation in class discussions. If you miss any meetings without an excused absence from the on-site director, your final grade will be dropped accordingly. In the case of absences, it is the student's

responsibility to find out what information was given in class including any announcements made.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).