Florence and the Mediterranean, a Sea of Culture

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: FLOR 3012
Number of Credits: 3
Language of Instruction: English
Contact Hours: 45

Course Description

During the Middle Ages and in the early Modern Age, three great civilizations clashed for the control of the Mediterranean basin: the Latin West, the Byzantine Empire, and the Muslim world. But the sea was not just a theater of war, it was also a lively economic area, with trade routes crossing it from north to south, from east to west. Moreover, it was the place where different cultures met: This course will explore their reciprocal influence, with a special focus on art history and a mainly Italian and Florentine point of view. Topics will include: the impact of Islamic art on Western culture; the role of Byzantine art in the development of Florentine painting; the rediscovery of Greek classical culture and its importance in Renaissance civilization; the consequences of the fall of Constantinople and of the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Students will explore Florentine churches, palaces, and museums in search of visual evidence of the links between the city and the diversity of Mediterranean culture

Course Goal

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Master a solid knowledge of the cultural, political, and religious history of the Mediterranean Sea in the lateMiddle Ages and during the Renaissance period.
- Identify and understand the complexity of cultural exchanges between different cultures.
- Find references to Greek and Islamic art and culture in Florentine works of art.
- Analyze and evaluate historical, artistic, and cultural information from multiple sources.
- Master a small vocabulary of Italian terms related to course content.
Methodology

This course is taught through in-class lectures, discussions and out of class visits to museums, churches and other important places in Florence and Pisa. Please dress with shoulders and legs covered for visits to churches. Class attendance is absolutely mandatory and **only two absences are allowed for this class**. Please refer to the Academic Handbook for the attendance policy in place in the program.

Penalty for absences: No more than two unexcused absences will be tolerated. Unexcused absences are to be considered all absences for which a specific and valid medical certificate is not provided. Additional unexcused absences will result in a grade penalty; for the third unexcused absence, a third of a letter grade (approximately 3%) will be deducted from the final grade for the class. Also, two tardy arrivals (more than 10 minutes late) will be treated as one unexcused absence.

Midterm and final exam must be taken on the days they are scheduled. There are no makeups for missed work, unless evidence of medical need is provided. For the no makeups policy, refer to the Academic Handbook.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for the course.

Required Reading / Materials

This course is supported by the University of Minnesota Department of Art History and may utilize some resources from the department to supplement course materials.

A PDF version of all the readings will be available for download (details will be given in class).

Required readings

See “Class schedule” for assigned readings for each week.

the Light of Apollo. *Italian Renaissance and Greece*, Cinisello Balsamo 2003, pp. 139-49, 166-73.


**Suggested readings.**

Students can study in-depth topics of the course using passages of the following texts. These resources are useful also for preparing Presentations and Papers.


Further bibliographical advice will be given during the course according to students’ needs.

### 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Score or Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93–100</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90–92</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83–86</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80–82</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77–79</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73–76</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70–72</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67–69</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60–66</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0–59</td>
<td>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.</td>
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## Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class writings</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper and revisions</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Class Schedule

Unit 1

Mapping the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages

Memory of the classical past as a shared background

Discussion: What were the main cultural contact points of Greek, Latin, and Arab civilizations? What were the main differences?


Unit 2

The image of power: the influence of Byzantine models on Islamic and Western Art

Discussion: Why was Byzantine art seen as a prestigious model? How was this model used in Western Europe and in the Islamic world?

Visit: Baptistery of Florence and its mosaics.


Unit 3

Christian vision of Islam

Discussion: What was the idea of Muhammad in Western Europe?


Unit 4

European Islamic art and its impact

Imported Islamic works and oriental fashion

Discussion: Part of Europe belonged to the Islamic world during the Middle Ages: What kind of cultural Islamic heritage can we find in Western civilization?

Visit: Museo degli Argenti: Room of Giovanni da San Giovanni, Oriental art from the Medici’s Collections.


Unit 5

The Maritime Republics. Trade and cultural routes

Discussion: Was Venice a Byzantine city? What was the influence of the Fourth Crusade on its artistic and cultural life?

Pisa. The dominion of the western Mediterranean Sea, conflict with Islam and cultural influence.

Discussion: What is the meaning of re-use of Islamic art in Tuscan Romanesque architecture?


Unit 6

Visit: Pisa (counts as two lessons). Cathedral, Baptistery, Belltower, Camposanto, Opera del Duomo Museum, Santo Stefano dei Cavalieri.
Unit 7

Review for midterm exam

Midterm exam

Unit 8

Knowing the enemy: the Crusades from a cultural and artistic point of view. St Francis in Egypt

Discussion: What is the meaning and what are the implications of the meeting of St Francis with the Sultan of Egypt?

Visit: Santa Croce: Bardi Chapel, Main Chapel (Legend of the True Cross), Pulpit, Pazzi Chapel.


Unit 9

Florence and the Holy Land: from Pazzino dei Pazzi to the Tempietto Rucellai and the Princes’ Chapel

Discussion: Why is there such a long connection between Florence and Jerusalem?

Visits: Palazzo Rucellai, Tempietto Rucellai, Cappella dei Principi


Unit 10

Byzantine and Western art: Komnenian and Palaiologan models and the development of 13th- and 14th-Century Italian painting.

Discussion: Did Giotto really banish “the crude Greek style”?

Visits: Uffizi Gallery 1: Cimabue, Duccio, Giotto, Simone Martini, Gentile da Fabriano.

Readings: Bloesma 2013, pp. 37-60.


Unit 11

The rediscovery of Greek antiquity: Cristoforo Buondelmonti and Ciriaco d’Ancona

Discussion: The origin of archeology and the role of merchants.

The rediscovery of Greek antiquity: Cristoforo Buondelmonti and Ciriaco d’Ancona

Discussion: What was the goal of the Council? Was it achieved?

Readings: O’Connell – Dursteler 2016, pp. 178-206; Casu 2003, pp. 139-49

Suggested Readings: Kolditz 2013, pp. 183-216; 166-73; Koutzogiannis 2003, pp. 60-70

Unit 12

Gemistos Plethon and the development of Florentine Neoplatonism

Discussion: Neopaganism, Christianity and classical mythology

Visit: Medici Palace and Magi Chapel; San Lorenzo: Old Sacristy


Unit 13

The Fall of Constantinople.

**Discussion:** Why was the fall of Constantinople such a huge shock in the Western world? What were the consequences on the balance of power in the Mediterranean Sea?

**Visit:** Uffizi Gallery 2: Piero della Francesca, Botticelli, Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini.

**Readings:** Angold 2012, pp. 84-120;

**Suggested Reading:** Gombrich 1945, pp. 7-18, 22-4, 40-3.

Unit 14

The Fall of Constantinople.

**Discussion:** Why was Mehmet II interested in Italian Renaissance art?

**Visit:** Villa la Petraia: Florence, Livorno and the Mediterranean in Volterrano’s Fasti Medicei.

**Readings:** Poole 2011, 383-420.

**Suggested Reading:** Gatward Cevizli 2017, pp. 43-65.

Unit 15

Review for final exam

Final exam

**Policies**

**Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance
alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

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.