

Traders, Travelers and Others: Italy and the World
(with particular attention to Florence)
Professor DINA COPELMAN
Email: dcopelma@gmu.edu
Spring 2025

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines Italy's interactions with other parts of the world, paying particular attention to Florence. Going from the Renaissance to the present, we will focus on three distinct topics: The interactions between society, culture and public representation in Renaissance Florence; 18th and 19th century travel and the development of mass tourism; and, in recent decades, reactions to and the experiences of migrants, immigrants and refugees in Italy. Through these topics we will learn about Italian history and culture; get an understanding of how Florence—as both a real and imagined place—was part of the cultural imagination of the West; and raise questions about the ways “foreigners” and “others” feature in the development of national identities.

Our perspective will be interdisciplinary. We will be considering art and architecture; literary and media productions—travel guides, travel writing, novels and films; economic history and works on political ideologies and the exercise of power—from the Medicis to Meloni; and to understand Italy's current political landscape and the role of migrants and refugees we will turn to sociological and economic analyses as well as current media accounts.

Throughout the course Florence will be one of our major sources. Reading about the city will be accompanied by experiencing it first-hand. Florence's artistic treasures will inform us, and we will also visit relevant historical sites and current institutions. Specific plans for these visits have yet to be arranged; you will be informed during the course.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

NOTE: All written assignments will be based on class readings and work done in class.

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| Class participation | 20% of grade |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance, preparation, in-class assignments, class presentations, site visits and other additional exercises. | |
| Two Short essays | 30% (15% each) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-4 page essays responding to questions about readings and/or site visits. One will be due before the midterm and one after the midterm. Late submissions will not be accepted. | |
| Take-home midterm and final | 50% (25%each) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5-7 page essay responding to a choice of questions. | |

READINGS

Unless otherwise notified, all course readings will be available online.

WEEKS

You are responsible for keeping up with all communication and being aware of any properly announced changes to the class schedule, required readings and assignments.

1

Introductions, Perspectives

Friday February 28

Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

Needs to be read in the first two weeks:

Jean Boutier & Yves Sintomer, *The Republic of Florence (from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries)*

2

Florence in Italy

March 4 & 5

Nicholas Scott Baker & Brian Jeffrey Maxson, "Where in the World is Florence?"

Richard Goldthwaite, "Private Wealth and the Family"

3

Politics and Power in Renaissance Florence

March 11 & 12

Nicholas Scott Baker, "For Reasons of State: Political Executions, Republicanism, and the Medici in Florence, 1480–1560"

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, selections

March 12 Essay due

4

A David for the Ages

March 18 & 19

Stephen J. Miller, "The Piazza della Signoria as practiced place"

John T. Paoletti, *Michelangelo's David*

5

Midterm Week

March 25 & 26 No class

March 26 Midterm due

Friday March 28 Site Visit location to be announced

6

The Grand Tour

April 1 & 2

Rosemary Sweet, "British Perceptions of Florence in the Long Eighteenth

Century”
Nathalie Hester “Geographies of Belonging: Italian Travel Writing and
Italian Identity the Age of Early European Travel”

7

Travelers’ Perceptions

April 8 & 9

Caroline B. Brettell, “Nineteenth Century Travelers’ Accounts of the
Mediterranean Peasant”

Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, “The Toynbee Travellers’ Club and the
Transnational Education of Citizens, 1888–90”

8

The Modern Tourist?

April 15 & 16

Ian Forster, *Room with a View*

Baedeker Guide to Italy, selections

Film

9

20th Century tourists

April 22 No class

April 22 Essay due

April 23

Derek Duncan, “Travel and Autobiography: Giovanni Commiso’s Memories of
the War”

Malte Stenbrink, Fabian Frenzel & Ko Koens, “Development and
Globalization of a New Trend in Tourism”

10

They are Not Tourists

April 29

Tim Dixon, et al *Attitudes towards National Identity, Immigration and
Refugees in Italy* More in Common July 2018

William Chiaromonte and Veronica Federico, “The Labour Market Needs
Them, But We Don’t Want Them to Stay for Good: The Conundrum of
Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers’ Integration in Italy”

April 30 no class

Friday May 2 Site Visit location to be announced

11

Florence, Tourists, Students, Others

May 6 no class

May 7 Reflections

May 8 Final due

RULES OF THE ROAD

Academic integrity: George Mason has established institutional academic standards. Three fundamental principles to follow at all times: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from any type of source—book, person, newspaper article, webpage, and more—without giving appropriate credit.

Consult <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/home/gmu-common-course-policies/> for a full description of George Mason regulations and policies.

You are expected to check your email and WhatsApp on a daily basis.

We will go over, as a class, additional writing guidelines (citations, format, etc.), in-class use of technology, in-class conduct, AI policies and more.

I will be available to you after class on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Beyond that you should not hesitate to contact me (phone, text, email) at other times.