



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 late Middle 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.

- F. Ames Lewis, *Neoplatonism and the Visual Arts at the Time of Marsilio Ficino*, in M.J.B. Allen– V. Rees (eds.), *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, Leiden-Boston-Köln 2002, pp. 327-38.
- M. Angold, *The Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans. Context and Consequences*, London-New York 2012.
- H. Bloesma, *Byzantine Art and Early Italian Painting*, in A. Lymberopoulou - R. Duits (eds.) *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*, Farnham 2013, pp. 37-60.
- M. O'Connell – E.R. Dursteler, *The Mediterranean World. From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Napoleon*, Baltimore 2016.
- S.G. Casu, in *Travels in Greece in the Age of Humanism. Cristoforo Buondelmonti and Ciriaco d'Ancona and The Council of Ferrara –Florence (1438-39)*, in M. Gregori (ed.), *In*

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

- A.M. Giusti, *The Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence*, Firenze 2000.
- C. Morris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West. From the Beginning to 1600*, Oxford 2005.
- K.M. Poole, *Christian crusade as spectacle. The Cavalieri di Santo Stefano and the Audiences for the Medici Weddings of 1589 and 1608*, in *Physical and Spatial Interaction in late Medieval and Renaissance Art*, S. Blick-L.D. Gelfand eds, Leiden 2011.

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.

- D. Abulafia, *The Great Sea. A Human History of the Mediterranean*, London 2014.
- K.E. Barzman, *Islamic North Africa in Trecento Italy. costume in the Assisi and Bardi chapel frescoes of Francis in Egypt* in P. Arnade – M. Rocke (eds), *Power, gender, and ritual in Europe and the Americas*, Toronto 2008, 29-51.
- G. Berti, *Pisa and the Islamic world: Import of Ceramic Wares and Transfer of Technical Know-how*, in G. Berti, C. Renzi Rizzo (eds.) *Il Mare la Terra, il Ferro*, a cura di, M. Tangheroni, Ospedaletto 2004, pp. 73-92.
- J. Binous, M. Hawari, M. Marìn, G. Öney, *The Legacy of Islam in the Mediterranean*, in *Islamic art in the Mediterranean. Italy. Siculo-Norman Art. Islamic Culture in Medieval Sicily*, Milan 2003.
- S. G. Casu, *The Iconography of the Virgin in Italian Painting of the 13th and 14th Century: Observations on its Relation to Byzantine Art*, in S.G. Casu – C. Hadjichritodolou – Y. Toumazis (eds.), *Theotokos-Madonna*, Nicosia 2005, pp. 85-91. J. Folda, *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting*, Cambridge 2015.
- C. Foss, *Arab-Byzantine Coins: Money as Cultural Continuity*, in H.C. Evans-B. Ratliff (eds.), *Byzantium and Islam. Age of Transition. 7th – 9th Century*, New Haven - London 2012, 136-43.
- A. Gatward Cevitzli, “Mehmet II, Malatesta and Matteo De’ Pasti. A Match of Mutual Benefit Between the ‘Terrible Turk’ and a ‘Citizen of Hell’”, in *Renaissance Studies*, 31, 2017, pp. 43-65.
- E. Georganteli, *Transposed Images: Correncies and Legitimacy in the Late Medieval Eastern Mediterranean*, in J. Harris - C. Holmes - E. Russel (eds.), *Byzantines, Latins and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150*, Oxford 2012, pp. 141-80.
- E.H. Gombrich, “Botticelli’s Mytologies. A Study in the Neoplatonic Symbolism of his Circle”, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 8, 1945, pp. 7-60.
- R. Irwin, *Petrarch and 'that mad dog Averroes'*, in *Re- Orienting the Renaissance. Cultural Exchanges with the East*, G. MacLean (ed.), Basingstoke and New York 2005, pp. 108-25.
- S. Kolditz, *Cultural Brokers in Relation with the Byzantine Courtin the Later 14th and 15th Centuries*, in M. von der Höh, N. Jaspert, J. R. Oesterle (eds.), *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages*, Paderborn 2013, pp. 183-216.
- T. Koutzogiannis, *The Renaissance Metamorphoses of Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaeologus*, in M. Gregori 2003, pp. 60-70.

- R.E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza. Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2002.
- M. O'Connell – E.R. Dursteler, *The Mediterranean World. From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Napoleon*, Baltimore 2016.
- J. Polzer, “Andrea di Bonaiuto’s Via Veritatis and Dominican Thought in Late Medieval Italy”, in *The Art Bulletin*, 77, 1995, pp. 263-89.
- J. Rodriguez (ed.), *Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages. A Reader*, Toronto 2015.
- B. Santi, *Palazzo Medici Riccardi and the Benozzo Gozzoli Chapel*, Firenze 2000.
- C.M. Sperling, “Leon Battista Alberti’s Inscriptions on the Holy Sepulchre in the Cappella Rucellai, San Pancrazio, Florence”, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52, 1989, pp. 221-8.

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

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	
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%
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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?

Readings: O'Connell – Dursteler 2016, pp.1-32.

Suggested Readings: Abulafia 2014, pp. 226-57; Rodriguez 2005, pp. 7-9.

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.

Readings: Giusti 2000, pp. 60-97.

Suggested Readings: Georganteli 2012, pp. 141-80; Foss 2012, pp. 136-43.

Unit 3

Christian vision of Islam

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

Visit: Santa Maria Novella: Strozzi di Mantua Chapel, Spanish Chapel, Tomb of Joseph Patriarch of Constantinople, Filippo Strozzi's Chapel, Façade, and Scientific Instruments.

Readings: : O'Connell – Dursteler 2016, pp. 105-29.

Suggested Readings: Abulafia 2014, pp. 258-270; Irwin 2005, 108-25; Polzer 1995, pp. 263-89.

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.

Readings: O'Connell – Dursteler 2016, pp. 33-53.

Suggested Readings: Binous-Hawari-Marìn-Öney 2003, n.p.; Mack 2002, pp. 51-73.

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?

Readings: O'Connell – Dursteler 2016, pp. 130-152.

Suggested Readings: Abulafia 2014, pp. 271-286; Berti 2004, pp. 73-92.

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.

Readings: O'Connell – Dursteler 2016, pp. 81-104.

Suggested Readings: Barzman 2008, pp. 29-51; Rodriguez 2015, pp. 52-59.

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

Readings: Morris 2005, pp. 223-30, 341-9, 382-4.

Suggested Readings: Sperling 1989, pp. 221-8.

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.

Suggested Readings: Casu 2005, pp. 85-91; Folda 2015, 196-246.

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

Readings: Ames Lewis 2002, pp. 327-38.

Suggested Readings: Santi 2000, pp. 3-7, 13-5, 23-8.

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](#).