

# ACM Florence Programs(s) Descriptions of Courses Taught by Visiting Faculty

1971-72

**Lewis Williams, Beloit College**

**“Cultural History of Pre-Renaissance and Renaissance Italy”**

Emphasizing the architecture, painting and sculpture of that period (Renaissance Art)

1972-73

**Richard Howe, Grinnell College**

1973-1974

**Dino Zei, Ripon College**

**“The History of Cosmology from Dante to Galileo”**

The course will trace the changes in attitude toward the constitution of the Cosmos from the Medieval (Dante's *Divine Comedy*) to the beginnings of the Modern Era (Galileo's *Dialogue on the Two Chief Systems of the World*) and show the connection between the Renaissance and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Scientific Revolution.

1974-1975

**William Urban, Monmouth College**

**“Introduction to the Arts of Florence; History of Florence”**

1975-1976

**Richard Ring, Ripon College**

1976-1977

**Charles Speel**

**Monmouth College**

**“Christian History: Early, Medieval and Renaissance”**

An introduction to historical events, figures and symbols reflected in the art, architecture and culture of Italy, with special reference to Florence.

1977-1978

**Stephen Bailey, Knox College**

**“History of Renaissance Florence”**

This course will consider how the medieval Christian view of life was displaced in Florence by a secular and individualistic approach to existence.

1978-1979

**Susan Dannenbaum, St. Olaf College**

**“Medieval Romance”**

A close reading of the greatest late medieval romances. The course will trace the development of romance tradition from its early forms, in which psychological and physical quests are integrated, to Dante's new form embodying a transcendent emotional pilgrimage.

### **“Italian Renaissance Literature”**

The emerging Italian Renaissance, centered in Florence, produced significant literary innovations in form and perspective. This course will illustrate these changes in readings from Boccaccio, Petrarch, Chaucer’s medievalization of their works, and Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*.

#### **“Seminar: Dante’s Divine Comedy”**

An intensive study of Dante’s masterpiece in a facing-page translation. Analysis of Dante’s poetry will be integrated with Sandro Botticelli’s illustrations and with readings on humanism, political movements and the religious thought of the Renaissance.

#### **“Renaissance Literature: The Three Crowns of Florence”**

To parallel the London- Florence migration of the students, this course will concentrate on one of the closest points of literary contact between the two cities: the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, when Chaucer visited Florence in the year of Boccaccio’s lectures of Dante. Chaucer’s medievalization of the forms he found in Italy will introduce this study of the new narrative skill, vitality, and comprehensive humanism which “the three crowns of Florence,” Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, contribute to the Italian Renaissance.

**1979-1980**

### **George Saunders, Lawrence University**

#### **“Contemporary Italy”**

Informal seminars on current issues and aspects of life in present-day Italy. The first half of this course will cover the development of modern Italy from the unification to the period after World War II. The second will consist of presentations by outside speakers dealing with the problems of Italy at the present time.

#### **“Belief, Symbolism and Ideology in Italy”**

An examination of political, religious and aesthetic manifestations of belief and ideology in Italian culture. Focus will be on Renaissance symbolism, but attention will also be given to continuities in Italian culture in more recent periods. Topics will include: the significance of the Madonna; conceptions of heaven, hell, the individual and the state; eschatological ideas and witch-beliefs; and the importance of antiquity.

#### **“Florence: Urban and Rural Milieux”**

A study of the rise of urban society in Florence, the development of the city-state, and the ongoing relationship between the city and rural society. Topics will include: the changing geography of the city, its internal government, living conditions in urban and rural sections, and commercial and agricultural activities. Emphasis will be on Florence’s development during the Renaissance, but attention will also be given to broad changes throughout the city’s history.

#### **“Seminar: Millenarians and Mystics in Medieval and Renaissance Italy”**

An examination of millenarian and mystical activism during the medieval and Renaissance periods, using theoretical approaches from anthropology and history to analyze the origins and functions of millenarian movements. A major case study will be made of the movement led by Girolamo Savonarola in Florence in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **“Society and Culture in the Italian Renaissance”**

This course will consider the relationship among changes in economic and political organization, aesthetic life, and world view, with special attention to the emergence of a secular and individualistic society in the Italian Renaissance. The course will focus especially on the socio-cultural milieu of Renaissance Florence, and will draw comparisons between the Renaissance and other periods in Italy’s history.

## 1980-1981

**John Wyatt, Beloit College**

### **“Contemporary Italy”**

Informal seminars on current issues and aspects of life in present-day Italy. The first half of this course will cover the development of modern Italy from the unification to the period after World War II. The second will consist of presentations by outside speakers dealing with the problems of Italy at the present time.

### **“The Latin Liturgy”**

A close study of the influence and the appearance of the Roman liturgy in Renaissance art. The thought, style, and aesthetic principles involved in the formal expression of worship in Italy will be examined. The liturgical year as a theological and artistic structure will be related to the work of Giotto, Fra Angelico, Fra Filippo, Raphael, and Michelangelo.

### **“A Renaissance Conception of Human Nature: Niccolo Machiavelli”**

An examination of Machiavelli’s understanding and presentation of human nature within the context of Renaissance Florence, the Latin classics, Christian theology, and Machiavelli’s own life and fortunes.

### **“Seminar: The Platonic Academy at Florence”**

An examination of the context and thought of Marsilio Ficino in 15<sup>th</sup> century Florence. Ficino’s unique synthesis of Greek and Latin philosophical speculation will be explored in detail, including this thought on the nature of love, the figures of thought and speech, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. Attention will also be devoted to the establishment and routine of the academy itself.

### **“The Divine Comedy”**

A close reading of Dante’s major work within the context of Florentine history. Special attention will be given to the rhetorical style, classical themes, and medieval theology appearing in the epic.

## 1982-1982

**William Carroll, Cornell College**

### **“Contemporary Italy”**

A weekly seminar on issues in Italian life since 1870, with special attention to the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Italian state.

### **“Renaissance Humanism”**

An analysis of the concepts of human nature discovered in the works of leading representatives of Renaissance humanism. Special emphasis will be placed on the influence of Cicero and St. Augustine in the intellectual world of Renaissance Italy.

### **“Galileo and Modern Science”**

A study of the role of Galileo in the scientific revolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries with reference to the relationship among physics, mathematics, theology, and philosophy. The course will also investigate the connections between Aristotelian science and modern science.

### **“Seminar: The Divine Comedy”**

A critical reading of Dante’s Divine Comedy in the light of medieval theology, philosophy, and political and ecclesiastical institutions.

### **“Dante’s Florence”**

An examination of the cultural, intellectual, and political world of early 14<sup>th</sup> century Florence, principally through a reading of Dante’s Divine Comedy.

## 1982-1983

**Robert Hellenga, Knox College**

### **“Contemporary Italy”**

A weekly seminar on the contemporary scene, based on Luigi Barzini’s thesis of national character in his book, *The Italians*.

### **“Problems in Historical Periodization: The Renaissance”**

Readings in leading historians from Burchhardt to the present will compare attempts to define the Renaissance and answer the central question: to what extent is the Renaissance really “out there,” and to what extent is it defined by historians according to their own personal prejudices?

### **“The Renaissance Experience of Self”**

A study of the sense of self – one strikingly different from our own—that lies at the center of many important Renaissance works of fiction, biography, and autobiography.

### **“Seminar: The Medieval-Renaissance World View”**

Dante’s *Divine Comedy* will be the principal text for an investigation of the medieval-Renaissance vision of the cosmos as a meaningfully ordered hierarchy and of the possibility that such a “symbolic universe” can shape one’s perception (experience) of “reality.”

### **“Problems in Historical Periodization: The Renaissance”**

Readings in leading historians from Burckhardt to the present will compare attempts to define the Renaissance and answer the central question: to what extent is the Renaissance really “out there” and to what extent is it defined by historians according to their own personal prejudices?

## 1983-1984

**Anne Jacobsen Schutte, Lawrence University**

### **“The Machiavellian Moment, 1469-1527”**

In December 1469, five months after Machiavelli was born, Lorenzo de’ Medici assumed power as unelected “boss” in Florence; a balance of power among Italian states, assuring peace and political autonomy, facilitated an intellectual and artistic flowering throughout the peninsula. In May 1527, six weeks before Machiavelli’s death, the Holy Roman Emperor’s troops sacked Rome, an event that some historians view as bringing the Italian Renaissance to an end. Focusing on writings by Machiavelli and his contemporaries, we shall investigate Italian political, social, cultural, and religious life in this crucial era. (also taught in the spring)

### **“Seminar: Florence and Venice in the Renaissance”**

Using primary materials and recent historical studies to examine two contrasting Italian city-state paradigms, we shall try to answer a major question. Why did Florence (a commercial and industrial center that was the locus *par excellence* of the Renaissance cultural flowering) succumb to despotic control, while Venice (a maritime republic in which culture took a back seat to business) managed to maintain its political independence?

## 1984-1985

**Susan Ashley, Colorado College**

### **“The Self and Society”**

The Renaissance fostered a new vision of human power and limitations. Humans possess, remarked one Italian, “the seeds of every possibility and every life.” Using literature, philosophy, and other primary sources as the principal guides, the course will explore how Renaissance Italians conceived their place in society, nature, and the divine order.

### **“Seminar: Machiavelli, Mazzini, and Mussolini”**

A study of popular and theoretical conceptions of authority in Italy. The course examines Renaissance, liberal, and Fascist states from the perspective of the rulers and the ruled in an effort to understand the roots and nature of Italian political culture. (also taught in the spring)

**Robert Lee, Colorado College,  
“Contemporary Italy”**

Through films, novels, and readings on recent Italian history and current events, as well as class discussions and guest speakers, the course will be an opportunity to examine various aspects of contemporary Italian culture, history, and society. (also taught in the spring)

**1985-1986**

**Daniel Taylor, Lawrence University  
“Language in Action”**

The topic of this course is language, “the most salient and striking characteristic of any culture.” By reading Dante’s brief treatise on language and literature and Machiavelli’s response to it, by studying some language science, and by discussing language as a cultural phenomenon, we shall examine the major social and linguistic issues which systematically influence speakers of any human language. The course seeks to impart a formal understanding of language and of how language functions in society, using Renaissance Italy as a point of departure.

**“Greek and Roman Myths”**

A study of classical myths that “passed into the minds of the great artists of later centuries.” Lectures will survey Greek and Latin literature and the major myths transmitted therein, while readings and on-site discussions will emphasize those myths as represented in literature, art and sculpture. In fine, we shall strive to enhance our enjoyment and understanding of these classic myths by reading them as works of literature and by viewing them as works of art. (also taught in the spring)

**1986-1987**

**Salvatore Bizzarro, Colorado College  
“Contemporary Italy”**

Through novels and other readings on recent Italian history and current events, as well as films, guest speakers, and class discussion, the course provides an opportunity to examine various aspects of contemporary Italian culture and civilization. (also taught in the spring)

**“Twentieth-Century Italy Through Its Literature and Cinema”**

A study of present day Italy emphasizing the post-World War II period. Through literature and cinema, the emergence of democratic Italy is examined and discussed. Regional differences between the north and the south are analyzed in order to understand the organization of church, state, society, the economic base, and the recent terrorism that has culminated in the rise and fall of the Red Brigades. Field trips are planned and guest speakers will be invited. (also taught in the spring)

**“Literature of the Italian Renaissance”**

A study of the *Divine Comedy* (Dante), the *Canzoniere* (Petrarch), the *Decameron* (Boccaccio), the *Prince* (Machiavelli), and the *Courtier* (Castiglione) facilitates an understanding of the literary, social, political, and religious life in Italy from early to late Renaissance.

**1987-1988**

**Marcella Taylor, St. Olaf College  
“Contemporary Italy”**

Through novels and other readings on recent Italian history and current events, as well as films, guest speakers, and class discussion, the course provides an opportunity to examine various aspects of contemporary Italian culture and civilization. (also taught in the spring)

**“Literature of the Italian Renaissance”**

This course will examine primary literary works of the period, seeking to discover what they reveal about the culture which allowed them to flourish and about the literary traditions they used and

surpassed. Major works to be studied include Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. Images, styles and concepts that inform these works will be traced in other writings of the period, in other art forms and in the social, political and religious life of the times.

**"The Italian Renaissance: Myth, Text and Cult"**

In this course we will focus on the myths, texts and religious concepts and practices that were the sources for the artistic works of the Italian Renaissance. We will begin with a study of the relationship among myth, art and religion and explore a sampling of themes from Greek mythology, the Old Testament and the life of Christ. In the second portion of the course, we will become acquainted with the concept of sainthood by studying the lives and writings of some men and women of the Church through the centuries (e.g. Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart, Bernard of Clairvaux, Catherine of Sienna). Our study will culminate with a reading of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. All our readings will be correlated with the paintings, shrines and other artifacts in the area.

**"Dante and His Contemporaries"**

In this course, we will study Dante's *Divine Comedy*, examining its mergence of political tension, religious feeling, classical image, literary tradition and poetic vision. In doing so, however, we will give attention to texts of other Italian Renaissance writers, namely, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* and Petrarch's *The Canzoniere*, allowing the themes and forms of these writings to carry on a dialogue with Dante's masterpiece. A primary goal of the course will be an understanding of the culture that allowed such literature to flourish and that nourished such a high point of achievement in all the arts.

**1988-1989**

**Frederick Ortner, Knox College**

**"Florentine Sculpture, 1250-1600"**

This survey of Florentine sculpture will emphasize two major figures: Donatello and Michelangelo. The development of sculpture in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance will be considered, as will sculpture's role in the religious and political life of Florence.

**"A Traveler's Sketchbook"**

Leonardo called the eye the "window of the soul;" for him drawing was the fundamental tool to understanding. The purpose of this course is to learn to see more, to train the eye of the traveler. It does not assume any particular level of artistic ability. The class will visit sites in and around Florence to compile a sketchbook of drawings in pencil and water-color. This is in the tradition of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Grand Tour, on which tourists kept sketchbooks of careful topographical drawings that would fix in the mind the "experience" of the places visited – the space, the time, the light. The sketchbook we gradually fill should become a personal diary that helps make the light of Italy brighter, its forms clearer and more subtly ordered.

**"Renaissance Art of Central Italy"**

The painting, sculpture and architecture of Italy in the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries will be studied in terms of stylistic development and historical setting. Visits to museums, churches, and monuments in the city of Florence and field trips to various cities in central Italy will be an integral part of the course.

**1989-1990**

**Philip L. Kintner, Grinnell College,**

**"Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Italian Culture, 1200-1560"**

An introduction to the lifestyles of the workers and lesser folks as well as "the rich and famous," this course will use chiefly literature, drama, music, political theories, and chronicles, autobiographies and histories written by contemporaries to get a sense of the times. Not a survey, the course will

focus on about four periods within those nearly four centuries, and will attempt to place Florence and Tuscany within the larger Italian context. In order to take maximum advantage of our surroundings, some combination of field trips, tapes, theatre and concerts will accompany each segment of the course. (also taught in the spring)

### **“Renaissance Florence, 1320-1530”**

This course is designed to provide a rather detailed look at the internal political events, while relating them to social and economic groups and individuals, external pressures and religious-ideological values, always with an eye to the ways in which these influenced the arts and artists. Lectures, discussions and oral reports- sometimes in class but especially on-site – will emphasize recent scholarship as well as contemporary writers and artifacts.

## **1990-1991**

**Edith Kirsch, Colorado College,**

### **“Patron and Artist in Renaissance Florence”**

Structured around the role of patronage in shaping Florentine art of the Renaissance, the course will focus first on civic and ecclesiastical commissions in Florence and neighboring Siena in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and then on the art generated by Florentine patricians of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Florentine art and architecture will be compared with their counterparts produced at the princely Renaissance courts of Italy and under the impetus of papal patronage in Rome. Among Florentine artists and architects to be considered are Giotto, Arnolfo di Cambio, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Masaccio, Fra Filippo Lippi, Fra Angelico, Leon Battista Alberti, Botticelli, and Michelangelo.

### **“Dante’s Florence”**

An introduction to Florentine culture of the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries as it is embodied in and reflected by Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. In addition to the *Comedy* in English, the class will read and discuss contemporary and modern sources on the literary, social, economic, and religious environment that shaped Dante’s life and work. The class will also consider the appearance of Florence – topography, architecture, works of art – the memory of which Dante took with him when he was exiled in 1302. The importance to Dante of ancient Rome, as a place and as a concept, will be examined as well.

### **“Renaissance Florence and Antiquity”**

The term “Renaissance” refers to a rebirth of interest in antiquity. This course will examine how and why this revival occurred in art. After briefly treating the Etruscan and Roman origins of Florence, the class will investigate the continuity and revival of classical culture in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. A trip to Rome will focus on both ancient Roman art and High Renaissance and the Baroque revivals of the antique by such artists as Michelangelo, Raphael and Gianlorenzo Bernini. Reading will include both classical authors and fifteenth and sixteenth century writers.

## **1991-1992**

**Susan Ashley, Colorado College**

### **“Renaissance Thought and Culture”**

An examination of the ways Renaissance men and women lived and thought about the world. The course explores the family, workplace, and polity, particularly in Florence, and connects these “material conditions of life” to views of the cosmos, of nature, and the individual. The class involves discussion of readings from contemporary witnesses of society and from thinkers such as Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and Machiavelli. It also draws from the evidence of Renaissance life offered in the streets, buildings and museums of Florence.

**Robert Lee, Colorado College**

### **“Italy in the Mediterranean World, 500-1500”**

An investigation of Mediterranean power and culture from the decline of the Roman Empire in the west to the revival of Western power in the Italian city-states, with emphasis on Florence and

Venice. The course looks at the Mediterranean as an object of geopolitical struggle but also as a single cultural entity, rich in commercial, intellectual, religious and cultural interaction. It treats the impact of Roman retreat, the spread of Arab power and Islamic culture, the saga of the Crusades, the rise of Venetian sea power, and the cultural, economic, and political links of Renaissance Italy with the rest of the Mediterranean world.

### 1992-1993

**Thomas Sienkewicz, Monmouth College**

#### **“The Ancient Roman Family”**

The basic premise of this course is that the ancient Roman family was based upon inter-personal relationships which have continued to affect Italian society through the Renaissance and into the modern world. The evidence of ancient art, archaeological remains and readings in translation from ancient Greek and Latin texts are used to consider aspects of family life in ancient Rome, including relationships between parents and children, marriage, divorce, the role of women in ancient societies, the family in ancient religion, and sexuality in antiquity.

#### **“Classical Gods and Heroes in Florence”**

This course uses the city of Florence and its cultural heritage as a laboratory to survey the myths of the ancient Greeks and Romans and their literary and artistic adaptations in the Renaissance and in the modern world. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and other ancient texts are read as sources for Renaissance authors and artists. Class lectures and slide presentations are combined with visits to museums and monuments to study myths in ancient art, like the Francois vase, and in the Renaissance, like Botticelli’s “Birth of Venus.”

#### **“The Renaissance and the Classical Mythology”**

An overview of the literary and artistic influence of Classical mythology on Renaissance culture, this course shows how to recognize and understand mythological references in the literature and art of the Classical, Renaissance and modern worlds. The use of Classical figures like Perseus, Cupid, Venus, and Romulus and Remus in painting and sculpture is explored.

### 1993-1994

**Chiara Briganti, Carleton College**

#### **“With the Poets in Tuscany”**

The primary purpose of this course is to illuminate the poetry of Romantic and Victorian authors such as Shelley, Byron, Landor, Hardy, Swinburne, and the Brownings, a good portion of which was composed in Florence and had Florence as its setting, both by analyzing their texts and by examining those Italian experiences that influenced their general development, their ideas about poetry, and the course of their production. To do justice to the role that Tuscany and, in particular, Florence played in the Romantic and Victorian imagination after England had, in Sidney’s words, become “so hard a stepmother to poets,” we will introduce biographical and historical information, including comments on the place of Italy in the English tradition, Italian social conditions and political developments, and accounts of the artists’ travels.

#### **“Traveling Companions: Italy in the English and American Imagination”**

This course is concerned with the power of attraction that Italian culture held over the English and American creative mind in the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century. We will examine the ways in which a good number of English and American writers looked at Florentine art as a source of inspiration, found vital material in their Italian experience and/or used Florence and Tuscany as settings for their works. To follow closely the Italian life of these writers, besides their fiction we will read essays, travelogues, and letters. (also taught in the spring)



## 1994-1995

**Gabriella Ricciardi, Colorado College**

### **“Middle Ages to Renaissance: Cultural Confluence in Florence”**

In the fifteenth century, new interest in philosophy, science and literature resulted in a break from the Middle Ages. By studying important writers and works of the Italian Renaissance, this course will trace the important role of Florence and its artists in the transition to a new understanding of science, modern history and civilization. Students will read selections by a variety of authors including Buni, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Leonardo, Alberti, Michelangelo and Machiavelli. These works will reveal not only a new way of perceiving the world but also the flourishing of the arts and new civil and social institutions.

### **“Italy after Fascism through Literature and Film”**

This course will focus on the fascist period and the ideology that made it possible. By examining history, literature and film, students will consider the political, economic and ideological causes of fascism. At the same time, the culture and institutions of Florence will provide a view of the ongoing cultural and political debate. Students will read a historical evaluation of post-war Italian politics, several novels written between 1935 and 1985, and a critical study of Italian post-war film. They will also view modern feature films addressing fascist Italy and contemporary Italian society.

### **“The Italian City in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Literature and Film”**

This course will use literature and film to investigate various aspects of Italian cultural, economic, political and social history from the First World War to the present. Readings and films will especially feature urban settings. The course will treat some of the same issues raised in the art history courses offered in London and Florence, which study these cities during an earlier time period. Field trips will be made to the cities used both as protagonists and backdrops in the novels and films.

## 1995-1996

**Brenda Fineberg, Knox College**

### **“City and Country in Ancient Rome”**

This course will explore the question of how city and countryside, as physical terrains and as conceptual spaces, informed on another for ancient Romans. We will consider both literary texts and physical evidence (architecture, sculpture, wall paintings, gardens) as we attempt to understand why the notion of space figures so prominently in what we know of ancient Rome. Although the course will focus on the works of ancient Rome, it will provide background and serve as part of a continuum in the study of Renaissance Florence. Italians of the Renaissance emulated and drew upon the heritage of Rome, and the tension between city and country has been a persistent one in works of both the Renaissance and the present. Students will trace the theme in both literary and visual texts, including ancient Roman architecture and wall paintings.

**Stephen C. Fineberg, Knox College**

### **“Ancient Mythological Sources for the Art of the Renaissance”**

Although this course considers ancient mythology, it primarily explores Renaissance Italian thought by observing how the artists of the period represented ancient mythological sources. We will study individual Renaissance works like Cellini's *Perseus* and Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, as well as the classical sources that inform them. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Hesiod's *Theogony*, and Virgil's *Aeneid* will be primary classical references because these texts were among the most influential sources of myth for Renaissance artists. Students will read literary texts, study Renaissance art, and participate in field trips in Florence and other Italian cities. (also taught in the spring with Brenda Fineberg)

## 1996-1997

**Timothy Chasson, Grinnell College**

### **“Michelangelo in Florence”**

The rich collections and sites of Michelangelo’s sculpture within the city will be the focus for this semester. While examining all works available for direct study, including painting and architecture, we will concentrate on the Florentine commissions embracing sixty years of change. Issues of setting, function, meaning, audience and aesthetics will be assessed in light of Florentine history, Renaissance poetry, philosophy and other visual art, as well as recent critical perspectives.

### **“Urbanism in Medieval and Modern Italy”**

In this course we will investigate how urban planning has served as an instrument of political self-assertion in various types of municipalities from the eleventh to seventeenth centuries (city-state, court center, sea power, fortified city, newly-founded town, ideal city and capital city). Attention will be directed toward factors of layout, administrative divisions, class, guild and governing systems, property investments, building codes, and specific public and private structures in terms of their political, cultural, social and economic functions. In addition to Florence, Pisa and Siena, we will study the examples of Urbino, Venice, Palmanova, san Giovanni, Pienza and Rome, emphasizing sites visited on field trips. As a complement, we will examine social values set forth in the major Italian contribution to late Renaissance utopian literature, Campanella’s *City of the Sun* from 1602.

### **“The Urban History of Florence”**

Using the present as point of departure and continual reference, we will explore how Florence’s physical structure developed across the centuries as a function of political, economic, social and cultural forces. Contrasts with other Italian cities will sharpen our understanding of its changing systems of government, administrative and class structures, urban planning and public and private building, especially from the thirteenth century forward. The breadth of our survey will also allow points of comparison with London, including developments and problems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## 1997-1998

**Diane Mockridge, Ripon College**

### **“The Earthly Republic: Florentine Writers and their World”**

This course will focus on selected writings of some key Florentine authors, including Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca, Leonardo Bruni and Niccolo Machiavelli, to delineate the complex relationship between the physical and mental worlds of writers during the Italian Renaissance. Students in this course will study not only the literary texts of these writers and others but also the public and private spaces of the world in which they lived. Texts for this course include selections from Dante’s *On Monarchy*, Bruni’s *Panegyric to the City of Florence*, and Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Sites to be examined include the towers of San Gimignano, the Piazza della Signoria, the Duomo and the Foundling Hospital. Topics to be discussed include factionalism in Florence, the rise of civic humanism, and the role that gender played in the separation of public and private spheres. (also taught in the spring)

### **“The Heavenly Republic: Medieval and Renaissance Saints”**

This course will look at the lives of a number of medieval and Renaissance saints in order to explore a variety of issues in religious, social, cultural and intellectual history. Essential to this course will be the study of primary sources, both written documents (hagiographies) and artistic creations (paintings, frescos, statues, etc.) which depict the lives of these saints. Given the wealth of these sources, especially the artistic ones that are available in the city of Florence and neighboring areas, students will be expected to come up with a paper topic of their own conception which utilizes these sources to their fullest extent. Topics for discussion and investigation include the role of the

family in the development of the saint's vocation, the "urbanization" of Italian saints of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the changing perception of sanctity over the centuries.

#### **1998-1999**

**J. Patrick Polley, Beloit College**

##### **"Etruscan and Roman Art and Archaeology"**

This course will focus on the art and archaeology of Etruria and Rome. Florence, being at the northern edge of the loose confederation of twelve cities that constituted Etruria, will provide an ideal setting to study the rise and decline of Etruscan culture from the eighth through third centuries BCE. The second half of the course will be devoted to the study of Roman art and archaeology, spanning the time from the end of Etruscan domination in the sixth century up through the founding and consolidation of the Empire under Augustus.

##### **"Renaissance Science and Art"**

The interplay of science and art in Renaissance Italy is the subject of this course. Today the natural sciences and the fine arts seem to inhabit different worlds; this study of Renaissance Italy shows how these two now disparate groups of disciplines once infused each other with vitality. We will study the great individual artists and scientists of the Renaissance, as well as the products of their genius in the art, architecture and scientific papers of the time. Special regard will be paid to the interplay of art, science and technology in the architecture of Florence. (also taught in the spring)

#### **1999-2000**

**Robert Lee, Colorado College**

##### **"Italy in the World"**

The course examines how Italy has interacted with the rest of the world from Roman times to the contemporary era. It looks at Italian outreach through exploration, migration, commerce, religion and politics, and the impact of the rest of the world on Italy. The course focuses on moments in the Italian experience, such as Roman expansion, the role of Venice and Genoa in the Crusades, the voyages of Marco Polo, confrontation with the Ottomans, Italy's involvement in two world wars, and the commitment to Europe after 1945.

**Susan Ashley, Colorado College**

##### **"The History of Memory"**

This course deals with remembering the forgetting, with particular attention to the Renaissance. We will look at memory from two different perspectives. We'll examine the way people understood the mechanics of memory and the techniques they used to cultivate it. We will also explore the personal and the social construction of memory – who remembers, what they remember and what they forget, and how they preserve their memories. This study of history of memory involves reading and discussing contemporary texts and directly examining the many artifacts of personal and public commemoration, including portraits, tombs, civic art, and monuments.

**Susan Ashley, Colorado College**

##### **"Public and Private Life in Renaissance and Modern Italy"**

The course examines the different lives people live: in the home, in the marketplace and in the state. These distinct but interesting communities provide individuals with a place and an identity, but they do it in different ways depending on the culture and the epoch. We'll look at Italy now and in the Renaissance, exploring the differences and defining the similarities which exist notwithstanding the half millennium of history which separates the two periods. The comparison concentrates on the family, work, politics and faith and on the ways in which these spheres defined the lives on individuals. We'll rely largely on contemporary sources, including art and literature and draw where possible on the immediate context, Florence.

## 2000-2001

**Pericles Georges, Lake Forest College**

### **“Enduring Italy: The Shape of Urban Italy during One Thousand Years, from Cities of the Plain to Hilltop Fortresses”**

A search for the continuities of life within the devastating transformations of Italian city and family lie from the last of the Roman order to the civic princes of the cinquecento. Our fieldwork and our reading will focus on family solidarity and the contest between the family and the state as themes of Italian history.

### **“Humanism: The Birth of the Modern Mind in the Violent Crucible of Renaissance Italy”**

An exploration of parallel themes of cultural creation, including the architecture of family feud and family magnificence (*torri, contrade, palazzi*) and the humanist antidotes to civil warfare drawn from the ancient ideal of republican Rome: the imitation of the past, the reinvention of history as a guide to the here and now, the creation of artistic representations of the past as templates for present action, and, finally, the rise of a new human ideal, the *uomo universal*, who overtakes the medieval warrior and the medieval saint as the culture hero of a dawning new age. (also taught in the spring)

## 2001-2002

**Salvatore Bizzarro, Colorado College**

### **“Film and Fiction Against Authority”**

20th-century Italy seen through the prism of Fascism, Neorealism and post-World War II literature and cinema. This course will examine a group of both men and women writers and filmmakers. The course will focus on the Fascist period (1922-1945) as a starting point for an understanding of present-day Italy, and will include works that cover the spectrum of pre- and post-Fascist Italy. Special emphasis will be placed on those works that address the question of power and challenger to power, exalting the myriad ordinary, “unhistoric” people, whose lives, bloodied in every generation, make up events that are history. (also taught in the spring)

### **“Here’s Looking at You Florence”**

Viewing Florence from the present day back to her medieval and Renaissance past. From the time of Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, and during the next three centuries, the city of Florence flourished as a center, not only of the arts but also of civil, social and administrative institutions. This course proposes to trace and analyze this period through the works of writers and artists who are linked to Florence, paying particular attention to critical notions of authority, allegory, autobiography, artistic endeavors, and the interaction of literature with theology, politics and society. The course will attempt to show why writers and artists like Dante, Boccaccio, Da Vinci, Machiavelli, Michelangelo, Petrarch, Castiglione, Giotto and Savonarola made Florence the greatest cultural and artistic center of the Western world. As part of our classes, we shall walk the streets of Florence, visiting *palazzi*, houses, churches, localities and museums, to recreate a world that still survives and is a core of our Western heritage and customs. Let the books and the art tell the story, and contemporary Florence and her surroundings will make it come alive.

## 2002-2003

**Robert Warde, Macalester College**

### **“Inventing Italy: Landscape and Culture through Foreign Eyes”**

Italy has long been venerated for its great beauty and as a crucible within which classical culture, Christian religion, and Renaissance Humanism were combined to form the foundations of modern civilization in the Western world. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Europeans and Americans made Italy the ultimate destination on the Grand Tour, a journey designed to expose travelers to the critical sources of their heritage. Many visitors recorded their impressions, thereby creating a picture of Italy that depended not only on the material reality of its cities and countryside, but also

on each observer's expectations and desires. This course considers the invention of Italy by foreigners during the era of the Grand Tour and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It focuses on literary and artistic renderings, mostly by British and American authors and painters, with some attention to film treatment as well. One assignment will ask students to participate in this imaginative process by constructing their own image of Florence through writings, drawings or photographs. We will see how representations of Italy have evolved over the past 200 years, and in what ways they have remained the same.

#### **“Conformity and Resistance: Struggles for Identity in Modern Italy”**

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Italy was still a group of separate states when Napoleon invaded and temporarily controlled the peninsula. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, led by Garibaldi, the small Italian states threw off Austrian rule and united as a monarchy. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Italy participated in both World Wars, emerging as a parliamentary republic in the popular referendum of 1946. The establishment of a democratic nation proved a precarious process that suffered severe setbacks during the period of Fascism. Throughout these dramatic decades of social change, individuals worked to shape their own destinies, thus illustrating the complex relationship between single human lives and the forces of history. This course examines the efforts to create both national and personal identities that have defined Italy over the past two centuries. We will consider in translation a selection of fiction, poetry and drama by Italian authors from this era, along with opera, film, and examples of both painting and sculpture. Though our focus will be on works from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, major 19<sup>th</sup> century figures such as the novelist Alessandro Manzoni, the composer Giuseppe Verdi, and the Macchiaioli painters will set the stage for our discussions.

#### **“Italy and England: Landscape and Culture through Foreign Eyes”**

Speaking in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Samuel Johnson said that “a man who has not been in Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see.” Italy was the ultimate destination on the Grand Tour, an almost mandatory journey for gentlemen or gentlewomen from Dr. Johnson's era through the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This course considers a range of British responses to the landscape and culture of Italy, with particular attention to authors such as the Brownings and E.M. Forster, who were especially associated with Florence, and to painters such as J.M.W. Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites, whose connections with Italy were strong. In addition, we will examine, for purposes of comparison, some Italian visions of Italy from the same periods, along with Italian responses to British materials, such as Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth* or *Falstaff*. Assignments will be interdisciplinary in nature, featuring fiction, poetry, nonfiction prose, opera and the visual arts, including film. We will see how British representations of Italy have evolved over the past 200 years, and in what ways they have remained the same.

### **2003-2004**

#### **Marie Cort Daniels, Colorado College**

#### **“Through the Florentine Frame”**

Florence as a setting in literature, art and film from Boccaccio to the present. The city of Florence has served as both the theme and setting for poets, politicians, philosophers and painters since the early Renaissance. This course traces Florence as setting from Boccaccio's chilling description of the arrival of the plague in Florence in 1348, to Robert Hellenga's vivid recollection of the restoration of post-flood Florence in 1967. Firenzepiles from many countries and periods have turned to Florence as the backdrop for their works of art. This course examines how Florence shapes the imagination of writers and artists from the early Renaissance to the present. Student will trace the footsteps of artists, writers and film makers as they explore the Florentine locales depicted in their texts. Students will search out and analyze the history, myth and physical reality of Florence as depicted in literature and art, and echoed in her streets, mapping the geography of Florence to discover the symbolic sites of the city as text.

### **“Fashioning the Self in the Italian Renaissance”**

This course provides an introduction to principal themes of Renaissance Italy through the prism of self-representation in Renaissance artists and writers. In their autobiographies, written centuries apart, Dante Alighieri and Benvenuto Cellini represent their lives as works of art in progress. A host of new Renaissance genres – portraits, madrigals, sonnets, dialogues and autobiographies – document the emergence of the artistic personality. In their letters, journals, poetry and self-portraits, artists, philosophers and poets from Petrarch to Michelangelo celebrate, analyze and question the development of their own genius. Florence provides the ideal laboratory for the discovery and appreciation of the Renaissance personality. Threading the labyrinth of Florence’s streets and monuments, students can encounter numerous examples of Renaissance self-representation, like Ghiberti’s self-portrait on the Baptistery doors. In addition to observing the living museum of Florence, the class will journey to the courts of Urbino, Venice and Rome, where so many of the most celebrated figures of the Renaissance forged their identities. (also taught in the spring)

**2004-2005**

### **Jeffrey Hoover, Coe College**

#### **“From Commune to Republic: Origins of the Secular European State in Northern Italy”**

This course will consider the rise of the modern secular state primarily through the lens of Florentine political history from Dante to Machiavelli. This history is presented not only in the writings of humanist and Renaissance authors, but also in the architecture of its civic buildings. The churches and halls commissioned by the guilds, on the one hand, and the palaces and plazas of the signoria and dominant families, on the other, tell the story of competing ideals (republican and oligarchical) and the competing power of various families and corporate bodies. The political history and architecture of Florence also provides an interesting comparison with the history and architecture of other city-states of the region. Excursions to Siena, which has an even earlier republican history than Florence, and to Venice, with its unique political institution of the Doges, will allow students to further enrich their understanding of political dynamism and significance of northern Italy in Europe’s transition from medieval society to a modern and secular society.

#### **“A Re-Vision of Nature: The Italian Renaissance and the Rise of the New Science”**

This course will focus on the transformations of thought about the natural world revealed first in the work of the philosophers, artists and architects of the Italian Renaissance, including Pico, Alberti, Brunelleschi and Leonardo. Underlying Italian Renaissance culture is a new vision of nature as having an inner, and often hidden, mathematical or geometrical structure. The attempt to understand and emulate this inner structure produces not only a new art and architecture, but ultimately a new mechanics of the physical world. This new conception of the inner mathematical structure of nature will be traced from the Italian Renaissance through to its development in the work of Copernicus and Galileo, who were deeply indebted to this earlier Renaissance and humanist culture. As a result of adopting a new vision of the heavens, the planets and stars, which had been seen as divine entities moving in their own eternal cosmos surrounding the earth according to supernatural purposes, were now part of a single physical cosmos no longer centered on the earth. Consequently, by the early 1600s Galileo is led by this new vision of nature not merely to challenge the religious hierarchy’s commitment to a geocentric view of the world, but more importantly to embrace a view of the universe as thoroughly mechanical and mathematically discoverable, that is, one without inherent mystery. (also taught in the spring)

## 2005-2006

**W. Rand Smith, Lake Forest College**

### **“Italian National Development and Identity”**

What makes Italy distinctive? This course seeks to understand Italy’s distinctive national character by comparing it to that of its southern European neighbors: France, Spain, Portugal and Greece. Italy shares many fundamental traits with these neighbors, including Roman Catholicism (with the exception of Greece), a history of political instability and extremism, regional disparities and localist orientations, and legacies of monarchical and authoritarian rule. Italy’s uniqueness lies in how it combines a range of characteristics, including the Roman imperial tradition, a history of intense political fragmentation (and hence late national unification), a tradition of political thought celebrating “realism” and *ragione di stato*, the Vatican as a counter-power to secular authority, and the *mafia* as an economic and political force. These traits have shaped Italian collective memory, political culture, social patterns, and economic and political institutions. This course will therefore examine “what it means to be Italian” by comparing Italian national development with that of other southern European countries. Given the program’s focus, we will give special emphasis to Renaissance Florence – its society, culture, political system, economy and foreign relations. (also taught in the spring)

### **“Italy in Europe”**

How has Italy influenced European development, and, conversely, how has Europe affected Italian development? Beginning with the assumption that one cannot understand either Italian or European development without reference to the other, this course focuses on the mutual influences between Italy and its European neighbors, from the Renaissance to the present. Italy’s influence, for good or ill, on Europe can be seen in events as diverse as the Renaissance itself and Mussolini’s Fascism. European influences on Italy can be seen in such aspects as the importance of European, as opposed to national, markets for Italian goods and services, and the impact of both emigration and immigration on Italian society and economy. Parallels with contemporary examples can be found throughout Italian history, beginning with the dominant role of France, Spain and Austria in Italian affairs in the Renaissance period and continuing through the Napoleonic conquests. Our focus on these mutual influences will be largely chronological, featuring four main periods: Renaissance and European State Formation (1400-1600), Risorgimento and Early Republic (1861-1922), Fascist (1922-45), and post-World War II (1946-present).

## 2006-2007

**Ellen Mease, Grinnell College**

### **“Dante’s *Divine Comedy*”**

Close study of Dante’s *Commedia*, perhaps the richest and most influential poem ever written. A poet, a politician, a serious student of history, philosophy, and theology, Dante became the encyclopedic chronicler of his age. Out of the bitterness of exile from his beloved city, he forged a synthesis of the great traditions, both secular and sacred, in the perennial discussion of paths to happiness, or the highest good of human life. To understand and experience this work, we will immerse ourselves in the political, intellectual, and artistic currents of Dante’s time. Studying the poem in Florence gives us access to extraordinary site-specific resources on this turbulent period in the city’s history. Dante is also an author who is unmatched in his ability to mine the resources of the traditions of which he felt himself a part. Among the larger ideas that emerge from the poem, we will talk about political issues in the *Inferno*, discuss the relationship between art, literature and poetry in the *Purgatorio*, and attempt to deal with some of the theological and philosophical issues of the *Paradiso*, as well as Dante’s vision for political salvation.

### **“Renaissance Self-Fashioning: Florence’s Golden Age”**

An intellectual history of Renaissance self-fashioning during Florence’s Golden Age from Dante through the Medicis to Galileo. In our readings, discussions and site study, we will develop an interdisciplinary approach to the Florentine humanist flowering of new knowledge in the arts (painting, sculpture, architecture), letters (poetry, philosophy, drama) human services (“mirrors for princes” including *The Book of the Courtier* and Machiavelli’s political science), and natural sciences (Vesalius, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo). Readings will include Dante’s *Inferno*; the ethical philosophy and Platonic metaphysics of Ficino and Pico della Mirandola; contemporary accounts of Golden Age Florence and the citizens and princely patrons who contributed to her greatness; Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*; Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and his comedy *La Mandragola*; Galileo’s late 16<sup>th</sup> century contributions to the Copernican revolution. Site study of Florence Cathedral; Brunelleschi’s Dome and Ghiberti’s Baptistery doors; Florence’s republican and Medicean architecture; and sculpture and painting of Michelangelo and his predecessors (Massaccio, Donatello, Botticelli, da Vinci); the Galileo museum. (also taught in the spring)

**2007-2008**

**Patricia Vilches, Lawrence University**

#### **“Bella Figura!”**

Making a good impression is a true art in Italy. *Bella Figura* is a rather philosophical idea that permeates everyday culture and finds expression in Italian society in various ways, be it in politics, philosophy, or fashion. The city of Florence is at the heart of this concept, since the city itself represents beauty and presents a *Bella Figura* for anybody visiting it. Students in this course will grasp concepts that mold Italian citizens, such as *prudenza e virtu* (prudence and vigor, strength), *sprezzatura* (poorly translated as “nonchalance”), and *arguzia* (astuteness) through canonical texts, such as Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Machiavelli’s *La Mandragola*, Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* and Della Casa’s *Il Galateo*. Students will use the city resources to define and redefine the concept of *Bella Figura* intellectually and pragmatically. (also taught in the spring)

#### **“Il Sorriso di Machiavelli (Machiavelli’s Smile)”**

What were Machiavelli’s concerns when he delivered his *Prince* to the Medici? Burckhardt declares that “Italy at the beginning of the Sixteenth century found itself in the midst of a grave moral crisis” (*The Civilization of the Renaissance*). From this perspective, Machiavelli’s *The Prince* will serve as the anchor for understanding Machiavelli’s turbulent life in Florence. Machiavelli at once rediscovered and simultaneously created a political theory that deployed the author’s knowledge of the ancient world and his own political and social experience. Other works by Machiavelli will help us as we analyze his ideas of a unified Italy with a national language. The city of Florence will serve as the backdrop for Machiavelli’s life, a place where he found happiness and much suffering that he “distilled into pages of pure power and vitality” (Violi, *Niccolo’s Smile*).

**2008-2009**

**Nicholas Regiacorte, Knox College**

#### **“Fortuna e Natura”**

In a decaying city, amid growing terrors of plague and lawlessness, how might we guard ourselves against fear, cynicism and isolation? Considering the 14<sup>th</sup> century backdrop to *The Decameron* and Boccaccio’s *brigata* of storytellers as an example, we’ll ask how it is possible to escape our fortune and nature enough to celebrate them. To what hillsides, real or imagined, may we retreat and start fresh? What new order and culture may bind us together where old institutions failed? Through close reading of the *novella*, considering the frame that governs them, tracking dominant motifs and strategies in storytelling, and searching for traces of these things in contemporary Florence, students will attempt to answer those questions for themselves in order to demonstrate the relevance of Boccaccio’s work today. Students will experiment with the same themes and strategies



in stories of their own, relative to what they read and derived from their own experiences, and workshop them in class.

### **“Sheets for the Table”**

This course will explore the ways in which peasant tradition, superstition, and mythology (from the field to the table, hearth to the bed) shape Italian sensibilities. Toward that end we will study Italian folklore, in order to investigate its sources, understand its means, and measure its transmission into life after Unification. We will begin with Italo Calvino’s *Italian Folktales*, treating his collection as our source material, moving on chronologically to such works as Carlo Levi’s memoiristic novel *Christ Stopped at Eboli* and Natalia Ginzburg’s book of essays, *A Place to Live*. Through our reading, in conjunction with interviews of local Florentines, collecting proverbs and stories, students will attempt to reach some conclusions about *Italianita*. Whenever possible, we may volunteer for harvest, prepare meals together, or otherwise try to participate in those traditions that seem indispensable to an “Italian life.” (also taught in the spring)

## **Fall 2009**

### **Ed Burke, Coe College**

#### **“Italian City-States: Ancient Rome and Renaissance Florence—the Society, Economics, and Politics of Historical Transition”**

The course explores in a broad but focused survey the society, economy and politics of the city-states of Rome of the first centuries BCE and CE, and Florence of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, as both republics faltered, suffering transition to centralized rule. Among our concerns will be the social fabric of the two city-states, who ranked where in the social hierarchy, what were the rules that informed and shaped public behavior. A parallel concern will be the economy--who possessed what wealth, by what means, and to what ends. And congruent with these there is the issue of politics—not only who ruled and by what institutions, but how and why change in governance took place, as in both city-states political power came to be narrowly concentrated, in Rome in the hands of the “princeps” Augustus Caesar, and in Florence in the Medici. The course will highlight parallels and contrasts in the histories of two of the West’s most important city-states. The texts to be explored are varied. Beyond secondary studies, we will rely on the observations, critiques and impressions provided by contemporary eye-witnesses: poets, political pamphleteers, historians, letter writers, essayists, and philosophers, and we will examine as well contemporary visual texts--coin, sculpture, painting, and architecture--to see what light these shed on the dramatically changing political and social ideologies.

#### **“An Historical Construct - Women of Rome and Renaissance Florence”**

In both ancient Rome of the late Republic and early Empire and Renaissance Florence, the “images” we have of and about women have been created for us largely by men, and typically the images, whether written or visual, were intended to serve as affirmation of a male ideology. The course looks to explore the phenomenon of the constructed image of women in two of Italy’s most socially sophisticated city-states. There will be multiple levels to the analysis. An early concern will be defining the character and ideology of the ascendant male culture: setting the context. Within this world, we will explore what society dictated the official role of women to be—what were the constraints imposed by laws, what normative social rules confronted women, and what duties were women expected to fulfill. In juxtaposition to the analysis of established expectations we will investigate how women actually lived, conforming and not conforming within the constraints, and what praise or opprobrium they earned as a consequence. In the effort to get at the complex reality of women’s lives in Rome and Florence, we will also employ a variety of modern theoretical models, differing analytical perspectives, to help unpack and better understand the constructed image of women. Beyond the theoretical literature, the primary texts to be examined include inscriptions, poetry of various types, fiction, history writing, letters, sculpture, and painting.

## Spring 2010

**Diane Mockridge, Ripon College**

### **“Renaissance Florence: Politics, Art, and Intellectual Life”**

This course will focus on the relationship between politics, art, and intellectual life in Renaissance Florence (1250-1550). Over the course of the semester we will examine the evolution of Florence from a medieval commune, to a Renaissance republic, to an oligarchy controlled by the Medici family, and finally, to a duchy under Spanish power. As we look at each stage of the historical and political development of Florence, we will also examine key intellectual movements of the time (Scholasticism, Humanism, Civic Humanism, Neo-Platonism, etc.) We will examine some of the Florentine writers who best represent each intellectual movement (Dante, Salutati, Bruni, Pico, Machiavelli) and place those thinkers in their historical context and relate their ideas to the key political issues of their times. Central to this course is the idea that intellectual endeavors are a product of their times and reflect the issues and concerns of their political milieu. We will see throughout this course that artistic endeavors can also reflect the current political and intellectual ideology of the day, and can be used to promote certain ways of thinking. Throughout the course, as we explore the interconnectedness of politics, art, and intellectual life during the Italian Renaissance, students will critically analyze texts, whether they are philosophical treatises or statues from the fifteenth century, and place them in their larger historical context. By the end of the course, students will have a broad understanding of Renaissance Florence, its political history, its major thinkers, and many of its famous works of art.

## Fall 2010

**Bonnie Koestner, Lawrence University**

### **“Celebrating the City: the Image of Florence as Shaped Through the Arts”**

Nothing more beautiful or wonderful than Florence can be found anywhere in the world”, wrote historian Leonardo Bruni in 1403. The citizens of renaissance Florence proclaimed the power, wealth and piety of their city through the arts, and left a rich cultural heritage that still surrounds Florence with a unique and compelling mystique. This course will examine the circumstances that fostered such a flowering of the arts, the works that were particularly created to promote the status and beauty of the city, and the reaction of past and present Florentines to their extraordinary home. The city’s civic and religious monuments will often be our classroom as we explore the artistic manifestations of faith, family, philosophy, and politics. Transitioning from the renaissance roots of Florence’s image as a cultural Mecca to its effect upon modern citizens and visitors, we will interview current residents of the city, study the 1966 flood that threatened Florence’s artistic treasures, and view a comic opera that portrays renaissance Florence and family pride from a 20<sup>th</sup> century perspective.

### **“The Professional Artist in Renaissance Florence”**

This course will examine the professional life of the renaissance Florentine artist, from his apprenticeship in a workshop to the production of works for important patrons. Among the topics to be considered are the relationship between masters, assistants and apprentices, the guild system that fostered and controlled artistic output, agreements and balance of power between patrons and artists, and the socio-economic conditions that contributed to the growing demand for art and the elevation of the artist’s status from craftsman to independent creator. These and other matters related to the practical life of the artist will be addressed through a combination of lecture, discussion, site visits, and readings from primary and secondary sources. During site visits we will have the opportunity to observe artists and artisans who are maintaining some of the same techniques used in the renaissance.

## Spring 2011

**Thomas Sienkewicz, Monmouth College**

### **“Florentia and Firenze: Ancient Rome and Classical Mythology in Modern Florence”**

The focus of this course is the classical heritage and Roman origins of the city of Florence. The goal is to engage you actively in observing the ways in which classical culture, and especially classical mythology, is woven into the identity of Florence. You will also see how classical themes are incorporated widely into the public architecture of the city and how the same themes from classical mythology are used by Italian artists in paintings, sculpture and artwork on display in the museums of Florence. Typically the class will use the city of Florence as a classroom. You will study public buildings with classical themes on site and look for artwork with classical themes in museums. You will also come to understand Florence as a Roman as well as Renaissance city by examining the archaeological evidence for the Roman city of Florentia, founded by Julius Caesar in the first century BCE. You will participate in walking tours of the city in order to experience Florence in from a different perspective, namely as an ancient Roman city, and will come to appreciate how the basic features of the ancient city, namely, its Forum, Amphitheatre, walls, etc., have determined the contours of modern Florence.

## Fall 2011

**Katy Stravreva, Cornell College**

### **“Weaving the Tale: Literary and Visual Art Narratives of Renaissance Florence”**

Studying the cupola mosaics of the Florence Baptistery, one notes four biblical narratives: the history of the world from the Creation to the Flood and the lives of Joseph, Jesus, and John the Baptist. Arranged in four separate bands, the stories can be read horizontally and thus chronologically, and vertically, i.e. typologically and allegorically. Italo Calvino, the most widely translated contemporary Italian master of storytelling, employs a similar strategy in his short story cycles *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* and *The Tavern of Crossed Destinies*. The stories in these cycles, told through a sequence of fifteenth-century French and Italian tarot cards, and illustrated with reproductions of the cards, can be read chronologically, as arranged in the printed book, or else the reading can follow the arrangement of the cards (for instance, cross-wise or from back to front). There is yet another dimension to Calvino’s narrative strategy and to the narrative of the Baptistery mosaic artist, Gaddo Gaddi. Just as the Baptistery visual narratives are inspired by Biblical stories, Calvino’s stories reprise episodes from Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, inviting multiple, layered narrative arrangements. Italian visual and language artists are especially fond of such narrative inter-weaving. Taking advantage of on-site explorations of room and furniture art in Florentine palazzos and of church art in Florence and Siena, we will analyze the narrative structures of art objects designed for daily consumption and reflection. We will study the interfaces of these narrative structures with tales and tale cycles by authors from the Italian Renaissance or authors writing about the Italian Renaissance. The goal is to develop an understanding of the close, lived relationship between the world of Renaissance Florentines and ancient or Christian history, of the porous boundaries between modernity and history, the secular and the sacred in the Renaissance. We will also pose the question about the state of these boundaries today, based on the modern readings and your lived experience of present-day Italian culture.

### **“Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and the City of Florence”**

In this course we will study Dante’s *Divine Comedy* in the poet’s cultural milieu, in sites that nourished his creative imagination. We will approach the intricately woven poem the way we map a city: starting with its overall shape, the principles of its organization, the range of its characters, then exploring in analytical detail the barren expanses and dark alleys of *Inferno*, the artists’ workshops of *Purgatorio*, and the orderly, yet magical civic landscape of *Paradiso*. As Catherine Keen argues, “political ideas about the organization of human life into cities, kingdoms, that form so

clear a strand in the *Commedia*, are communicated in a language, form and style that their author made immediately accessible and relevant to an Italian, urban audience.” We will study this language and the poetic traditions it evokes and revises (Biblical and classical literature, medieval lyric, courtly romance, the allegorical tradition). We will also study the poem’s interfaces with the visual and literary art that its original “readers,” including those who heard it read aloud in the piazzas of Florence, would have been so familiar with (church art representations of religious themes such as the Last Judgment, saints’ lives, biblical narratives; panel paintings, etc.). Finally, we will discuss the *Commedia*’s commentary on the political divisiveness and turmoil of Dante’s era and its envisioning of imperial utopia. The course will be taught in English, but we will use a bilingual edition of the *Commedia* and on occasion, will sound out Dante’s cadences. Every week, we will take our books to relevant sites in Florence and nearby Tuscan cities to unravel significances generated at the intersection of locale and literary and artistic

### **Spring 2012**

**Ruth Caldwell, Luther College**

#### **“Renaissance Men and Women in Dialogue”**

This course will focus on the relationship between men and women in Renaissance Italy, as seen in selected primary sources. In the period between 1300 and 1600, classical models were important not only in visual art but also literature, where the influence of Plato and Cicero resulted in dialogues that used real people as interlocutors who spoke not only about abstract topics but also of how to live one’s life. In this course we will read some actual dialogues, but we will also imagine the dialogue created by the juxtaposition of works written independently by men and women, often in response to each other. During site visits in Florence and other parts of Italy we will determine to what extent these conversations are contextualized in the visual art and material surroundings of the time. By the end of this course, the student should be able to 1) identify and discuss the significance of some important male and female writers of the Italian Renaissance, 2) situate these writers in their material and historical reality in order to appreciate the use of primary sources in constructing historical knowledge, including that of gender, and 3) discuss the idea of dialogue and conversation and comment on contemporary Italian culture with reference to its distinguished past.