



# Florence & the Mediterranean, a Sea of Culture

## Course Details

**Course Designator & Number: FLOR 3012**

**Number of Credits: 3**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**Contact Hours: 45 (direct and indirect)**

**Instructor: Prof. Stefano G. Casu, Ph.D.**

## 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 Objectives

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.

## Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for the course, but students must be highly motivated and demonstrate their ability to work independently. The course is held in English, with some Latin/Italian/Greek/Arabic terminology related to the period examined.

## Required Reading / Materials

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

### Required Readings

Selections from the following texts are assigned for each class (see page numbers under “Class schedule”):

- 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.

### 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 Bardì 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.
- 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 an 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

## 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 in class	15%
Mid-term exam	20%
Response exam	10%
Research paper	25%
Final paper	30%
<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Assessment Details

### Response Paper

One paper (3 pages) on the topic of one of the lessons of the first five weeks. Students should write a personal synthesis of the lesson based on readings (both required and suggested) and on class notes. The response paper is due on February 14.

### Research Paper

One paper (6-7 pages) on a significant topic related to the course that the student finds particularly interesting from his or her point of view. Topics have to be approved by the professor. On March 20, a workshop on research papers will be held: students will present the topic they chose, explaining why they think it is an interesting one, how it is related to the course and how they are going to organize their papers. Other students and the teacher will help, giving advice, asking questions and suggesting ideas. The research paper is due on April 17.

In both papers, following the guidelines of writing enriched curriculum (WEC) project, students are expected to be able to:

- Minimize grammatical and spelling errors,
- Organize a consistent and clear text,
- Provide accurate and detailed historical contexts for art objects, historical actors, ideas and events.

All sources must be quoted at the end of the paper: students are strongly advised to use Suggested readings (see “Texts and resources” and “Class schedule”) and other scholarly sources to be found in the Study Center’s Library and online. The instructor is ready to give further bibliographical advice according to students’ needs.

### **Exams**

The midterm and the final exam will test students’ knowledge of ideas, cultural connections and works of art covered in class and during visits. Students will be expected to write short texts on topics discussed during the course.

### **Discussion**

At the end of each lesson held in class there will be a group discussion about topics listed in class schedule. Students should take part in giving their opinion (based on the Required readings), answering and asking questions. Class discussions will affect the participation grade.

# Course Content

## 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 & 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 & Its Impact

#### Imported Islamic Works & 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-Marîñ-Öney 2003, n.p.; Mack 2002, pp. 51-73.

## Unit 5

### The Maritime Republics. Trade & Cultural Routes I: Venice. Its Relation with Byzance & with Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

**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.

**Trip to Pisa.** Cathedral, Baptistery, Belltower, Camposanto, Opera del Duomo Museum, Santo Stefano dei Cavalieri. Counts as two lessons

## Unit 6

### Knowing the Enemy: the Crusades from a Cultural & 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.  
(Meeting in front of the façade of the church)

**(Response Paper due)**

### **Readings**

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

### **Suggested Readings:**

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

## **Unit 7**

### **Review for Mid-Term Exam**

### **Midterm Exam**

## **Unit 8**

- Sicily study tour Group 1
- Spring break Group 2

## **Unit 9**

- Sicily study tour Group 2
- Spring break Group 1

## **Unit 10**

### **Byzantine & Western Art: Komnenian & Palaiologan Models & the Development of 13th- & 14th-Century Italian Painting.**

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

**Visits:** Uffizi Gallery 1

**Readings:** Bloesma 2013, pp. 37-60.

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

## Unit 11

### **Florence & the Holy Land: from Pazzino dei Pazzi to the Tempietto Rucellai & the Princes' Chapel**

#### **Workshop on Research Papers**

- Students will present the topic of their choice, why they think it is an interesting one, how it is related to the course and how they are organizing their papers. Class and teacher will help giving advice, asking questions, suggesting ideas.

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

## Unit 12

### **The Rediscovery of Greek Antiquity: Cristoforo Buondelmonti & Ciriaco d'Ancona**

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

### **The Council of Ferrara & Florence & the Development of Florentine Neoplatonism**

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

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

## Unit 13

### **Gemistos Plethon & the Development of Florentine Neoplatonism**

**Discussion:** How did philosophy influence Renaissance art?

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

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

## Unit 14

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

Visit: Uffizi Gallery 2

## Unit 15

**The Fall of Constantinople. Mehmet II & the Image of the Turks in Italian Art.**

**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?

**Conclusion and Review for the Final Exam (Research paper due)**

**Readings:** Anglod 2012, pp. 84-120

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

## Unit 16

**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](#).