

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: Italy, the Journey and the Self (ENG.366)
Credits: 3 Credits
Instructor: Gabriela Dragnea Horvath; gab_drag@yahoo.it



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OFFICE HOURS: THURSDAY, 9:30-10:30

SCHEDULE: MON, TUE, THUR 8.30-9.30

ROOM:

PREREQUISITES

One 200 level English course or the equivalent.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Protagonists of an important experience abroad, the students will be solicited to reflect on the journey in its archetypal, metaphysical, and aesthetic dimensions, following the subtle interplay of reality and imagination. They will explore Italian shores with Homer's Ulysses and visit the underworld with Virgil's Aeneas, they will encounter Satan and God together with Dante, travel to the Far-East with the Venetian merchant Marco Polo and join Columbus on his discovery of the New World. The perception of otherness as invented geography, fantastic animals, monstrous races or religious difference, mingles with the spirit of adventure, the desire to cross borders, to conquer the unknown in an absorbing search for the self.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The first aim of the course is to stimulate the students' awareness of the intellectual and emotional value of their experience abroad. General aspects concerning the journey like: anticipation, the journey as self-quest, life as a journey, the journey as knowledge of the other will be addressed in their personal experience, in ancient and medieval epic, Marco Polo's report on the Far-East and in the first documents concerning the discovery of America. The readings are connected with Italy.

The full immersion in the great epic journeys of the past: Homer, Virgil, Dante reveals how poetry contributes to shaping space as a mental construct, endows geography with myths and gives an opportunity to readers to travel in imagination. Ulysses is the first Greek traveller who 'touched' Italian shores and his adventures entered Roman and later Italian mythology. This is confirmed by Virgil's Aeneid and also by today's geographical names (the Circeo. etc). Virgil has Homer as a model and starts his poem, just like the Odyssey with the end of the Trojan war, producing a journey with a different meaning: whereas the proud Ulysses learns to be humble and turns back to his family, Aeneas, expressing the Roman ethos, leaves his place in order to conquer another nation and become the mythical founder of an empire. Dante has Virgil as a model and a guide in his Divine Comedy. While Virgil is the first epic poet to produce an 'accurate', obviously imaginary description of the underworld, Dante goes further, giving us a rigorous configuration of hell, creating the purgatory in the Southern hemisphere, placing the earthly paradise on top of it and visiting the heavenly spheres and the Empyrean. His image of the 'other world' is the most complete and his Divine Comedy the epitome of the spiritual and cultural journey.

Imaginary journeys described by poets were taken to be true by the readers. On the other hand, reports on real travels were imbued with fantastical elements. Reality and fantasy could not be separated in a culture based on mythical thought. An example is Marco Polo, a contemporary of Dante, who travelled with his father and uncle, two Venetian merchants to the Far East and spent time

at Kublai Khan's court. His report, recounted by Rustichello da Pisa, is an interesting literary case: it became very popular and continued for centuries to be the text of authority on the Arab world, China, India, Japan. Misinterpretation of his statements by the illustrator of the book and stereotypes of European imagination populated the east with unicorns, dragons and monstrous human races (dog-headed, one-legged people, etc.) Polo's mention of the immensely rich oriental cities will enflame imagination for another two centuries, until someone like Columbus decides to find another way to India. He combines practical knowledge, religious fervour and fantasy. The Bible, but also books like Marco Polo's *Millione* and the *Divine Comedy* inspired him. When he reached the shores of the New World he expected to see Chipangu (Japan) and after realizing that Polo's description did not correspond to what he was seeing, he decided to rely on Dante, and declared he had discovered the earthly paradise exactly where his compatriot had located it.

The authority of narrated journeys, either real or imaginary, stands out in a context where the Word was the foundation of the world, as the Genesis and St. John's Gospel informed. The word stimulates journeys but also describes them. No journey is complete unless it has been communicated to others. With this idea in mind the students are required to write their papers, reflecting on journeys of the past, but also on their own Italian journey.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Every session consists in lecture and analysis of text, illustrations, engravings, maps, aimed at providing the students with theoretical and visual instruments which may allow them to approach the journey in general (including life as a journey) and their own Italian journey in particular from different perspectives, insisting on the complex interplay of myth, historical fact, and imaginary report. At the same time, the students will be assigned guided home readings to present in class and will be stimulated to engage dialogues on the most intriguing issues. Understanding how ideas and beliefs contribute to our perception of cultural difference and our representations of the world is the main objective.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- manifest an increased awareness of the intellectual and emotional value of their experience abroad, completing their direct knowledge of Italy and of their own country with their literary pre-modern and early modern representations.
- evaluate in a comparative perspective contemporary approaches to cultural difference versus ancient, medieval or Renaissance treatment of otherness.
- get a deeper insight into the intricate relation between exploration of reality and mythology
- write a paper on the topic of the journey combining their own experiences with the texts analyzed in class.

GRADING AND OTHER POLICIES

The final grade takes into account the following requirements:

Attendance and Participation – count 20%

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Arriving late will lower your grade; two arrivals behind schedule will count as an absence. Absences are considered as such, excused or unexcused. It is the students' responsibility to make up for missed classes. More than six absences will result in an F for the course. More than five will result in an F for attendance and participation.

Participation means bringing the reading material to class and the written reports when required, presenting oral reports of readings, being active in debates and group work. Participation also refers to regular behaviour in class, thus the evaluation of attendance and participation includes deportment.

Deportment

Mutual respect is essential for a good collaboration. Being physically present, but doing things that have nothing to do with the class (listening to music, checking emails, private conversation, etc) will have a negative effect on the grade. Disrupting behaviour will be followed by warning and/or dismissal from class and will result in a D or F for attendance and participation and/or dismissal from class. Food and beverages are not accepted in class. Cell phones must be off.

Reading Assignments – count 10%

Due on the dates designated in the syllabus, the reading assignments will be checked by oral and/or written reports, group work in class and unannounced quizzes throughout the semester.

Paper Assignments – count 40 %

Two formal papers are required: the first is due on October, 21, the second on December 15. Late papers will be lowered a grade for each class period late. Hard copies typed in standard format are to be handed in to the professor at the beginning of class and an electronic copy readable by Word-Windows or Microsoft Word is to be submitted by email.

The freely chosen topic paper topics regard the ideas discussed in class and the students' personal experience abroad. This will imply literary research and creative writing in the same measure. **Every topic must be discussed with the professor** before you start writing.

The first paper counts 20% and refers to the readings discussed in class by Oct, 20, the second counts 20 % and will be based on the readings analyzed between Oct 26 and Dec 10.

The evaluation is done according to the following criteria:

- well formulated argument (rhetorical strategy)
- inquisitive approach and creative thinking.
- ability to transpose into mentalities of other times and countries.
- good use of bibliography: citing sources for paraphrases, quotations and summaries. Class notes can build the frame of your argumentation, but will not be cited as primary sources.
- clarity of expression including quality of style (grammar, spelling).

With the authors' accord excellent papers will be submitted to the director of The Florence Newspaper in view of publication.

Plagiarism (claiming credit for the work or efforts of another, downloading papers, presenting an older paper, copying from other students' work or library books without citing sources) will result in an **F grade** for the course. Internet plagiarism software and the professor's own knowledge of written sources in the library are instruments to check your work.

Exams – count 30 %

Two exams are scheduled: **October 22** and **December 14**

- Mid-term exam – counts 15% and is a written test consisting in:
 1. four questions out of six on the readings discussed in class (60 points)
 2. a comment on an excerpt from one of the texts (40 points)

- Final exam - counts 15% of the final grade and is a written test consisting in:
 1. two questions out of four on two fragments chosen from the readings (40 points)
 2. an essay (no less than one page) on a larger topic regarding two titles in the bibliography (60 points)

Special Accommodation

Requirements of special accommodation due to specific problems are to be notified on the first day of class.

REQUIRED READINGS

A COURSEPACK WITH ALL THE INCLUDED TEXTS IS AVAILABLE IN FLORENCE IN FOTOCOPY. THE READINGS ARE EXCERPTS OR CHAPTERS OF THE FOLLOWING TITLES

1. Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated with an introduction by Richmond Lattimore, Harper Perennial, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1991, Books VIII-XII
2. Virgil, Publius Vergilius Maro, *The Aeneid*, translated by Robert Fitzgerald, Vintage Classics, Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, INC, New York, 1983, Books I-IV; VI.
3. Alighieri, Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, translation and comment by John D. Sinclair, Oxford University Press, New York, 1961, Inferno I, II, XI, XXVI, XXVIII, XXXIV, Purgatorio XXVIII, Paradiso XXX.
4. *The Travels of Marco Polo*, translated and with an Introduction by Ronald Latham, Penguin Books, London, 1958, pp.33-45; 90-112; 113-162; 163- 213.
5. Wittkower, Rudolf, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, Thames and Hudson, New York, 1987.IV *Marco Polo and the Pictorial Tradition of the Marvels of the East*, pp.76-92
6. *The Book of Prophecies edited by Christopher Columbus*, Repertorium Columbianum, UCLA, University of Bologna, 1992, General Editor, Geoffrey Symcox, *Letter from the admiral to the king and queen*, pp.67-77)
7. *The Letter of Columbus on the discovery of America*, Printed by order of the trustees of the Lenox Library, New York, 1892 (pp.1-13)
8. *Letters from a New World*, Amerigo Vespucci, Marsilio, New York, 1992, *Letters III* pp. 29-35
9. *Novus Mundus letter, Appendix D From Martin Waldseemüllers Cosmographiae Introductio*, in *Letters from a New World*, New York, 1992. pp.45-56:113-123
10. *Italian Reports on America, 1493-1522*, Repertorium Columbianum, Vol.X, Gen.Editor Geoffrey Symcox, 1992, Letters of Alexander VI (pp.30-59) and Julius II (pp.61-69).

COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE

SEPT	TH, 17, Introduction to the course. MO, 21, Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i> , Book VIII, TU, 22 <i>Odyssey</i> Book IX TH, 24 <i>Odyssey</i> Book IX MO, 28 <i>Odyssey</i> Book XI
Oct	Tu, 29 <i>The Odyssey</i> , Book XII TH, 1 <i>Odyssey</i> – review +conclusions Mo, 5, Virgil, <i>The Aeneid</i> , I TU, 6, Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> , II Th, 8 Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> III Mo, 12 Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> , IV Tu, 13 Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> VI Th, 14 Virgil Review + conclusions Mo, 19 Conclusions on the ancient world TU, 20 Exam Review; First Paper delivery Th, 22 Mid-term Exam Mo, 26 Dante, <i>Inferno</i> , I, Tu, 27 Dante, <i>Inferno</i> II Th, 29 Dante, <i>Inferno</i> , XI, Mo, 2 Dante, <i>Inferno</i> , XXVI
NOV	Tu, 3 Dante, <i>Inferno</i> XXXIV Th, 5 Dante, <i>Paradise</i> XXXIII

Mo, 9 Dante, Review+conclusions

Tu, 10, Marco Polo, *The Travels*, pp.33-45

Th, 12, Marco Polo, *The Travels* pp.90-112

Mo, 16 Marco Polo, *The Travels*, pp.113-162

Tu, 17 Marco Polo, *The Travels*, pp. 163- 213.

Th, 19 R. Wittkower, *Marco Polo and the Pictorial Tradition of the Marvels*

Mo, 23. **Marco Polo Review +Conclusions**

Tu, 24 Columbus, *The Book of Prophecies*, pp.67-77: *Letter on his first voyage*

DEC Mo, 30 Fernandez de Oviedo, *Natural History of the Indies*, chs.2-4

Tu, 1 Letters of Popes Alexander VI and Julius II

Th, 3 Vespucci's letters

Mo, 7 Martin Waldseemüller, *Cosmographiae Introductio*.

Tu, 8 **The mythology of the conquest: Review+conclusions**

Th, 10 EXAM Review. Second Paper Delivery

Mo, 14 FINAL EXAM