

# GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: ENGL 366: Epiphany & Empathy in the Contemporary Novel  
Credits: 3 Credits  
Instructor: Filippo Belacchi



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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course – a blend of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies – is a journey that begins with the Greeks and somehow also ends with the Greeks; in between we will follow through the some novels the modern man and woman and their cultural evolution; the attitude men have had toward feelings within their social context of these last two centuries (the, so called, *Serious Century* and the also so called *American Century*).

In discussing novels, short stories, films and essays we will see how some artists have tried to reform our idea of sensibility. Thus the goal of this course is seeing how our “heart” has changed and also how its speeches and voices has changed throughout the centuries.

After few introductory classes about the Modern Novel (from Cervantes to Joyce) that will help us to set the cultural context in which writers and their opus have operated and that will allow us to observe the different aesthetic problems novelists have had to face in different ages, we will finally begin to discuss the Epiphany and the novelist to which this aesthetic concept is normally associated: James Joyce.

I will explain why and which has been the importance of the Epiphany for James Joyce, what his predecessors and followers thought and wrote about this concept and why has become so important from some authors of the XX century literature.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

***White Noise***, DeLillo, Don, *Picador*, ISBN 0-330-29108-4, 326 pages, 2000

***The Information***, Amis, Martin, *Vintage*, ISBN 978-0-679-73573-1, 374 pages, 1996

***Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance***, Pirsig, Robert M., *Vintage*, 25th Anniversary Edition, ISBN 0-099-32261-7, 436 pages, 1999

It is recommended that you purchase these books before arriving in Florence. Otherwise you can purchase through the Internet in shops such [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), [ibs.it](http://ibs.it), etc.

## READING ASSIGNMENTS:

The books you will have to read are three: *White Noise* by Don DeLillo; *The Information* by Martin Amis and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Rober M. Pirsig, plus some excerpts taken from novels, essays, interviews that I'll bring to class or I'll send you via mail.

The reading assignment isn't that heavy: this means that you will have plenty of time to think, meditate what you have read and write good essays.

( About writing essays and editorial norms to follow please use Mla [a quite recent edition] or visit this [web site](#) in which you will find answers to all you doubts inherent to your writings: how to quote, how to write a bibliography, what it has to be considered as plagiarism etc).

When I'll begin discussing *White Noise* I expect you to have finished the novel. While I'll discuss DeLillo you can start with *The Information* so that when I'll begin with Amis you'll be done with it and so forth.

I think that is extremely important that you have read the novels before I begin discussing them for three reasons: 1) you will know of what I am talking about, you will be able to relate with the characters and you will be able to orient yourself in the novel; 2) Having your reading done will save you a lot of work when you'll have to write the essay for your final exam; 3) Not having done your readings will heavily affect your final grade

### **WRITINGS:**

I'll assign three written essays: the first it has to be at least 700 words long; the second it has to be 1500 words long and the final at least 5000 words long.

You can also add to your writings videos (made by you), pictures (ditto); you can dare and try to be original as long as your efforts will show that you have deeply searched for **Quality**.

### **PARTICIPATION:**

During class even if I don't interact much with the students I can obviously see your participation from a lot of different things: behaviour, attention, warmth of your listening, intellectual honesty, attitude etc.

### **GRADING**

Students will be evaluated on the basis of two examinations (mid-term and final), a paper and class participation proportionally broken down as follows:

40% Mid-term Exam

40% Final Exam

10% Paper

10% Class Participation