Gonzaga University in Florence
Fall Term 2017

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Course Description
The most important functions of museums are preservation, education, and improving the social fabric of their communities. Therefore museums are the treasure-houses of the human race. European museums, especially those in Florence, preserve artifacts that embody a large part of the cultural heritage of the Western World. The cultural strength of Florence is also the foundation of its economic present and future, because museums play a major role in cultural tourism, attracting significant numbers of visitors from other countries.

This class strives to acquaint students with the ethical issues and opportunities faced by both American and Italian museums in contemporary society. It will be our goal to learn about Museum Studies and to investigate the history of Florentine museums. First we will examine the value and the function of such institutions mainly addressing the social role that museums play in inspiring their visitors to learn about any city and any culture. Then the class will study the history of Florentine museum as outstanding examples of Western culture from the Renaissance to the 20th century, also visiting local churches and museums. This historical background is the beginning step of Museum Studies, because the historical notion is ensuring museums a peculiar role in the regeneration of local cultures. Researching the history of those collections treasured in a given museum also serves to identify and to represent identity and continuity for the cultural heritage of any modern society at times of grand global changes.

Learning Outcomes:
By taking this class in Florence students will:

1) Identify the universal nature of museums in one of cradles of Museum studies by evaluating their most significant functions: preservation, education, and improving the social fabric of their communities
2) Analyze differences between various types of museums
3) Acquire conceptual tools necessary to explore the manner in which international museums interpret their collections, serve their audiences, and respond to new technologies in a interconnected world
4) Understand how spending time in a foreign social environment (here Florence, Italy), and visiting foreign museums engage a range of human experiences both individual and collective
5) Enhance their understanding of how museums work by comparing Italian museums with similar American and international institutions
6) Analyze how education and interpretation of both world and local history work in the contemporary global context
7) Articulate a mental connection between the past and the future in the vibrant urban environment of Florence
8) Grasp more about Italian history and culture, being museums a relevant portion of the Italian environment
9) Internalize specifically the history of Florentine museum as outstanding examples of Western culture from the Renaissance to the 21st century
10) Recognize outstanding examples of Italian history and art in due order and succession
11) Discriminate about complex issues regarding the positive impact of museums in the regeneration of local cultures from any local community (here Florence) to the global market
12) Analyze how, as the notion of public museums is about 3 centuries old, European countries depend on public museums not only to preserve the inherited culture of the past, but to define the present, and to articulate possible activities or professions to transmit common history to future generations

A list of reading assignments will be handed weekly.
A detailed list of images will be handed at the beginning of the semester.

Course requirements, and assessment of students achievements
Students will be engaged in frontal lectures, visits in Florence, and designated class discussions.
Students will have to demonstrate:
  • Careful reading of the assigned pages prior to each class session,
• Thorough review of class notes.

Students are expected to participate imaginatively and effectively in every discussion and visits to meet the specific learning outcomes described above.
The professor will distribute in advance of some seminar sessions a set of questions that will serve to focus the reading and guide the discussions or visits. Students are expected to prepare written or oral responses to these questions prior to the pertinent class session.

Papers

All students are expected to submit two essays.

For the first one (a 6 to 9 pages paper with footnotes and consistent bibliography), students will write about the history of a Florentine museum, also describing the interior architecture and how artefacts are presented to inform, educate and inspire the visitors. As a matter of fact the success of such institutions requires the combined skills of a variety of museum professionals and the participation and contribution of the audiences and communities being served by museums. Possible choices: Palazzo Vecchio, Opera del Duomo, Uffizi, Museo Stibbert, Bargello, Museo di San Marco, Accademia, Museo Archeologico, Museo della Specola, Museo degli Argenti

This paper needs to be crisp and well written with a significant number of academic references thoroughly discussed by the student.

The second essays/project could be labeled Florence the city as a museum. A fundamental aspect of Florence is the peculiar relationship between landmarks (such as the large statues or the architectures in Piazza della Signoria), Italian history and local economy.

Choose 2 items from around Florence (building, fountain, bridge, statue, a square, whatever strikes you) that represent to you the Gonzaga-in-Florence experience. Take pictures, print or develop them, and write a short text for any image as if the photos and your writing were going to be a part of an exhibition on Florence as a museum-city.

Mount the photos on paper with the printed comments beneath the photo. The text for each of the comments should be no less than 90 words. Write 2 pages as an introduction for your own selection.

All academic work must be completed on time. No work will be accepted late or after the program ends.

On the delivery date hard copies typed in standard format are to be handed in to the professor at the end of class. Standard format: Title,
Essays submitted late will receive a grade penalty as follows: 1 day: 1 letter grade (e.g., A- to B-), 2 days: 2 letter grades (e.g., A- to C-), more than 2 days: grade of 0 / F on the assignment.

At the completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate:

- A cogent interrogation of connections, and differences between their own culture, Europe, and Italy from the angle of Museum Studies, as demonstrated through writing assignments, oral reports, and spontaneous comments during frontal lectures as well as visits in Florence.
- A deeper intercultural competence necessary to address the ethical issues, and opportunities faced by international museums in contemporary global society, especially in a World Heritage site such as Florence.
- A minor knowledge of Italian terminology consistent with Museum Studies, and art appreciation.
- Awareness of the complexity of the issues at hand (i.e. the case of Florence museums) by integrating diverse information coming from various sources
- Possible Imaginative solutions to those issues through writing assignments or oral reports, yet taking under respectful consideration the peculiarities of the Florentine context

Mid-Term and Final examinations are comprehensive written exams. Both Midterm and Final exams consist of two sections: slide identifications with comments and a longer essay question. Final examinations must be administered only during the week indicated in the GIF Academic Calendar (Dec.15th-20th), and only on the day and at the time indicated in the Final Exam Schedule, which will be published by the Registrar's Office.

Grading System
Research papers 30%
Midterm Exam 20%
Final Exam 40%
Attendance and Participation 10%

There is to be no eating during class. Cell phones must be switched off. Laptop computers may not be used during class to take notes
SCHEDULE

**First week** (Sept. 18th, 20th, 21st)
Presentation of the Syllabus. What is a Museum?
Visit to piazza della Signoria
Types of Museums and the role of Museums
Reading assignment: *A Museum: What is it?* and *The Term Museum and Some Other Terms of Similar Meaning* from A. Wittlin, *Museums: In Search of a Useable Future* pp. 1-2; 221-225

**Second week** (Sept. 25th, 27th, 28th)
Museum Studies and history of Collections. Collections in the Ancient World.
Florence: the city as a museum.
Collections in the Middle Ages

**Third week** (Oct. 2nd, 4th, 5th)
Humanism and Niccolò Niccoli’s collection.
Cosimo il Vecchio and Piero de’ Medici.
Lorenzo de’ Medici patron of the arts. *Disegno* unifier of all arts.
**A visit to Piazza SS. Annunziata, Palazzo Medici, Piazza S.Marlo.**

**Fourth week** (Oct. 9th, 11th, 12th)
The birth of modern art history . Moral nature and function of art and history from Savonarola to Vasari.
Visit to Cappella Medici, San Lorenzo
Reading assignment: G. Savonarola, *Sermons*, in *Philosophy of Art Reader*, pp.149-150
Fifth Week (Oct. 16th, 18th, 19th)
Cosimo I. The first studiolo in Palazzo Vecchio.
The Guardaroba
Visit to Palazzo Vecchio
Reading assignment: to be assigned

Sixth Week (Oct. 23rd, 25th, 26th)
Francesco de'Medici.
Mid-Term Examination
The Uffizi. Gallerie, palaces, churches
Reading assignment: to be assigned

Seventh Week (Oct. 30th, Nov. 2nd)
The Grand Tour (1).
Florence from the Medici to the Asburgo Lorena
Eighth Week (Nov. 6th, 8th, 9th.)
Kircher and the museum for the Collegio Romano.
Visit to the Uffizi
Pietro Leopoldo, the new Uffizi.

Ninth Week (Nov. 13th, 15th, 16th)
The Zoological Museum. La Specola
Museo Nazionale del Bargello: a visit.
Vivant Denon, the Louvre, Napoleonic Florence. The Accademia
Galleries in Italy: Florence, Brera, Venice
Reading assignment: Dominique Vivant Denon and the Louvre, from E. Alexander, Museum Masters, pp. 81-110.

Tenth Week (Nov. 27th, 29th, 30th)
Famous foreigners in Florence. Frederick Stibbert: the man, the collection.
Florentine antiquarians and museums
Visit to Santa Maria del Fiore, a church as a museum

**Eleventh Week** (Dec. 4\(^{th}\), 6\(^{th}\), 7\(^{th}\))
Herbert Percy Horne’s ideal Florence.
**Visit to Santa Croce**
The city, tourism, museums

**Twelfth Week** (Dec. 11\(^{th}\), 13\(^{th}\), 14\(^{th}\))
American Museums and Italian Museums: a brief comparison
**Class discussion on Your Experience in Florence.** Review for final exam

**Thirteenth Week** (Dec. 15\(^{th}\) - 20\(^{th}\))
**Final exams**
REQUIRED READINGS
(to integrate with recent English publications concerning the history of Florentine Museums)

A. Blunt, *The social position of the Artist*, in *Artistic Theory in Italy*, Oxford 1940, in pp. 48-57 (*in Renaissance Philosophy of Art Reader.*, pp.188-193)


F. Haskell *Dominique Vivant Denon and the Louvre* , from *Museum Masters* in Museum Studies Reading Packet, pp. 81-110.


M. Wallace, *Types of Museums and The Role of Museums*, from *Museum Basics*, in Museum Studies Reading Packet, pp.6-11


