Fall 2019 - Culture and Context: Italy  
CORE-UA 9554  
Wednesdays, 9:00-11:45 p.m.  
Villa La Pietra, Aula Le Vedute

**Class Description:**

In Italy, regional identities have always been strong, while national identity has always been complex, a situation that characterizes even current political debates. Although the Italian peninsula was home to some of the most important ancient civilizations, Italy’s existence as a united country dates only from the nineteenth century, making it younger than the US as a modern nation state. Italy was first unified by the Romans, making Roman antiquity a point of reference throughout history as intellectuals and political leaders dreamed of a unified nation. This course proposes to examine how Italian identity was formed throughout history, both by Italians and by foreign visitors to Italy, in response to the principal ancient cultures that thrived on the peninsula. Focusing on primary sources, literary works, artifacts, art objects, works of architecture, opera and film, the course takes advantage of its site in Florence to explore these unique resources in their original contexts.

The course explores various historical periods that are essential for understanding current debates about Italian national identity. Starting with the emergence of Florence as an independent commune in the Middle Ages, the course explores various “revivals” of antiquity, to identify the distinct ways in which ancient culture was made to serve social and political ends. Special attention is given to the exploitation of antiquity during the Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy and subsequently during the Fascist period, especially in relation to the transformation of Rome into the nation’s capital during the Risorgimento and subsequently by the Fascists.

Preparation for this course is largely based on the use of primary sources. Primary sources here include not only texts, but also works of art and architecture, urban spaces, opera libretti and music, film and websites. A fundamental goal of the course is to familiarize you with the use of primary sources, that is, how to read or view them critically, and how to analyze and interpret their significance. Assigned readings contain both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources are intended primarily to demonstrate a variety of approaches to the interpretation of primary sources and objects or to provide a framework for discussion. Primary sources will serve as the basis for class discussion.

This course is not conceived as either a course on the history of the Italian nation state nor is it intended as a course on the history of classical revivals in the arts. The purpose of the course is to familiarize students with fundamental questions regarding regional versus national identity in Italian culture that are essential keys to understanding the social and political context of Italy today. The texts, artworks and monuments of antiquity, and the inspiration that they provided in subsequent periods for other cultural products, are here examined to develop a critical understanding of the problem of national identity in Italy throughout history and the ability to characterize and describe those phenomena through the synthesis of primary source materials.

**Instructor Details:**

Name: Bruce Edelstein  
NYUGlobalHome Email Address: edelstein@nyu.edu  
Office Hours: Mondays, 3:00-5:00 p.m., or by appointment  
Office Location: Villa La Pietra  
Office Extension: 07246
Desired Outcomes:
On completion of this course, students should:
- Have improved their ability to think critically, engage in complex reasoning and express their thoughts clearly through their written work
- Have improved their ability to analyze primary source materials
- Have mastered a basic understanding of how to respond critically to primary source materials
- Recognize classical sources and the ways in which they may be exploited to define social and political identity in Italy and more broadly in Western culture in the past and in the present

Assessment Components
- Attendance and Class Participation: 15%
- Midterm Exam (approximately 6-8 handwritten pages): 20%
- Written Assignments (3 assignments: approximately 3-5 typewritten pages each; 9-15 typewritten pages total): 35%
- Final Exam (approximately 6-8 handwritten pages): 30%

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Exams: The midterm and the final exam are comprised of three short essay questions. You will be presented with three broad topics discussed in class; write a well-organized essay, with an introduction, exposition and conclusion in response to each of these. You are expected to cite relevant primary sources analyzed in class – texts and/or objects; answers that do not cite any of these primary sources will not receive full credit. The final exam will only cover material discussed in the second half of the course. Both the midterm and the final are carefully timed: see below if you are entitled to an Academic Accommodation.

Written Assignments: Over the course of the semester, you will write three short critical analyses (3-5 pages). For each of these texts, you will be asked to visit a site or view a work of art independently and identify the ways in which the work refers to classical prototypes as a means to defining local or national identity, or participation in these. Your text is not intended to be a research paper, nor is it intended to be an emotive response to the appearance of the object or site you are examining; your text should be primarily your own personal analysis of the question of the construction of identity through reference to antiquity. However, you are welcome to refer to assigned readings or works previously studied in class.

The three assignments are:
1. Piazza Santissima Annunziata: Loggia of the Foundling Hospital; the Piazza; the Equestrian Statue of Ferdinando I (due in class, session 4)
2. Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Palazzo Pitti: choose 2 works on display in any of the first 4 rooms of the museum (due in class, session 10)
3. Stazione di Santa Maria Novella: Exterior and Interior of the main train station (due in class, session 12)

Submitting your work: Electronic submission of your assignments is welcome, although you may submit assignments in hard copy. All electronic submissions must be made as GoogleDocs, in Word (.doc or .docx format) or PDFs (.pdf); for all other formats, please contact me to confirm their acceptability before submission. If you submit assignments electronically, you must do so BEFORE 9:00 p.m. OF THE DAY PRIOR TO THE DUE DATE INDICATED ON THE SYLLABUS. Electronic submissions received after 9:00 p.m. will be considered late. Late submission of either electronic or hard copy assignments will result in a lower grade or evaluation for them.

Readings
Readings are listed under the weeks for which they are assigned and must be done in advance of those classes. Unless otherwise noted, all readings are available in electronic form in the electronic course reader on the NYU Classes site for this course. All other readings are found in books in the library located in Villa
Ulivi. It is essential that you keep up with the reading as they serve as the basis for class discussion. Active participation in class discussion is an essential component of your class participation grade, which is worth 15% of your final grade.

**Assessment Expectations:**

**Grade A:** The student’s work demonstrates an understanding of the subject that goes beyond assigned course readings. The student writes essays/exam questions that are an original synthesis of source materials, demonstrating the ability to evaluate source material critically. Written arguments are clear, well-organized and well-presented; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student has distinguished himself/herself throughout the course of the semester for his/her contributions to class discussion.

**Grade B:** The student’s work shows a clear understanding of assigned readings and materials covered in class. The student writes clear, well-organized and well-presented essays/exam questions; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student is prepared in class and asks relevant questions.

**Grade C:** The student’s work shows a basic understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. However, written and/or oral work is deficient in one or more of the following areas: clarity, organization or content. The student’s work is generally in need of improvement.

**Grade D:** The student’s work shows occasional understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work is deficient in one of more of the follow areas: clarity, organization or content. The student does not participate in class discussion and has not frequented the instructor’s office hours.

**Grade F:** The student’s work does not demonstrate understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work are either insufficient or are not submitted. The student appears unprepared in class and has not frequented the instructor’s office hours.

**Grading Guidelines**

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\begin{align*}
A &= 94-100 \\
A\ \text{minus} &= 90-93 \\
B\ \text{plus} &= 87-89 \\
B &= 84-86 \\
B\ \text{minus} &= 80-83 \\
C\ \text{plus} &= 77-79 \\
C &= 74-76 \\
C\ \text{minus} &= 70-73 \\
D\ \text{plus} &= 67-69 \\
D &= 65-66 \\
F &= \text{below 65}
\end{align*}
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**Grading Policy**

Please refer to Assessment Expectations and the policy on late submission of work.

**Academic Accommodations**

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see the Moses Center for further information.
Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.

**Attendance Policy**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. **To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade.** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to the number of class times over a single week.

**Excused Absences:**

In case of absence, regardless of the reason, the student is responsible for completing missed assignments, getting notes and making up missed work in a timely manner based upon a schedule that is mutually agreed upon between the faculty member and the student. **The only excused absences are those approved by the Office of Academic Support; they are as follows:**

- **Absence Due to Illness**
  - If you are sick, please see a doctor. Contact the Office of Student Life for assistance.
  - For absences that last for two or more consecutive days, a doctor’s certificate, “certificato medico” is required. The doctor will indicate in writing the number of days of bed rest required. Please note these certificates can only be obtained on the day you see the doctor and cannot be written for you afterwards.
  - Absences can ONLY be excused if they are reported WITHIN 48 HRS of your return to class via the online NYU Florence Absence Form
  - OAS will not accept a student email or telephone call regarding an absence due to illness
  - OAS will only notify faculty of absences REPORTED on the ABSENCE FORM
  - The Office of Student Life, when assisting you in cases of severe or extended illness, will coordinate with the Office of Academic Support to properly record your absences

- **Due to Religious Observance**
  - Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday
  - Information regarding absences due to religious observance must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online NYU Florence Absence Form
  - Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

- **Due to a class conflict with a program sponsored lecture, event, or activity**
  - All students are entitled to miss one class period without any penalty to their grade in order to attend a lecture, event or activity that is sponsored by the academic program
  - Information regarding absences due to a class conflict must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online NYU Florence Absence Form
  - Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

Students with questions or needing clarification about this policy are instructed to contact a member of the Office of Academic Support located in Villa Ulivi or to email florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu
Late Submission of Work
- All course work must be submitted on time, in class on the date specified on the syllabus.
- To request an extension on a deadline for an assignment, students must speak to the professor one week prior to the due date.
- To receive an incomplete for a course at the end of the semester, two weeks before final exams, both the student and the faculty member must meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs to review the request and if granted, they must both sign an Incomplete Contract detailing the terms for completing missing coursework.

Plagiarism Policy
PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY FORM:
The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

In the event of suspected or confirmed cases of plagiarism, The faculty member will consult first with the Assistant Director for Academic Affairs as definitions and procedures vary from school to school.

Writing Center
The Writing Center, located in Villa Ulivi, offers you feedback on any type of writing, at any stage in planning or drafting; very rough drafts are welcome. Sign up for a consultation at the Writing Center’s website and submit your working draft or ideas at least six hours in advance to NYU Florence Writing Center. You can drop in for a consultation M-Th, but remember that appointments are given priority. Please also note that the Writing Center does not correct or “fix” your writing but prompts you to think and work. The aim is to create stronger writers in the long term, not necessarily perfect papers in the short term.

Required Text(s)
Unless otherwise indicated, all readings for this course are to be found in the Resources section of our Classes site for this course. Updates and announcements will be posted regularly on the Classes site so please check it regularly. If you are having any difficulty accessing the Classes site, please let me know in person or via e-mail. Our Classes site is a work in progress; recommendations and requests for it are much appreciated.

Copies of each textbook are available for consultation and short term loans in the Villa Ulivi Library. Extra copies of some textbooks are also available for semester long loans. For more information on Books and Course Materials go here.

Supplemental Texts(s)
Required readings available in the Villa Ulivi library are indicated in the syllabus below, followed by the phrase, “in Ulivi Library.” These are all be available on our Classes site in electronic form, but should you prefer to read from the original texts, feel free to consult these volumes directly in our library.

Internet Research Guidelines
The careful use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites will be given. Failure to cite internet and other non-traditional media sources in your written work constitutes plagiarism.

Additional Required Equipment: N/A
Class Assignments and Topics
The locations for classes that meet on site are specifically indicated. All other classes meet in our regularly assigned classroom.

Session 1 - Sept. 4
“Italia mia:” Italy Divided and the “Rebirth” of Antiquity
Lecture: Dreams of a united Italy; local foundation myths
Discussion: National and local identity in Humanist texts; Which Antiquity? Rome and Athens as models

Reading:

Primary source texts for discussion:
- Francesco Petrarca, “Italia mia,” Canzoniere CXXVIII
- Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter 26 (The Exhortation to Liberate Italy from the Barbarians)

Session 2 - Sept. 11
Exploring Florence’s Ancient Past: the Center
Site visit: Evidence of the Roman Florentia and the Medieval and Renaissance construction of a “New Rome,” I
Location: Piazza Duomo, meet in front of Giotto’s Bell Tower

Primary source objects for discussion:
- Baptisteriy: ancient “Temple of Mars”
- Arches and Domes: Loggia del Bigallo and Brunelleschi’s Cupola
- Forums and Markets: Piazza della Repubblica and via Roma; Orsanmichele; Mercato Nuovo; Uffizi
- A New Rome: Palazzo Vecchio; Loggia dei Priori; Sculpture

Reading:

Primary source texts for discussion:
- Leonardo Bruni, Laudatio florentinae urbis

Session 3 - Sept. 18
Exploring Florence’s Ancient Past: the Periphery
Site visit: Evidence of the Roman Florentia and the Medieval and Renaissance construction of a “New Rome,” II
Location: Santa Croce, meet on the steps of the Basilica

Primary source objects for discussion:
- Santa Croce: Tomb of Leonardo Bruni; Pazzi Chapel
- Piazza Peruzzi – the Roman Amphitheater in Florence

Reading:

Primary source texts for discussion:
Session 4 - Sept. 25
Due: Assignment 1: Critical Analysis of Piazza SS. Annunziata

Building Antiquity
Site visit: Rus in urbe: the “Tuscan Villa”
Visit to Special Exhibition: “Omaggio a Cosimo I - Il villano e la sua botticella,” Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti
Location: Pitti Palace and Boboli Gardens, meet in front of main entrance to the Pitti Palace, Piazza Pitti

Primary source objects for discussion:
- Pitti Palace: Façade and Courtyard
- Boboli Gardens: Amphitheater and Isolotto (Marine Theater)

Primary source texts for discussion:
- Thomas Gordon Smith, Vitruvius on Architecture, New York: 2003, pp. 85-87 (to end of part 4); 186-203 (to end of part 7) (in Ulivi Library)
- Pliny the Younger, Letters, trans. Betty Radice, London: 1969, pp. 75-79; 139-144; Book 2, epistle 17 (To Gallus); Book 5, epistle 6 (To Domitius Apollinaris) (in Ulivi Library)

Session 5 - Oct. 2
Owning Antiquity
Site visit: Tuscans and Etruscans
Location: Museo Archeologico

Primary source objects for discussion:
- Etruscans: Arringatore, Chimera and Idolino of Pesaro
- Greeks: “François” Krater
- Egyptians: Tuscan expedition of 1828

Reading:

Session 6 - Oct. 9
Which Antiquity? Whose Antiquity?
Site visit: Democracy, Oligarchy and Autocracy: the Republic vs. the Empire
Location: Museo Nazionale del Bargello

Primary source objects for discussion:
- “Gods;” Donatello, Marzocco; Donatello, David (marble); Donatello, David (bronze); Michelangelo, Bacchus
- “Mortals;” Donatello, Male Youth; Mino da Fiesole, Piero de’ Medici and Giovanni de’ Medici; Antonio Rossellino, Matteo Palmieri; Benedetto da Maiano, Pietro Mellini; Verrocchio?, Francesco Sassetti; Verrocchio, Young Woman; Francesco Laurana, Battista Sforza; Michelangelo, Brutus; Cellini, Cosimo I

Reading:
Session 7 - Oct. 16
Exploring Florence’s Ancient Past: the Periphery
Site visit: Evidence of the Roman Florentia and the Medieval and Renaissance construction of a “New Rome,” III
Location: Piazzale Michelangelo, meet by bronze replica of Michelangelo’s David

Primary source objects for discussion:
- *Florentia* to Florence – urban evolution and the bridges
- Piazzale Michelangelo – Antiquity and the Unification of Italy
- San Miniato – Romanesque and Renaissance Revivals

Reading:

Session 8 - Oct. 23
Midterm Exam

Session 9 - Nov. 6
Foreigners in Italy: the lure of the Antique
Lecture: *Artists and Patrons in Rome: Co-opting Antiquity*
Discussion: *The Bourbons of Naples and the Discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum: Inventing Archaeology*

Reading:

Primary source texts for discussion:

Session 10 - Nov. 13
Inventing the Modern Nation
Due: Assignment 2: Critical Analysis of Artworks in Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Pitti Palace
Lecture: *The Risorgimento and the Antique*
Discussion: *Verdi and the Antique: Nabucco and Attila*
n.b.: You are required to watch one of the two operas in its entirety before the class meeting. Selections from both operas will be played during the class for our discussion. The editions we will refer to are: *Nabucco*, available on Youtube; *Attila* available on Youtube [please advise me if the links are no longer active]. DVD recordings of these same editions are also available in the Villa Ulivi library.

**Reading:**
- Peter Stamatov, “Interpretive Activism and the Political Uses of Verdi’s Operas in the 1840s,” *American Sociological Review*, LXVII, 3 (Jun., 2002): 345-366

**Primary source texts for discussion:**
- Temistocle Solera, Libretto for Verdi’s *Nabucco*
- Temistocle Solera, Libretto for Verdi’s *Attila*

**Session 11 - Nov. 20**
**Fascism and the Antique**
Lecture: *Mussolini’s Rome*
Discussion: *Sports and the Antique: Soccer, Olympic Games and the Stadio Olimpico*

**Reading:**

**Primary source texts for discussion:**

**Session 12 - Nov. 27**
**Colonial Antiquities**
**Due: Assignment 3: Critical Analysis of Stazione di Santa Maria Novella**
Discussion: *Archeology as Propaganda; Tripoli and Addis Ababa: Classicism in the Service of Colonialism*

n.b.: Selections from Giovanni Pastrone’s 1914 film *Cabiria*, based on ideas by Gabriele d’Annunzio, will be shown in class. You are recommended to watch the complete film beforehand. The film is available on YouTube: *Cabiria* [please advise me if the link is no longer active]. A DVD is also available in the Villa Ulivi library.

**Reading:**

**Primary source texts for discussion:**

**Session 13 - Nov. 29**
**Field Trip: Rome** (meet at S. Maria Novella Train Station, under pharmacy sign)

**Primary source objects for discussion:**
- Forum and Flavian Amphitheater (“Colosseum”)
- Campidoglio
- Monument to Vittorio Emanuele II (“Vittoriano”) and the Museo del Risorgimento
- EUR [alternative: Foro Italico (Stadio dei Marmi)]
Reading:


Session 14 - Dec. 4

Restitutions

Discussion: Giving Back Antiquity: the Lion of Judah and the Obelisk of Axum; the Euphronios Krater and the Venus of Morgantina

Reading:


Primary source texts for discussion:

- Hilary Clarke & Catherine Elsworth, “Getty Staff ‘Knew Art had been Plundered’,” *The Telegraph*, 27 Sept. 2005
- Marion True, “‘Neither Condemned nor Vindicated:’ Marion True on Why it is Hard to Accept the Lack of Verdict after her Five-Year Trial,” *The Art Newspaper*, Jan. 2011 (published online 5 Jan. 2011)
- Mike Boehm, “Can Getty Keep Prized ‘Bronze’? Italy’s High Court Delays Ruling,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 2014
- [Agencies], “Obelisk Returned to Ethiopia after 68 Years,” *The Guardian*, 20 April 2005
- *Cultura Italia: un patrimonio da esplorare* (website of Italian Ministry of Culture), Press Release: “Countdown to her re-entry to Sicily, the Venus of Morgantina bids farewell to the USA,” 1 Dec. 2010
Session 15 - Dec. 11
Final Exam

Classroom Etiquette
- Eating is not permitted in the classrooms. Bottled water is permitted.
- Cell phones should be turned off during class time.
- The use of personal laptops and other electronic handheld devices are prohibited in the classroom unless otherwise specified by the professor.
- We recycle! So keep it green! Please dispose of trash in the clearly marked recycle bins located throughout the on campus buildings

Required Co-curricular Activities
See Field Trip description in Session 13 above.

The field trip is an integral part of the course and your attendance is required. Should you have a conflict with a field trip in another course, please speak to someone in the Offices of Academic Support to determine how to resolve your field trip conflict.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities
Suggested optional co-curricular activities will be announced in class and/or via email by the professor throughout the semester.

Your Instructor
Bruce L. Edelstein is an art historian. At NYU Florence he is Coordinator for Graduate Programs and Advanced Research and serves on the Academic Advisory Committee. He is Affiliated Faculty in the department of Italian Studies at NYU. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1995 after completing a dissertation on the patronage of Duchess of Florence Eleonora di Toledo, a reflection of his broader interest in mechanisms of court patronage and the exercise of female authority in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy. He has held teaching positions at the Florida State University Florence Study Center, Syracuse University in Italy and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and curatorial positions at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the Fogg Museum in Cambridge, Mass. His publications include articles on Eleonora di Toledo’s investment policy, the typology of the Albertian hortus, the hydraulic system of the lost Neapolitan villa of Poggioreale as a model for sixteenth-century Medici gardens, the iconography of Abundance in the courtly persona of Eleonora di Toledo and the mid-sixteenth-century appearance and function of the Camera Verde in the Palazzo Vecchio. During the academic year 2001-2, he was a fellow at the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies at Villa I Tatti. During the academic year 2015-16, he was Visiting Scholar at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, while completing the manuscript for a book on the early history of the Boboli Gardens. He is co-curator of the exhibition “Miraculous Encounters: Pontormo from Drawing to Painting,” seen at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, the Morgan Library and Museum in New York, and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles in 2018-2019, and one of the principal authors of the catalogue for the exhibition, “Omaggio a Cosimo I - Il villano e la sua botticella,” seen at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence in 2019.