



Spring 2019 - Italian Sketchbook: Travel Writing & Digital Storytelling

IDSEM-UG 9205 F01

Wednesdays 15:00-16:15

Aula Capponi (Villa Colletta)

Class Description

Why do we travel? Where do we go and how do we get there? How do we document and remember the places we've been?

"Travel dislodges thoughts" argues the photographer Sharon Harper. Indeed when gazing at the images from her series Flight/Flug, a traveler is reminded of the vertiginous view from the window of a high speed train, the landscape blurred by velocity. The train's movement is projected onto the rolling landscape in a reproduction of the sensation of movement, like staring out a window and letting one's mind drift.

Representing our experiences of travel and mobility are crucial mechanisms by which we situate ourselves within the world and are earliest forms of human cultural production. These storytelling practices are tightly bound not only with recognizable forms of collective expression, such as nationality and class, but also with more private conceptions of individual identity and family.

This course will reference a wide range of forms—the essay, the journal, the sketchbook, the map, the photograph, the human voice—through which an author represents the thoughts and sensations of mobility. We will also explore many different authorial subject positions such as: cartographer, pilgrim, explorer, fugitive, and tourist.

In our study of these forms we will focus on two primary impulses: **observation** and **creation**. We will trace how traveling subjects observed and recorded the world as expressions of artistic representation, scientific discovery and comparative sociocultural analysis AND we will focus on the strategies and techniques, in particular the interchange between word and image, employed by authors and artists as we translate these familiar approaches into new digital forms. Italy, and in particular Florence, will serve as the most immediate conceptual and physical context for investigation so that we may link the textual and visual material studied in the classroom with the world beyond the boundaries of Villa La Pietra.

Instructor Details

Name: Scott Palmer

Email Address: snp1@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 PM and by appointment

Villa Colletta Office Location: Ground Floor

Villa Colletta Office Extension: +39 055 5007 281

Desired Outcomes

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- Understand significant historical and conceptual elements that characterize travel writing and narrative mobility.
- Recognize various subject positions which writers have adopted to document and represent the experience of travel.
- Articulate the process of developing a concept and strategy for a creative digital storytelling project.
- Tell a compelling and original story with digital media.

Assessment Components

Class Participation (15%)

Active engagement in class discussions and participation in online platforms (such as group research and the class photo pool) are mandatory. Reading assignments should be completed for the day indicated for that particular session (i.e. if a reading assignment is scheduled for 4/10, read it before 4/10). On [NYU Classes](#) there is a specific page dedicated to each class session containing all assigned content. Assigned readings form the basis for class discussion, so it is essential that you have read each week's assigned texts and come to class prepared to discuss them. Likewise, multimedia content listed in the course schedule should be reviewed before class. Each student is expected to contribute one original photograph each week to the group photo pool. Participation is worth 15% of the final course grade.

Works-in-Progress Workshops (15%)

During the two scheduled works-in-progress workshops, all students will share the current state of their final projects and will receive structured feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. Successful and active participation in these workshops is worth 15% of the final course grade.

Digital Sketchbook (30%)

A series of multimedia assignments will be proposed over the course of the semester, each of which explores a different thematic storytelling approach. Each student must complete three of these assignments (#1 The Envelope, should be completed by all students). These analyses are worth 30% of the course grade.

Creative Project (40%)

This will consist of a creative multimedia project (audio/video/image, etc.) that explores one of the particular themes or subjects covered in this course. The emphasis should be on storytelling and analysis rather than technical excellence. Two individual conferences with the instructor are required for this project. The first conference should be scheduled before 3/6 to identify potential areas of investigation for the final project and to discuss possible formats. A second follow-up conference should be completed by 4/23. The final project will be introduced to the class in a 5 minute presentation at the end of the semester. Additionally, a reflective essay of no less than 1000 words, describing the process of producing the project and/or analyzing the concepts presented within it is required. Refer to the following [document](#) for more detailed information. This assignment is worth 40% of the final grade.

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

Grading Summary

Participation 15%, Works-in-Progress Workshops 15%, Digital Sketchbooks 30%, Creative Project 40%

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

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

A=94-100

A minus=90-93

B plus=87-89

B=84-86

B minus=80-83

C plus=77-79

C=74-76

C minus=70-73

D plus=67-69

D=65-66

F=below 65

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 [insert new hyperlink]
- 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 NYU Florence.
- 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.academicssupport@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. Please consult the "Academic Guidelines for Success" distributed on your USB key at Check-in and on the NYU Florence Global Wiki.

For a detailed description of some possible forms of plagiarism and cheating please consult the Community Compact that you signed at Orientation, a copy of which is on the above mentioned Wiki and USB key.

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 a day in advance to [NYU Florence Writing Center](#). You can drop in for a consultation M-Th, but remember that appointments are given priority. Please note that we do 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 Texts

Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities*

Jérôme Ruillier *The Strange*

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](#).

All other assigned course content is available via this syllabus and [NYU Classes](#).

Supplemental Texts(s)

Texts that students are not required purchase to are available in the Ulivi Library or available online.

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

Please refer to the [NYU Classes](#) course site for more detailed information on assignments for each class session.

Session 1: Wednesday, February 6

Defining Travel: Canvas, Map, Journal, Archive

Assigned Content: Emily Dickinson [There is no frigate like a book](#) Teju Cole [Far Away From Here](#)
Elisabeth Bishop [Questions of Travel](#) Sam Cooke [Far Away Places](#)

Assignment: Signup for class [photo pool](#) Create account on Digital Sketchbook companion site.
Follow this [link](#) to register.

Session 2: Wednesday, February 13

Observation & Documentation

Assigned Content: Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities* 1-20 Joan Didion [On Keeping A Notebook](#) Georges
Perec [The Street. The Town. Space](#) Courtney Barnett [Elevator Operator](#)

Assignment: Digital Sketchbook #1 - The Envelope (Due 2/17)

Session 3: Wednesday, February 20

The Stranger

Assigned Content: Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities* 21-56 Homer [Stranger at the Gates](#) [The Stranger Comes to Town](#) (*High Plains Drifter* 1973) [Eleven](#) (*Stranger Things* 2016) Elmore James [Stranger Blues](#)

Sessions 4/5: Monday, February 25 (18:00-19:30) & Tuesday, February 26 (12:00-14:30)

Digital Storytelling I: Sight

LPD Event: "Storytelling, Documentary Photography and Social Justice in the Balkans" (Feb. 25)
Lunch Workshop with Photojournalist Rocco Rorandelli (Feb. 26)

Assigned Content: Evelyn Nieves & Rocco Rorandelli [Spices. Soil. Worn Photos. These Are the Objects Unidentified Migrants Left Behind.](#) [Augie's Project](#) (*Smoke* 1995) Jonathan Gotschall [The Storytelling Animal](#)

Session 6: Wednesday, February 27

Digital Storytelling II: Sound

Assigned Content: Michel De Certeau [Spatial Stories](#) Daneila Zyman & Janet Cardiff [Excerpt from The Walk Book](#) Janet Cardiff [The Missing Voice](#) (1999) Massive Attack [Unfinished Sympathy](#)

Assignment: Digital Sketchbook #2- Story of a Stranger (Due 3/3)

Session 7: Wednesday, March 6

The Flâneuse

Assigned Content: Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities* 59-69 Virginia Woolf [Street Haunting](#) (optional)
Lauren Elkin [Flâneuse-ing](#) Garnette Cadogan [Walking While Black](#) Valeria Luiselli [Manifesto à Velo](#)
Ruth Orkin [Jinx Allen in Florence](#) B52's [Roam](#)

Assignment: Complete introductory project conference with instructor by 3/6

Session 8 : Friday/Saturday, March 15-16

The Ethnographer - Overnight Field Trip to Naples

Assigned Content: Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities* 73-99 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe [Excerpt from Italian Journey](#) Hajj Sayyah [Excerpt from An Iranian in Nineteenth Century Europe, The Travel Diaries of Hâj Sayyâh 1859-1877](#) Roberto Rossellini [Episode 2](#) (*Paisan* 1946) ♪ Pino Daniele [Napule è](#)

Assignment: 1 page project proposal due

Session 9: Wednesday, March 20

First Works-in-Progress Workshop

Assigned Content: Begin Jérôme Ruillier *The Strange*

Assignment: Preliminary Project Outline (500 words) due 3/17 for group evaluation in project folder
Digital Sketchbook #3 - Street Sights (Due 3/24)

Spring Break March 25-31

Session 10: Wednesday, April 3

The Exile

Assigned Content: Complete *The Strange* Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities* 103-132 Iain Chambers “[An Impossible Homecoming](#)” Samar Yazbek “[The First Crossing](#)” Eliza Griswold “[Mapping the Journey of Syria’s Artists](#)” [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (Articles 13-15)

Session 11: Wednesday, April 10

The Cartographer

Assigned Content: Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities* 135-165 Jorge Luis Borges “[Of Exactitude in Science](#)” Lewis Carroll “[The Bellman’s Speech](#)” Denis Diderot “[Map of the System of Human Knowledge](#)” “[The Facts](#)” (*Memento* 2000)

Session 12: Saturday, April 13

The Pilgrim - Field Trip to Orsigna

Assigned Content: Terzani [Orsigna, Last Love](#) Goethe “[The Pilgrim Strides Out Busily](#)” Bauman “[From Pilgrim to Tourist](#)” Neko Case “[Wayfaring Stranger](#)”

Assignment: Digital Sketchbook #4 - Seeker’s Map (Due 4/22)

Session: 13 Wednesday, April 24

Second Works-in-Progress Workshop

Assignment: Project Update (250 words) due 4/21 for group evaluation in project folder Complete followup project conference with instructor by 4/23

Session: 14 Wednesday, May 8

Sketchbook Final Presentations

Session: 15 Friday May 10

Sketchbook Final Presentations

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

2/25/26 Lecture and lunch workshop with Rocco Rorandelli
3/15-16 Field Trip to Naples
4/13 Field Trip to Orsigna

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

Scott Palmer has been teaching courses on writing and cultural studies at New York University Florence since 2005. His research interests focus on nineteenth-century literature and visual culture, especially the intersection between mobility, race and image-making. Dr. Palmer has both a BA and an MA in English from the University of Oregon as well as an MA in Anglo-American Literary Relations from University College London. He received his PhD in American Literature from Tufts University.