Spring 2021
Arts and Cultures Across Antiquity
ACA – UF 9101- F01
Tues./Thurs. 2:00 – 3:15 pm Central European (Italian) Time

Instruction Mode: Blended
Aula Giardino

Spring 2021

We know that you may be taking courses at multiple locations this semester. If you are enrolled in this course 100% remotely and are not a Go Local/Study Away student for this course site, please make sure that you’ve completed the online academic orientation via NYU Classes so you are aware of site specific support, policies and procedures.

Please contact florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu if you have trouble accessing the NYU Classes site.

If you are attending in person, you will be instructed to choose your seat on the first day and are expected to use that seat for the entire semester due to NYU COVID-19 safety protocol.

Instructor Details:

Name: Eric Nicholson
NYU Global Home Email Address:
Office Hours: Tues. 12:00-1:30 pm Italian time
Appointments available via Zoom, or in person on request
Villa Ulivi Phone Number:
Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging and Equity

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, “…not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities.” At NYU Florence, we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

• fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and

• promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

NYU Florence embraces diversity and recognizes our responsibility to foster an open, welcoming environment where students, faculty and staff of all backgrounds can collaboratively learn, work and communicate. We will continually strive to work together to nurture a culture of inclusivity, compassion and mutual respect.

There are both on-campus and NYU Global resources available to students and staff wishing to share their experiences with us or offer suggestions for improvement. On-campus, students, faculty and staff can contact any one of our three local IDBE Liaisons, Mary Barbera, Lisa Cesarani and Angelica Pesarini. Students can also contact the Office of Academic Support or the Office of Student Life to talk to a member of staff. Students are invited to join the NYU Florence IDBE Student Committee and take on an active role in planning encouraging dialogues on issues around diversity and inclusion.

The Global NYU community can access the Office of Global Inclusion, Diversity and Strategic Innovation who works closely with students, faculty, administrators, and staff, regardless of where you may be located, to help make every aspect of NYU more equitable. You can contact them at globalinclusion@nyu.edu for more information and resources.

Bias Response Line
NYU’s Bias Response Line (BRL) provides an open forum to members of our community and helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive. It is a centralized way to share or report experiences and concerns regarding bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our local or global NYU community. To contact the BRL, please email or call: 212-998-2277.

Class Description:

**Prerequisite:** An open mind, and a willingness to study, speak, and learn with others

Through close reading, viewing, and discussion, we will explore major literary, architectural, and visual works of the ancient Mediterranean and Asiatic worlds. With emphasis on theatre and oral performance, we will study the genres of epic, lyric, tragic, and comic poetry: a special aim will be to relate these forms to their social and cultural contexts, as well as to other artistic practices and later literary traditions. Thus our approach will be a comparative one, as we examine, for example, Judaic vs. Mesopotamian accounts of a universal flood, divinely powerful women in Indian as well as Homeric epic, and the rendition of myths and rituals in Greek vase-painting vis à vis their portrayal in Athenian drama.

The course will also focus on the artistic representation of basic social and individual questions. With the aim of articulating our own inquiry and dialogues, we will consider how ancient texts and art works depict and interrogate subjects such as the individual’s relations with the community; human selfhood and mortality; love, gender, and sexuality; conflicts between civilization and nature; and a recurring, urgent concern of these cultures: humanity’s relationship with the divine and supernatural.

In the last third of the semester, we will turn our attention to not only the achievements of the vast ancient Chinese (Han) and Roman empires, but also the impact of Buddhism and Christianity on their respective cultural worlds. Again, a special concern will be to make informed comparisons and contrasts between the
Asiatic and European traditions, and through this study, to focus and deepen our understanding of a richly creative process of transcultural exchange.

A SPECIAL OBJECTIVE will be to make informed connections between the ECOLOGICAL concerns and anxieties of these ancient cultures and today’s global preoccupations with a fragile environment, in a time of climate change, embattled resources, and endangered species.

In practical terms, the course aims to develop your critical, analytic, and interpretive skills through attentive reading of texts and viewing of art works, combined with open, engaged, and interactive discussion. The course’s Florentine home location gives us the advantage of being able to refer many of these works and traditions to exceptional sites, among them the ancient theatre of Fiesole and the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze.

In addition, this section of Cultural Foundations gives you the chance to learn and interpret course material through the theatrical adaptation and performance of poetry, dramatic scenes, and monologues.

One specific goal of this approach is the following: if the works we are studying are now defined as “classics” and “masterpieces,” what exact qualities might earn them these distinctions?

By its conclusion, the course will ideally provide you with a strong foundation for future studies in the Humanities, not only through familiarization—and perhaps re-orientation—with fundamental works of classic art and literature, but also through direct learning and application of specific methods of inquiry, assimilation, and analysis.

**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 understanding of the methodologies of literary, art historical, and cultural studies

- Have mastered a basic understanding of how to research questions in literary, art historical, and cultural studies

- Recognize major works of the ancient Mediterranean and Asiatic worlds, and understand why they are significant for literary, artistic, and cultural studies and activities in a global context

Assessment Components

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Written Assignments (ungraded but required, discussion-oriented journal assignments, plus three graded take-home essays): 25%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Oral Presentation: 15%

Final Exam: 20%

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

**NB: Commitment:** A student’s commitment will be evaluated based on active participation, involvement and contribution in the course either remote or in-person.

This may include, but is not limited to, presence at synchronous class sessions, timely submission of predetermined course assignments to the instructor, collaboration with peers in group course work both during class time or independently outside of class time, individual oral or written contributions to synchronous course time through the chat function, in person discussion, or in individual office hours with the instructor. In an asynchronous format this academic engagement may take the form of written contributions to course forums, adding comments to posted work on VoiceThread or Google Drive shared docs.

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 her/his/their self throughout the course of the semester for her/his/their 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 or more of the following 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 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. In blended course format, students, based on need and circumstance may attend class sessions in-person or remote synchronously online. Both are acceptable and would be considered present in class. 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 Global Sites is expected. Unexcused absences will affect students’ semester participation grade. Faculty will take attendance at the beginning of every class. For Go Local Students studying in Florence, If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to discuss where at the Academic Center the remote course can be taken. Both in-person and remote students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated unexcused absences in a course may result in failure. Please be in contact with your professor via email to meet during office hours to discuss any missed lectures and assignments and arrange a timeline for submitting missed work.

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. **Absences should be reported to the Office of Academic Support** via email and to your faculty member BEFORE your class meets for lesson.

**Categories of Excused Absences**

**Absence Due to Illness**
- If you are a Go Local student present in Florence and feel sick, please contact the Office of Student Life for assistance.
- COVID-19 related family emergencies will be considered as an excused absence.
- 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.
- 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 NYU Florence Writing Center offers you feedback on any type of writing, at any stage in planning or drafting; very rough drafts are welcome. Sign up for an online 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. 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):

Course readings are posted online in the Resources folder of the NYU Classes site. In the Villa Ulivi Library hard copies of some textbooks are available to loan out for the semester. For more information on the resources and services of the library, please email florence.library@nyu.edu

Supplemental Texts(s):

Texts that students are not required to purchase are in NYU-FL 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 (Course Calendar):

Session 1 – Thurs. 28 Jan.

Introduction: What is “art,” or “Art”? What makes a “classic” a “classic”? Creation myths; Masks, ritual, and performance from around the world

Session 2- Tues. 2 Feb.
Creation Myths and Cultural Beginnings, continued (excerpts from “The Book of the Hopi,” et al.; The Bible, Book of Genesis, chapters 1-4, all in our NYU Classes course site); selected texts and images from The Liberal Studies (LS) Global Image Gallery, on Paleolithic and Prehistoric art, plus excerpt from Gardner’s Art Through the Ages, “Art Before History” (“Prehistory,” in the Resources section of our NYU Classes course site)

First journal assignment due
Session 3 – Thurs. 4 Feb.

Building Cities, Writing on Clay Tablets, Praising and Questioning the Hero in Ancient Mesopotamian Civilizations: Gardner’s Art, “Mesopotamia,” plus selected images from The LS Global Image Gallery; The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablets I-V (pp. 1-47)

Session 4 – Tues. 9 Feb.

The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablets VI-XII (pp. 47-100); Book of Genesis, chapters 6-9

Second journal assignment due
Session 5 – Thurs. 11 Feb.

The Ongoing Quest for Eternity: Book of Genesis, chapters 17-22, 30-33; Gardner’s Art, “Egypt,” plus images from The LS Global Image Gallery, with students’ comparative presentations on Mesopotamian and Egyptian art

Session 6 – Tues. 16 Feb.

Life’s a Trip: Homer, The Odyssey, Books 1-5

Third journal assignment due

*** PLEASE NOTE! No class meeting on Thurs. 18 Feb.!

Session 7 – Tues. 23 Feb.

The Odyssey, Books 6-10

Session 8 – Thurs. 25 Feb.

The Odyssey, Books 11-17; Group interpretation exercise on Books XII and XIII of The Odyssey
Session 9 – Tues. 2 March
The Odyssey, Books 18-23; special, ungraded IN-CLASS Vote/Quiz on The Odyssey

Session 10 – Thurs. 4 March
Finish The Odyssey, (Book 24); On to India and the Epic of Everything in the World: introducing The Mahabharata (excerpts, on our NYU Classes course site); selected texts and images from the LS Global Image Gallery, on ancient Indian art and culture

FIRST 4-5 PAGE ESSAY DUE

Session 11 – Tues. 9 March
Classic Indian culture, continued: finish excerpts from The Mahabharata (in the NYU Classes course site); short, ungraded in-class quiz on the Mahabharata excerpts
Introducing Classical Greek Tragedy, with a focus on Women, Asia, and the Status of Immigrants: start Euripides, Medea

Session 12 – Thurs. 11 March
A divinely powerful non-Greek woman vs. the Greek patriarchal state: Euripides, Medea; supplementary essay on Athenian theatre and society

Session 13 – Tues. 16 March
Finish Euripides, Medea: viewing and listening to related video and audio clips, plus a group staging exercise

Session 14 – Thurs. 18 March
Ancient Greek Art, part I: Gardner’s Art Through the Ages, “Ancient Greece”, plus selected texts and images from The LS Global Image Gallery

Session 15 – Tues. 23 March
Ancient Greek Art, Part II, with particular focus on theatre and performance: Gardner’s Art Through the Ages, “Ancient Greece,” continued; selected texts and images from the LS Global Image Gallery, with students' comparative presentations

Session 16 – Thurs. 25 March
* IN-CLASS/RECORDED SITE VISIT, to the MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO, Florence (details to follow)

Session 17 – Tues. 30 March
Ancient Greek Art, Part III: Gardner’s Art, “Ancient Greece,” plus selected texts and images from the LS Global Image Gallery, with Midterm Preparation

Session 18 -- Thurs. 1 April through Fri. 2 April
● MIDTERM EXAM

Session 19 – Tues. 6 April
Women on Top for the Cause of Peace, or How to Stage a Sex Strike, Make People Laugh, and Enact Social and Political Justice, from Ancient Greece to Modern Africa and America: start Aristophanes, Lysistrata

Session 20 -- Thurs. 8 April
Finish Lysistrata, with in-class viewing of scenes from the film Chi-Raq (2017), directed by Spike Lee.

Fourth journal assignment due

Session 21 -- Tues. 13 April
Classic Sanskrit drama of India, featuring another strong, sensual, and dynamic female hero: start Kalidasa, Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection, Acts 1-3

Session 22 -- Thurs. 15 April
Finish Kalidasa, Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection, Acts 4-7 (recommended reading: chapter on Classic Indian Theatre); Group staging exercise

Ancient Songs of Love and Desire: selected lyric poems of Kalidasa, and excerpts from The Bible, “The Song of Solomon”

Session 23 -- Tues. 20 April
The Art of Great Empires: Imperial Roman Art and Ancient Chinese Art; Stokstad, “Hellenistic and Roman Art,” plus selected texts and image from The LS Global Image Gallery
Session 24 -- Thurs. 22 April

Ancient Songs of Love and Desire, continued: selected lyric poetry by Sappho and Catullus, plus The Constant Changes of Love and of the World: start Ovid (and Ted Hughes), Tales from Ovid (selections, to be specified in class)

Session 25 -- Tues. 27 April

Tales from Ovid, continued, with Students’ Group Presentations

*** 2-PAGE “VIEWING ESSAY/EKPHRASIS” DUE ***

Session 26 – Thurs. 29 April

Tales from Ovid, concluded, with Students’ Group Presentations

Session 27 -- Tues. 4 May

Classical fantasy, satire, and proto-Science Fiction: Lucian, “A True Story,” with Students’ presentation

Session 28 -- Thurs. 6 May

Christianity and the Roman Empire: The Gospel according to St. Matthew (excerpts); Jewish and Early Christian art (excerpts from Gardner’s Art, “Late Antiquity,” and from The World Between Empires), plus selected texts and images from the LS Global Image Gallery,

*SECOND 4-5 PAGE ESSAY DUE*

Session 29 -- Tues. 11 May

Review Session for the final exam

Session 30 – Thurs. 13 May through Fri. 14 May

FINAL EXAM

Class Time Expectations
In light of the unique circumstances of blended instruction, we ask students to consider the following class time expectations to ensure a productive class:

- Prepare your workspace for class, limit non-class activities during synchronous class time.
- If you are not using your cell phone to follow the lesson, cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during class time.
- If deemed necessary by the study away site (i.e. a COVID related need), synchronous class sessions may be recorded and archived for other students to view. This will be announced at the beginning of class time.
- Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class. Consider using the chat function or “raise hand” function in order to add your voice to class discussions.
- Please be mindful of your microphone and video display during synchronous class meetings. Ambient noise and some visual images may disrupt class time for you and your peers.

Final Exams
Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between final exams, please bring it to the attention of the Office of Academic Support florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu as soon as this is known to facilitate alternate arrangements. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

Required Co-curricular Activities

To be announced, though pandemic-caused restrictions may limit these to events such as an online lecture, seminar session, film or performance viewing.

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

Eric Nicholson (Ph.D., Yale University, 1991) teaches literature and theatre courses at NYU Florence, and Syracuse University Florence. An active member of the international research collaborative Theater Without Borders, with Robert Henke he has co-edited Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater (2008), and Transnational Mobilities in Early Modern Theater (2014). He has recently contributed the chapter on “Commedia dell'Arte in early modern English drama” to The Routledge Research Companion to Anglo-Italian Renaissance Literature and Culture (2019). For the NYU and Syracuse Florence programs, he has directed plays by Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Leonora Bernardi, Molière, Goldoni, and others, and in 2018 he co-directed and played Theseus/The Fool in a bilingual theatre workshop, with a final public performance, on Oedipus at Colonus/King Lear in Verona, Italy. Eric is very much looking forward to teaching Arts and Cultures Across Antiquity this spring semester.