Course Description

In this course we will read Florence as a Rhetorical text, (a public persuasive text). We will learn the basic skills of rhetoric—textual analysis, argumentation, semiotics, the inherent relation of text and context, the impact of the medium, the power of the situation, the effect of style, etc.—and apply them to the city of Florence in order to enhance our understanding of contemporary Florence and its rich history. Through course readings and field trips we will explore the arguments embedded in public spaces, buildings, public art, markets, food and fashion, asserting what Florence was, is and hopes to be.

Students will get a crash course in rhetoric, cultural analysis, and visual literacy as they come to understand the city they will be living in as well as how the past influences the current city. Specifically, we will go into the streets and look at the emblems, geography, architecture, memorials, public art, museums, food, fashion, theater, religion, and markets of Florence while paying close attention to authorship, evidence, cultural values and expectations, style, and decorum.

Objectives

1. Students become competent readers of Florence in particular and cities in general.
2. Students gain competence and/or familiarity with a variety of rhetorical skills and concepts.
3. Students practice writing, speaking, mapping, and photography in order to improve their general communicative skills.
4. Students critically engage with Florence as a site, source, container and constrainer of rhetorical practice.

Course Grading and Evaluation

30% Weekly assignments
   First impression of Florence
   Photographic Treasure Hunt
   Map of personal commute
   Presentation of Rhetorical Artifact
   Evening Florentine Cultural Event Review
   Critical impression of Florence

25% Emblem of Florence, Rhetorical Analysis

25% Florence home stay, Rhetorical Ethnography

20% Participation (conscientious preparation and thoughtful engagement)
Course Policies and Procedures

1. Your preparation, presence, and participation in each class are essential. All absences (physical or mental) will lower your course experience and grade.
2. All work must be submitted on time, complete and thoroughly edited. Late work will be heavily penalized.
3. Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty is a serious offence. Penalties can range from failure of assignment to course failure. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1  Introduction to Rhetoric and the Founding of Florence

Florence was founded in 59 BCE near the end of the Roman Republic. From Florence’s founding in 59 BCE, through the Renaissance, rhetoric was a central component of education and therefore heavily impacted public life. We begin by exploring what rhetoric is and how the Romans made the Greek concept of rhetoric their own.

Assignment: First impression of Florence

Week 2  Physical Florence and Rhetoric of Place

Florence’s placement on the Arno was neither accidental nor inconsequential. Through a treasure hunt and mapping exercise we will examine the physicality of Florence and learn about Rhetoric of Place.

Assignment: Photographic Treasure Hunt

Week 3  Republic of Florence and Visual Rhetoric

Florence became a Republic in 1115 CE, during the Golden Age of Florentine art. This week we focus on visual rhetoric and how to analyze a visual text. We will also begin on site presentations of significant Florentine rhetorical artifacts.

Assignment: Map of Commute with Landmarks
Assignment: Orally present a significant Florentine rhetorical artifact (first third of the class)

Week 4  Renaissance Florence and Architecture as Rhetoric

The Renaissance began in Florence in the 14th century and spread throughout Europe. This week we will focus on architecture as rhetoric and learn how to analyze a building or monument. We will continue on site presentations of significant Florentine rhetorical artifacts.

Assignment: Orally present a significant Florentine rhetorical artifact (second third of the class)

Week 5  The Medici’s and Public Art as Rhetoric
The Medici family ruled Florence on and off from 1434 to 1737. Their role as bankers and patrons had a powerful influence on Florence. Lorenzo Medici and others commissioned work by Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli and other masters. This week we will focus on museums and public art and learn how to analyze art as rhetoric. We will continue and complete on site presentations of significant Florentine rhetorical artifacts.

Assignment: Orally present a significant Florentine rhetorical artifact (third third of the class)
Assignment: Rhetorical Analysis of Florentine Emblem paper due

Week 6 United Kingdom of Italy and the mark of two World Wars

Italy unified as a nation in 1861 with Florence becoming the capital in 1865. During World War I, Italy secretly signed the Treaty of London in 1915 but allied with Germany and the Axis powers in World War II. This week will focus on how the city presents itself as part of a larger Italy as well as how it remembers the wars and fascism.

Assignment: Florentine Cultural Event Review

Week 7 The Republic of Italy, Contemporary Florence and Family life

June 1946 Italy became the republic that it is today. The final project in this course is a paper presenting how the host family contributed and/or complicated the student’s notion of what it means to be Florentine. This week will focus on how discourse creates and communicates culture; specifically we will look at public holidays and rituals as rhetorical.

Assignment: Critical impression of Florence
Assignment: Florence home stay Rhetorical Ethnography

31 July 2013