



Renaissance Men and Women in Dialogue

ACM London / Florence Program

Spring 2012

Course Overview and Goals

This course will focus on the relationship between men and women in Renaissance Italy, as seen in selected primary sources. In the period between 1300 and 1600, classical models were important not only in visual art but also literature, where the influence of Plato and Cicero resulted in dialogues that used real people as interlocutors who spoke not only about abstract topics but also of how to live one's life. In this course we will read some actual dialogues, but we will also imagine the dialogue created by the juxtaposition of works written independently by men and women, often in response to each other. During site visits in Florence and other parts of Italy we will determine to what extent these conversations are contextualized in the visual art and material surroundings of the time. By the end of this course, the student should be able to 1) identify and discuss the significance of some important male and female writers of the Italian Renaissance, 2) situate these writers in their material and historical reality in order to appreciate the use of primary sources in constructing historical knowledge, including that of gender, and 3) discuss the idea of dialogue and conversation and comment on contemporary Italian culture with reference to its distinguished past.

Required Reading Materials

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. Transl. by Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella. New American Library Signet Classics, 1982.

(selected stories)

Bondanella, Julia Conway and Mark Musa, eds. *The Italian Renaissance Reader*.

New York: Meridian, 1987. (Selections)

Brucker, Gene. *Giovanni and Lusanna*. Berkeley: University of California Press,

2005.

Castiglione, Baldesar. *The Book of the Courtier*. Transl. by George Bull. Penguin

Books: 1976. (selections)

Course Reader

Course Requirements:

Grading:

Class Participation (30% of grade): 20% of this grade is *general* participation. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and site visits, having prepared the readings and ready to participate with comments and questions. In addition, (10%) there will be *specific, individual* presentations on the readings and observations of contemporary Italy.

Analytical Papers (45% of grade): Students will write three analytical papers (ca. 5-8 pages each).

Final Examination (25% of grade): The opportunity to bring together all the information and experiences of the semester.

Policies:

Reading materials: These will be provided to you by ACM. If you wish to own your own copy of the books, for the purpose of writing in them, you will be expected to purchase them.

Class times: We will meet on Mondays 15:00-16:30 and on Thursdays 9:00-12:00. Site visits will be incorporated into these times to the extent possible.

Site Visits: When we convene on site, it is important that you be prompt and prepared. Consult a map and plan your travel route and time carefully. Dress for conditions, remembering that the inside of museums are not a lot warmer than the outside.

Attendance: Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. Please notify the professor in advance in case of an emergency or illness or other situation. One unexcused absence will affect borderline grades; additional unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your grade for each absence. Medical excuse is the only valid reason for absence. Prompt arrival is crucial-- class sessions will commence at the declared time. Late arrival negatively impacts your grade and you may have to pay your own admission fee to ticket sites.

Written and Oral work: In fairness to your peers, **late work** is not allowed. When the deadline has passed, expect considerable reduction in your grade. To ensure parity, all written assignments must be presented in hard copy on or before deadline. In order for you to pass the course, all work must be completed before your departure from Florence.

Course Schedule

Some of the class meetings will be site visits to be arranged in conjunction with other ACM Florence courses. Of interest will be the imagination of Renaissance neighborhoods and the interiors of buildings, especially of the “casa,” as seen in paintings as well as places such as the Palazzi Davanzati and Moretti and Museo Horne.

Unit I: Two Crowns of the Trecento

Week 1

Mon. 30 Jan: Introduction to the course. Concepts and questions (what is a “dialogue,”

the “Renaissance,” Did women also have a Renaissance? How can we know?)

Thurs. 2 Feb.: Giovanni Boccaccio: *The Decameron* (1348-51), selected stories

Week 2

Mon. 6 Feb.: Boccaccio, continued.

Thurs. 9 Feb.: Francesco Petrarca: “Letter on the Ascent of Mt Ventoux” (1336)

Selected poems from his *Canzoniere*.

Unit II: Men, Women and Marriage in the Quattrocento

Week 3

Mon. 13 Feb.: Francesco Barbaro: selections from *On Wifely Duties* (1416).

Leon Battista Alberti: selections from *The Book of the Family* (1433-39).

First analytical paper due (Unit I)

Thur. 16 Feb.: Laura Cereta: selected letters on her life experience and that of women

in general (1488-92).

Week 4

Mon. 20 Feb.: *Giovanni and Lusanna* (trial, 1455), ed. Gene Brucker

Thur 23 Feb.: Alessandra Strozzi: selected letters to her sons (1447-70)

Isabella d'Este: selected letters on collecting art (1501-12)

Unit III: Relationships in the Cinquecento

Week 5

Tue. 28 Feb. NOTE DATE CHANGE! Niccolò Machiavelli: *The Mandrake Root*

(ca. 1519)

Second analytical paper due (Unit II)

Thur. 1 Mar.: Baldassare Castiglione: *The Book of the Courtier*. (1528)

Week 6

Mon. 5 Mar.: Castiglione, continued.

Thur. 8 Mar.: Michelangelo Buonarroti, selected poems (ca. 1540-55)

Vittoria Colonna, selected poems (1538)

Gaspara Stampa, selections from the *Rime* (1553).

Isabella de Morra, selected poems (1559)

Veronica Franco: Letter to a mother (ca. 1580); selected poems (1575)

Week 7

Mon. 12 Mar.: Tullia d'Aragona, *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love* (1547).

Third analytical paper due (Unit III)

Thur. 15 Mar: Final exam