University of Pennsylvania, Department of Italian Studies

Writing on the Wall: Art and Poetry in the Streets of Early Modern Florence
Course ID ɪᴛᴀʟ-5550 | Fall 2023 | Mondays 3:30-5:30pm | Location: TBD

Giotto, Scrovegni Chapel (c. 1305)   Ms. Ital 482/Decameron (c. 1370)   Diego Rivera, Phil. Museum of Art (1931)

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Office Hours TBD & by appointment

Course Description:
This course explores street art and wall paintings, both real and literary, in early modern Florence. How did street art and murals in early modern Florence shape viewers' understanding of society and their role within it? And how did Italian writers appropriate artistic conventions, through text, to comment on sociopolitical concerns? Taking into consideration emerging artistic conventions for creating public and mural art alongside textual descriptions of visual art, we will investigate ways in which Italian writers and artists visualized justice, critiqued dominant social hierarchies, and renegotiated gendered spaces in their literary and artistic works. We will expand our study to investigate contemporary street art and graffiti traditions in order to consider the legacy of these early modern literary and artistic tensions in Florentine culture today.

In addition to close engagement with visual sources, course readings will include works by Dante, Boccaccio, Ariosto, and Machiavelli among others. Select readings from the work of Marguerite de Navarre, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and Classical antecedents will shed light on cross cultural dialogue on the representation of civic life, gender, and society.

This course is designed to meet the requirements for the Price Lab for Digital Humanities' *DH Credentials for Graduate Students Certificate* as well as the requirements for the Digital Humanities Undergraduate Minor. Throughout the course, students will collaborate on a digital publication and learn to use select digital tools that facilitate visual and textual analysis. ***NB: Technical instruction and assistance will be provided at all stages of creating the digital publication. Students are not required to have digital humanities experience prior to enrolling.***

Taught in English with optional meetings in Italian for interested students.

Course Objectives:
In this course, students will come away with:
- familiarity with the study of literary descriptions of visual art and ekphrasis, in medieval and Early Modern Italian literature;
- an understanding of the societal conditions governing the production of mural art in medieval and Early Modern Italy and its main artistic conventions;
- experience engaging in interdisciplinary analysis through close engagement with images, text, and digital media;
- practice integrating source and critical material effectively in interdisciplinary research and writing for publication.

Assignments & Evaluation Breakdown:
(Expanded guidelines below)

        20%   **Attendance & Participation**
        30 %   **Close Engagement Assignments (X2)**
        15 %   **Digital Annotation Assignment**
        35%   **Final Project**
- **(25% project + 10% peer review comments)**

Expanded Assignment Guidelines:
20% **Participation:** Active engagement is essential in an interdisciplinary course; this is an opportunity to read deeply via different approaches to the text, learn from colleagues, and apply new skills. Challenge yourself to take risks and find unexpected disciplinary intersections, while also engaging thoughtfully and responding generously to colleagues. Participation also includes course preparedness and <u>a minimum of one office hour appointment</u>: You may come with questions about the course; to talk through progress with an assignment; feedback on project topics. We can also discuss study and work habits, time management, and strategies for academic and professional development. I look forward to connecting with you and supporting your academic success.

30 % **Close Engagement Assignments (X 2):** These are short format essays designed to prepare you for the final project by asking you to select and closely analyze 1-2 visual objects alongside the text they represent. In addition to a detailed visual analysis of the object(s), you should interpret the image alongside the text. In 4-6 pages, your essay should present a well-structured and informed analysis of your object(s), laid out in a clear and coherent manner. The first close engagement assignment is due in Week 4 and the second is due in Week 8. The visual objects can be of any medium or time frame, however they should have some bearing on the class themes and must be appropriately cited. These essays will be written and submitted in the digital publishing platform, Scalar, which we will be learning to use step-by-step during the course. Technical skills scaffolded in the close reading assignments will include how to create a Scalar page, how to upload an image, and how to add metadata and alt-text to an image, etc.

15 % **Digital Annotation Assignment:** This assignment consists of a creatively and critically annotating a visual or textual object. This assignment asks you to select an object to engage with and to make decisions about how to annotate it for specialist and public audiences. What kind of information would you provide to contextualize the item? How would you leverage digital annotation tools to

comment and tell a story about the object? Students will learn how to use annotation tools and be provided with technical support to complete this assignment.

35%   **Multimodal Digital Publication Assignment (25%):** This assignment consists of writing a born-digital, multimodal essay. The essay should include 6-8 visual objects. Other digital media including sound or video files are also welcome. Your essay should critically engage with a question or theme and demonstrate how you are tracing this theme across both visual objects and textual analysis. You are responsible for cataloging the metadata for visual objects within your project and designing the integration of text and media within your essay. This assignment is designed to build on the technical skills scaffolded in the close reading assignments and to provide a space to critically analyze both media and text in a digital scholarship publication.

>   **Peer Review Assignment (10%):** This assignment asks you to comment on the preliminary pages of a peer's final assignment, placing into practice the skills developed in the digital publication review assignment. A peer review form will be provided for this assignment. Your comments should also suggest areas of expansion for the final version. Your review should also take into consideration the logic and flow of the argument, as well as the design and navigation of the digital publication, especially in terms of its integration of images or other media alongside the narrative.

Scalar:
Throughout the course, we will use the digital publishing platform, Scalar, an open-source authoring and publishing platform designed for sharing scholarship online through the incorporation of media including texts, images, and sound recordings, as well as visualizing data through maps and word clouds. By developing a collection of digital essays within Scalar, we produce a work of public-facing scholarship addressing the intersection of mural arts and text in medieval and Early Modern Italy.

Developed by the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture, Scalar is a free, opensource, authoring and publishing platform designed for writing short and long-form, born-digital scholarship online. Scalar enables users to assemble media from multiple sources and juxtapose them with their writing in a variety of ways, with limited technical expertise required.

Course Policies:
Attendance & Covid-19: I ask that you make every possible effort to attend and participate in all classes in order to engage meaningfully with your peers and with the course material. If you need to miss class for reasons of health, physical or mental, caring for a family member/partner, curricular commitments, or personal emergencies, please stay in touch with me so that we can arrange the appropriate accommodation, including asynchronous assignments.

If missing class due to Covid-19, please follow Penn's guidelines for testing and tracing. When you are able, please schedule a 15 min. Zoom meeting with me to discuss missed class content.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you have questions about plagiarism, please consult with me and/or Penn's guide to citation practices and plagiarism policies.

Inclusivity, Accessibility, & University Resources:
Preferred Name & Pronouns: If you feel comfortable sharing, please let me know how you preferred to be addressed, including name, preferred pronouns, or anything about your sense of personal identity. Only the information designated by you will be shared with classmates.

Accessibility: This course is intended for all Penn students, including those with mental, physical, or cognitive disabilities, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that has the potential to negatively affect a student's access to education. Please inform me if you require accommodations or modifications for this course, either during office hours or by appointment, and/or let me know if there are specific ways I can support you. Note that this does not mean that you need to disclose anything that you are uncomfortable sharing. Please also be in touch with Penn's Academic Accommodations center.

Student Health and Counseling Services takes a goal-focused and collaborative approach to mental health services to assist students in improving their lives, providing a range of mental health services to the Penn community. They can be reached by phone: 215-898-7021.

English as an Additional Language: Students seeking support whose primary language is not English are welcome to reach out to me to discuss strategies for approaching the text and/or assignments. Minor mistakes in your non-native language may be marked but will not affect your grade, unless it significantly obstructs the clarity of your argument. English support services are also available on campus via workshops and individual appointments. For more information, contact elp@sas.upenn.edu.

Inclusivity: The University of Pennsylvania is committed to fostering and maintaining an inclusive campus that is free from discrimination and harassment. Any student impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking, is encouraged to seek support on campus or in the community. Please contact the Title IX Office (titleIXofficer@upenn.edu) or the University Ombudsperson (ombuds@upenn.edu) to address your specific needs.

Weekly Course Schedule: (**Subject to Change**)

Week 1	
TBD	Introduction and Course Overview
	In class: 3D Scrovegni Chapel Project

Week 2	
Sept. 11	Homer, *The Iliad* (Book 18.478-608)
	Virgil, *The Aeneid* (Book 1.450-95)
	- James Francis, "Metal Maidens, Achilles Shield, and Pandora: The Beginnings of Ekphrasis," *American Journal of Philology* 130:1 (2009), 1-23.
	Optional:
	- Michael Putnam, "Dido's Murals and Virgilian Ekphrasis," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 98 (1998), p. 243-275.
	- Jas Elsner, "Art History as Ekphrasis," *Art History* 33 (2010), 10-27.

Week 3	
Sept. 18	Giovanni Villani, *Cronica Book XII Selections* Guido Cavalcanti Select Poems: "Una figura della donna mia" & Guido Orlandi response "S'avessi detto, amico, di Maria", Cavalcanti: "Tu mi hai si piena dolor la mente", "Una giovane donna di Tolosa"; "Noi sian le triste penne isbitotite", "Io vidi li occhi dove Amor si mise" Guido Guinizelli: "Al cor gentil" - Ronald Martinez, "Guido Cavalcanti's "Una figura della donna mia" and the Specter of Idolatry Haunting the Stilnovo", *Exemplaria* 15:2 (2003), 297-324. - Richard Trexler, "The Framework of Ritual Introduction," in *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Cornell, 1980), 1-9. Optional: - C. Jean Campbell, "Municipal Verse, Vernacular Poetry, and Simone Martini's *Maestà*," *in* The Commonwealth of Nature: Art and Poetic Community in the Age of Dante (Penn State, 2008), 61-95.

Week 4	
Sept. 25	Dante, *Vita Nuova Selections* Cennino Cennini, *Il libro dell'arte I-IX* - Christine Klapisch-Zuber, "Zacharias or the Ousted Father: Nuptial Rites in Tuscany between Giotto and the Council of Trent," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (UChicago Press, 1987), p. 178-212. Optional: - Michelangelo Picone, "Theories of Love and the Lyric Tradition from Dante's Vita Nuova to Petrarch's Canzoniere," *Romance Notes* 39:1 (1998), 83-93. - Anne Dunlop, "Painted Rooms and Permeability," in *Painted Palaces* (2009), p. 89-121. **Close Engagement Assignment 1 Due Friday**

Week 5	
Oct. 2	Dante, *Commedia,* Purg. 10-12 Guillaume de Lloris, *Roman de la Rose Selections* - Teodolinda Barolini, "Re-presenting What God Presented: The Arachnean Art of Dante's Terrace of Pride," *Dante Studies* 105 (1987), 43-62. - Norman Land, "The Poet's Eye, I," in *the Viewer as Poet: The Renaissance Response to Art* (Penn State, 1994), 49-71.

Week 6	
Oct. 9	Boccaccio, *Decameron Selections (Introduction to Book 1, 1.8, Introduction to Day 4, 4.2)* - Bonnie Irwin, "What's in a Frame?: The Medieval Textualization of Storytelling," *Oral Tradition* 10:1 (1995), 27-53. - Geraldine Heng, "Architectures of Racial Formation: Church and State, Law, Learning, Governmentality, Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries," 33-36. Optional:

	- Alison Cornish, "Incarnation in Venice (IV.2)," *The Decameron Fourth Day in Perspective* (Toronto, 2020), 47-57.

Week 7	***Special Collections Visit***
Oct. 16	Boccaccio, *Decameron Selections (8.3, 8.6, 8.9, 9.3, 9.5)* - Niall Atkinson, "Sound, Space, and Meaning in Renaissance Florence," in *The Noisy Renaissance: Sound, Architecture, and Florentine Urban Life*, p. 121-151. Optional: - Samuel Edgerton, Icons of Justice," in *Pictures as Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (Cornell, 1985), 21-58. - Justin Steinberg, ""The Artist and the Police," (VIII.3), in *The Decameron Eighth Day in Perspective*" (2020), pp. 59-88.

Week 8	
Oct. 23	Boccaccio, *Decameron 6.5 & Amorosa Visione Books 1-4;* Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters: Prologue to the Third Section & Giotto* - Watson, Paul F., "The Cement of Fiction: Giovanni Boccaccio and the Painters of Florence" (1984), pp. 43-64. Optional: - Richard Kuhns, "Trecento Story and Image," in *Decameron and the Philosophy of Storytelling: Author as Midwife and Pimp,*" (Columbia, 2005), 29-52. - Marvin Trachtenberg, "The Architecture of Painting and the Multimedia Tableau", pp. 214-223. **Close Engagement Assignment 2 Due Friday**

Week 9	The Scrovegni Chapel & Mexican Muralism
Oct. 30	Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, *El Primero Sueño Selections* and *Poetry Selections* - Jean Charlot, "Diego Rivera in Italy," *Magazine of Art* 46 (1953), 3-10. - Megan Flattley, "Diego Rivera, first and second floor murals of the Secretaría de Educación Pública," in *Smarthistory*, June 6, 2021, **https://smarthistory.org/rivera-murals-ministry-public-education/**. Optional: - Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, "Past and Present: History as Metaphor," in *The Usurer's Heart: Giotto, Enrico Scrovegni, and the Arena Chapel in Padua* (Penn State, 2008).

Week 10	
Nov. 6	Boccaccio, *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta Chapter VIII & De Mulieribus claris Selections* Marguerite de Navarre, *le Livre de la Cité des Dames Book II* - Kevin Brownlee, "Christine Transforms Boccaccio: Gendered Authorship in the *De mulieribus claris* and the *Cité des dames*," in *Reconsidering Boccaccio* (2018), p. 246-259. Optional: - Alessia Ronchetti, "Reading Like a Woman: Gendering Compassion in the *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*," in *Reconsidering Boccaccio* (2018), p. 110-132.

Week 11	
Nov. 13	Petrarch, *Trionfi* Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso Canto 33* - Federica Caneparo, "The Literary Canon and the Visual Arts: From the Three Crowns to Ariosto and Tasso," in *Building the Canon through Classics: Imitation and Variation in Renaissance Italy 1350-1580* (Brill, 2019), 158-186. Optional: - Jens T. Wollen, "'Ut poesis pictura?' Problems of Images and Texts in the Early Trecento," in *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle* (University of Toronto, 1990), 183-210. - Margaret Ann Zaho, "The Evolution of the Triumph in Literature and Art", in *Imago Triumphalis*, (2004), 26-36.

Week 12	
Nov. 20	Mural Arts Philly Tour - Michael Baxendall, "Period Eye 1-8," in Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy (Oxford, 1998), p. 29-81. **Digital Publication Review Assignment Due**

Week 13	
Nov. 27	Machiavelli, *The Prince (Dedication, Books XXI & XXV)* Tommaso Campanella, *Città del Sole Selections* Alberti, *De Pictura* - J.D. Falvo, "Nature and Art in Machiavelli's *Prince*," *Italica* 66:3 (1989), 323-332. - Allie Terry-Fritsch, "Mobilizing Visitors: Political Persuasion and the Somaesthetics of Belonging in the Chapel of the Magi," 53-58. Optional: - Sarah McHam, "Donatello's Bronze 'David' and 'Judith' as Metaphors of Medici Rule in Florence"

Week 14	
Dec. 4	Michelangelo, *Poetry Selections* Vittoria Colonna, *Poetry Selections* - Jessica Maratsos, "Michelangelo, Vittoria Colonna, and the Afterlife of Intimacy," *The Art Bulletin* 99:4 (2017), 69-101. - Mary D. Garrard, "The Cloister and the Square: Gender Dynamics in Renaissance Florence." Early Modern Women, vol. 11, no. 1, 2016, pp. 5–44. Optional: - Elizabeth Cropper, "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style," *The Art Bulletin*, 374-394. **Final Project Initial Draft Due to Peer for Review**

Week 15	
Dec. 11	Contemporary Street Art in Florence - "L'arte sa nuotare" - Blub & Florentine Street art - Moretti, Fabrizio, "Jeff Koons in Florence." Muse Firenze. Web. 25 Nov. 2015. **Peer Review Comments Due on Final Project** ****Final Projects Due December TBD****

Additional Resources & Recommended Reading

Eisner, Martin, *Dante's New Life of the Book: A Philology of World Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2021). *Especially: Chapter 9: "The Veronica (Tipped in)"*

Spathoni, Anthi-Danaé, "Du texte à l'image — et retour. Cy Twombly et Homère," *Revue de littérature comparée* 381:1 (2022), 65-79.

Brucker, Gene. "The Renaissance City," in *Renaissance Florence* (1969), pp. 1-50.

Clarke, K.P. "Text and (Inter)Face: The Catchwords in Boccaccio's Autograph of the Decameron," in *Reconsidering Boccaccio: Medieval Contexts and Global Intertexts* (2018), pp. 27-47.

Coletti, Theresa, "'Did Women Have a Renaissance?' A Medievalist Reads Joan Kelly and Aemilia

Dressler, Rachel, "Continuing the Discourse: Feminist Scholarship and the Study of Medieval Visual Culture," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 43.1 (2007): 15-34.

Heng, Geraldine, "Inventions/Reinventions," in *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (2018), pp. 15-54.

Kelly, Joan, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly. U of Chicago P, 1984.
- "Early Feminist Theory and the Querelle des Femmes." in Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly. U of Chicago P, 1984.

Klapisch-Zuber, Christiane. *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (1987).

Lipton, Sarah, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (2014)

Lugli, Emanuel, "The Hair is Full of Snares: Botticelli's and Boccaccio's Wayward Gaze" (2019), pp. 203-233.

Martinez, Ronald L., "Calandrino and the Powers of the Stone: Rhetoric, Belief, and the Progress of the Ingegno in *Decameron* VIII.3." *Heliotrope*.

Nochlin, Linda, "Why Have there Been No Great Female Artists," *ArtNews* 1978.

Herbert Kessler, *Experiencing Medieval Art: Rethinking the Middle Ages* (2019).

Simons, Patricia "Women in Frames: The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture" (1988), pp. 38-57.

Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (1999).

Whitaker, Cord, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.