



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SPRING SEMESTER 2022
SALLE ZOLA
CLASS TIMES – M 10:30-11:55
W 10:30-11:55

ANTH/LIT/COM 375

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The European City in Literature and the Visual Arts

This course will explore the rise and the establishment of the urban setting as the nexus of contemporary European culture and civilization. We will focus primarily on the late nineteenth-century up to the contemporary setting, more specifically on Rome, Paris, Prague and London. Other cities will be taken into account but only in complement to these four central urban settings. The main genres will be the novel and cinema but will not exclude poetry, music or painting.

OBJECTIVES

Explore a variety of fictional representations of European cities

Examine the historical, geographical and demographical foundations informing the fictional representations of European cities

Explore the influence of the urban setting on artistic imagination

OUTCOMES

Students will

Articulate the importance of setting in the arts

Characterize some key European cities

Enrich their knowledge of the geographical and demographical importance of urban settings in the context of European history.

Learn to see setting as character in narrative

Better differentiate the interplay between the historical realities and fictional and/or imaginary perspectives of European cities.

Below is a list of the cities we will concentrate on, in the order we will deal with them and the essential works that reveal perspectives on the settings.

Rome – Remnants of a Founding Civilization

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe – “Roman Elegies” (1790)

Gabriele D’Annunzio – *Pleasure* (1889)

Giacomo Puccini – *Tosca* (1900)

Roberto Rossellini – *Rome, Open City* (1945)

Vittorio De Sica – *The Bicycle Thief* (1946)

Federico Fellini – *La Dolce Vita* (1960), *Roma* (1970)

Paolo Sorrentino – *La Grande Bellezza* (2013)

Nanni Moretti – *Caro diario* (1993)

Paris – Modern Urban Perfection

Emile Zola – *The Ladies’ Paradise* (1883), *The Masterpiece* (1886)

Louis Aragon – *Paris Peasant* (1926)
Charles Baudelaire – *Tableaux Parisiens* (1857)
Walter Benjamin – *The Writer of Modern Life* (c.1930)
Albert Camus – *The Fall* (1956)
Matthieu Kassovitz – *La Haine* (1995)
Various Artists – *Paris, je t'aime* (2005)

Prague – No Escape

Franz Kafka – *The Trial* (1926)
Orson Welles – *The Trial* (film, 1962)
Rainer Maria Rilke – *Two Stories of Prague* (trans. 1994)
Milan Kundera – *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1979), *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984)
Philip Kaufman – *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (film, 1988)
Steven Soderbergh – *Kafka* (film, 1992)
Agnieszka Holland – *Burning Bush* (mini-series, 2013)

London – A Vast Landscape

E.M. Forster – *Howard's End* (1910)
Jack London – *The People of the Abyss* (1903)
Virginia Woolf – *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)
Roman Polanski – *Oliver Twist* (film, 2005)

City in General

Italo Calvino – *Invisible Cities* (1972)
Lewis Mumford – *The City in History* (1961)
Mary Ann Caws – *City Images* (1991)

REQUIREMENTS:

The primary requirements are that you attend class, keep up with the reading, and participate in class discussion. While never impossible, the reading assignments are sometimes long and always challenging, so allow ample time to complete them. This is not a lecture course, and its success very much depends on everyone coming to class prepared and ready to talk. In order to prepare for class, consult the questions I distribute (of those that are available) for that purpose and be ready to answer them in some form. However, I recommend consulting these questions only after you have already read through some of the books or seen some of the films. Grades will be calculated according to the following distribution:

Daily short answer essays:	200 points
4 Short Papers:	400 points (100 points each paper)
Midterm Exam:	100 points
Presentation:	100 points
Term Paper:	100 points
Participation:	100 points

READING AND VIEWING:

We will be dealing primarily with both literature and film, but also some painting and music. You should go ahead and start your reading RIGHT NOW. The books are various lengths, so be sure to organize your time. The first few classes we will be talking about Rome through cinema. This will give you time to start reading. In class, we will watch and discuss selections from the films, but I expect for you to have watched them in their entirety, unless otherwise stipulated. All of these films can be streamed at <https://web.microsoftstream.com> using your Office 365 account login. The channel is named LIT/ANTH/COM 375.

ACCESS TO MATERIALS AND CLASS COMMUNICATION

All communication outside of class time will be managed through the Microsoft Teams platform. You should download the app on your smartphones to stay up to date. You can find the films and

the readings in digital format by signing into your account at <https://www.office.com>. The name of the “Team” for this class is LIT/ANTH/COM 375 – European City. You have already been added to this class and it should appear in your account.

DAILY SHORT ANSWER ESSAYS:

For each reading or film viewing you will be required to submit a 300-350-word short essay. For each of the readings or viewings I will provide you some prompts to consider. In your responses, you can answer all of the questions together or just choose to focus on one of the questions for the entirety of the essay. Each of this is worth 10 points. The essays will be evaluated on their pertinence and originality. In my feedback I may require you to try something different for successive essays. Your adaptability in trying something new may affect the assessment of your essays as well.

PAPERS:

There will be four short papers to write, each four to six pages long (1200-1800 words), and one slightly longer final paper to write (1500-2100 words). I will provide the topics, but for the third, fourth and final papers you are encouraged to develop your own. The topic for the final paper you must develop on your own with my help. Note in the “assignment schedule” the due dates for the papers. Make sure you let me know your topic before you begin working on the paper. As the due dates approach, I will give you more details about what is expected in your essays. [See Written Papers Guidelines](#).

EXAMS:

Your in-class midterm will be cumulative and will deal in a comparative manner with some of the major issues we will have dealt with up to that point.

PRESENTATIONS:

Students are responsible for preparing a fifteen to twenty-minute presentation. As subject, you may choose works from the class or choose from the above list of readings or films or simply come up with your own idea. The important thing is that you present a work (novel, poem, film, painting, etc.) that illustrates the importance of some European city. Your assignment for the presentation is to present the work, show in what ways it represents the city and, if necessary, what about the background of said city informs the artistic production. If you were to choose, for instance, James Joyce’s *Ulysses* to talk about Dublin, Ireland, you could give an overview of the book, mention in what light Joyce presents the city, what about the city in reality bears out the author’s fictional version of it, and even go further to talk about your own experience with Dublin and some of the things you saw or experienced that bear out Bloom or Stephen’s (protagonists) experiences. The basic idea is that through your presentation we should get a glimpse of the realities of the city, the work’s imaginative perspective on the city and how the two intertwine and conflict. [See presentation guidelines](#).

ATTENDANCE:

One of the primary requirements this semester is that you attend class. This is not a lecture class, and its success depends very much on your coming to class on time, prepared for the lesson, and ready to participate in discussion and activities. Attendance will be part of your final grade. Absences have a negative impact on your final grade. Each unexcused absence above two will lower the final grade by a half-letter grade. IAU College excused absences: absences linked to IAU excursions; sickness (a medical certificate is required); emergencies.

CLASS 1.

Introduction, Methods. Cities and their Characters. How would you fictionalize the town you come from?

CLASS 2. – AIX-EN-PROVENCE, read *Fortune of the Rougons I,II.*

- How does Zola present the character of the people of the village of Plassans? Tour of Zola's Aix-en-Provence.

PAPER 1 DUE

In 500-600 words, how does Goethe give life to Rome as a character in this reading from *Roman Elegies*?

CLASS 3. - ROME, read Goethe's *Roman Elegies*. Read "History of Rome." See Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*.

- Consider all possible meanings for the term "decadent." Read "Decadence Definition."
- Every image is calculated and composed by Fellini. How do these images convey a sense of Rome's past and its personality?
- Concentrate on the "character" Sylvia. In what ways might Fellini have her fulfill the role of a mythic character?

MOVIE NIGHT

6:30PM - Watching together on the big screen Sorrentino's *La Grande Bellezza*, CEF Main Hall. Make sure to let host families know you will have dinner out that night.

CLASS 4. See Sorrentino's *La Grande Bellezza*.

- Make a list of all the ways it is inspired by *Dolce Vita*. Decades afterwards, has the image of Rome evolved?
- In what ways does Sorrentino's film extend Fellini's *Dolce Vita*?
- Did you find this film disturbing? Why or why not?

CLASS 5.– Read Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Pleasure*. (Books I,II), Read "futurism and fascism."

- Why does D'Annunzio depend so much on description of minute detail?
- What does Rome mean to Andrea Sperelli? What does the city offer him?

CLASS 6. - Pleasure. (Books III-IV)

- Consider Rome as a character in this book. What adjectives would you use to describe him/her?

CLASS 7.– Pleasure

CLASS 8.– See De Sica's *Bicycle Thief*. See Caravaggio's *Bacchus* at www.caravaggiogallery.com/zz_bacchus.aspx. Read "Caravaggio-Bacchus."

- For *Bicycle Thief*, What institutions of Rome are represented?
- How does the film explore differences in class; the privileged and the underprivileged?
- How does this correspond to or contrast with your preconceptions on Rome?
- How does De Sica explore the idea of crowds in the cityscape?

PAPER 2 DUE

CLASS 9. - PARIS *Ladies' Paradise* (pp. 3-116),

- What characteristics of the department store does Zola use to portray the city of Paris?

CLASS 10. - Ladies' Paradise (pp. 117-263),

- How would you describe Denise's day out in the country (Rambouillet)?
- What does the day-trip tell us about the city?

CLASS 11.– See film *La Haine* (1995)

- Watching this film, take note and comment on what aspects of the city of Paris are prevalent to you.
- You will obviously notice that this is not an image of Paris you may never experience or hear about.
- Do you think the director had this in mind and if so, why?

PAPER 2 REWRITE DUE

Field Study to PARIS

CLASS 12.– *Ladies' Paradise* (pp. 264-423)

- What has the Parisian woman become under commerce's growing dominion over Parisian culture?
- In what ways has the department store subsumed other aspects of Parisian society? Exam review

MID-SEMESTER EXAM

CLASS 13. – PARIS/AMSTERDAM *The Fall* (??)

- How does the narrator characterize Amsterdam? How is it different from Paris?
- Why exactly would the narrator feel compelled to begin a conversation with a stranger and draw him in?

CLASS 14.– *The Fall* (??)

- How is Jean-Baptiste seductive, how "creepy"?
- Is he trustworthy? How or how not?

CLASS 15. - PRAGUE – *The Trial* (Chaps. 1-3, pp. 7-71)

- Read bio and background on Kafka
- Why would the courts be in such ordinary places around the city?
- Joseph K. is free to roam around the city, but is he free? Why or why not?

CLASS 16. - *The Trial* (Chaps. 4-7)

- What roles do the various female characters play?
- Despite proceeding through myriad places of the city, Joseph K. seems to make no headway with his case. Is the city open to his efforts? Why or why not?
- In what ways is Joseph K. an archetypal city dweller? How is this destructive?

CLASS 17. – Read *The Trial* (Chaps. 8-10)

- Concentrate on the parable “Before the Law” recounted by the priest in the cathedral where the man from the country comes seeking entrance into the law.
- What is a parable? How does this parable summarize the dilemma of Joseph K? In the parable, what risk does the man from the country take in submitting to the guard?
- What risk would he take in defying the guard?

CLASS 18.– Film: *Burning Bush*, Episode 1, Agnieszka Holland (I also recommend episodes 2 and 3!)

Reading:

Selection from *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

Selection from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

Bohumil Hrabal's "Magic Flute"

- In these films and readings, how can we see victimization (and even self-victimization) as a character trait of the city of Prague?
- In these readings and films, how, despite the oppression, do characters assert their sense of individuality and heroism?
- What in the end maintains them?

• **PAPER 3 DUE**

CLASS 19.– Readings: *Mrs. Dalloway* (pp. 3-35)

- Read bio on Virginia Woolf
- See map of the walks through London of the different characters of the book
- Follow Clarissa’s walk through London. With the places she walks by, what can we learn about her social class?
- How would you characterize Clarissa’s relationship with London?
- What role does the clock tower Big Ben play in this section? How is it a character in its own right?

CLASS 20.– Read *Mrs. Dalloway* (pp. 35-107)

- Whose narrative voice do we hear as this section begins?
- What reality of London/Britain’s history does this character reveal?
- Why is he an important presence?

CLASS 21.– Reading and viewing: Wole Soyinka’s “Telephone Conversation”

- What is the situation of the speaker as compared with the interlocutor on the other end of the conversation? How would you define the tone of the poem?

CLASS 22. - Read *Mrs. Dalloway* (pp. 108-139)

- Focus specifically on the character of Elizabeth Dalloway.
- How is she a "pirate" or a pioneer?
- How does Woolf present her as different from her mother and her mother's friends and acquaintances?
- What has changed about her by the ending of the book?

CLASS 23.– Review for Final Paper Project

Final Paper Due