



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Italy Program, Summer 2026

HIST 315 Topics: Love and War in Ancient Italy

Instructor: Dr. Chrol

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change



1. Course Description:

Taught in English, this course examines the themes of love and war in Roman poetry and prose. We will take advantage of the Italian environment and museums to understand these themes in context, as well as discern how our modern views reflect or reject the ancient ones.

Love and war, on the surface, are seemingly at odds with one another: love brings people together, while war divides them. While this is true, it is useful to look at these two prominent themes in literature together, for they bring into sharp focus two of the most powerful drives in humanity, the drive to reproduce and the drive to conquer. Both love and war possess aspects of both of these drives. The theme of love can span topics such as sex, power, friendship, family, marriage, children, infidelity, masculinity, femininity, and murder, just as the theme of war can span topics such as sex, power, friendship, family, marriage, children, infidelity, masculinity, femininity, and murder. Love and war actually have much in common. In this class, we will focus on the conflicts between the personal and political, self and other, masculinity and femininity, and private and public through the lens of love and war in ancient classical texts.

2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

If you've ever had a breakup, you may understand how difficult it is to answer one of the key questions of this course: what is love? Your first assignment is going to be to provide your definition of this term, and you will be surprised that we are likely going to have more definitions than students. This is actually important. What we consider primary human emotions become hard to pin down under scrutiny, and these differences become a vital locus of understanding when viewed through a cross-cultural lens. This class will use some of the greatest hits of Classical literature as well as artwork in the museums we'll walk through to think of ways people have represented emotions that we consider 'primary'.

By the end of our time together you will have developed your skills in thinking, speaking and writing about specific elements of the language, history, epic, religion, poetry and culture of the Romans. You will be familiar with authors, time periods, mythological content, political context, subjects and themes of literature, structure of poetry and prose, and literature as a reflection of the culture and people for whom it is produced. You will also consider how others have received this same information in Renaissance Italy and today.

Specifically at the end of our time together you will have learned:

I. How to analyze, evaluate, and create written and visual texts with a view to discovering their content, genre, language and cultural connections; and how language and artistic representations can enhance the understanding of a text and its cultural and literary contexts. This learning will come about through class discussion and writing assignments.

Components of this learning include:

1. the analysis and evaluation of art and literature through class discussion and writing.
2. the close-reading and explication of a text with a view to such literary elements as plot, theme, character and literary devices; and such cultural elements as literary and cultural contexts through class discussion and writing.

3. the planning, creation, revision, evaluation, and editing of interpretive essays and creative representations through formal writing and a process that may include peer reviews, student-teacher conferences, revisions and reflections.

4. the close-reading and explication of artwork considering your own time period and its.

II. How to develop your skills for critical thinking.

1. Reasoning: Through class discussion, informal and formal writings, group work and other presentations. You will learn how to establish an argument, present a counter argument and reason against the counter argument.

2. Cultural Judgment: Through class discussion, informal and formal writings, group work and other presentations. You will understand the literary and cultural contexts of a text through understanding your own cultural contexts and how they affect your perception of the representations of another culture.

3. Representation: Through the reading of texts and the study of visual representations both from the Ancient world and later periods that are connected with these texts. You will learn how to analyze and evaluate these representations both from the viewpoint of the culture that created them and from your own.

4. Reflection: Through an awareness of your learning process. You will write assignments reflecting on you and where you are.

III. How to develop your writing skills. The writing goals of this course are to:

1. Encourage and reinforce your learning in the course by using writing as a learning tool
2. Help you write more effectively
3. Help you learn critical thinking skills by using writing as a learning tool
4. Prepare you for writing in your careers and in your personal and community lives

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

We will be discussing the values of Love, War, Sex, Death, Heroism and the Family. We will read ancient texts, understand them in their context, and discuss their ideas in light of reception in artwork in the places we visit, as well as in a modern context.

Please be aware: there are going to be challenging topics, including sexual assault, slavery, and violence both physical and emotional. If you have a sensitivity to one of these topics and need either alternative assignments or a preview of where a topic arises, please speak with the professor and we'll get you sorted.

5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement:

Love and War should qualify for the General Education requirements for Literature, Multiculturalism and Critical Thinking

6. Required Readings and Materials:

Materials

You will need

- a small, portable pad of paper for taking notes and sketching while in museums
- a device that can access Google Classroom that can also read PDFs
- a device that can take pictures and upload them to our class WhatsApp channel.
 - o **A modern cell phone can usually handle the two above.** If you don't want to bring a computer, don't feel you have to. We will have access to WiFi in the hotel, so if you don't want to get a data plan, you don't have to. Your parents may be sad that they can't reach you at all hours, though.
 - o Note: you do not need your own WhatsApp, see below.

Closer to time of departure you will receive a link to the Google Classroom.

Readings

One of the great things about reading ancient stuff is all the authors are suuuuper dead. All our readings will be open source, creative commons, out of copyright or fair use. This means we can read and discuss some of the greatest hits of the ancient world for free, just like humanity deserves.

We will be reading some of the greatest hits of ancient literature, with selections from Vergil, Ovid, Sulpicia, Tibullus, Lucretius and Livy. In the Google Classroom you will receive PDFs of all our texts, and all those PDFs will be excerpted from online sources. Since we can't trust our internet while traveling, please download the pdfs to your device before leaving the US.

Your **written assignments** will preferably be submitted through Google Classroom, though if you need to hand-write your assignments and turn them into the professor that is available to you. Your **photo assignments** will be uploaded to the class WhatsApp account. If you take a picture with another student be sure to get their consent before uploading it. Specific instructions about photo assignments appear on our Google Classroom page.

7. Graded Assignments:

Your grade will comprise the following:

- 40% Participation
 - 20% Discussion
 - 20% Artistic Reception Missions
- 20% Journal
- 20% Modernizations
- 20% Final Photo Essay

Participation has two components, **Discussion** and **Artistic Reception Missions**.

Discussion means being willing to engage with the class as we analyze literature or ideas. Do the readings and you'll be prepared. *You don't need to know anything about the ancient world, and unless I've taught you before, it's often better that you don't! (There is a lot of terrible stuff about the ancients out there)* Just be adventuresome and respond honestly, most of the questions we are asking won't have a right or wrong answers, rather better or worse interpretations. **(spoiler alert: I don't care what you think just how you think)** We will help hone your skills at assessing these interpretations in light of the data we have. You will have a small pre-assignment before we land in Italy.

Artistic Reception Missions will require you to take (at a minimum) 4 photos and make 1 drawing of something that relates to our readings for each mission. You will upload these pictures to our Class WhatsApp channel. You may upload these pictures to your own

personal account if you have one. *If you take a picture with another student in it, be sure to get their permission before uploading it.* **NEVER EVER EVER IN THIS LIFE OR ANY OTHER IN THIS UNIVERSE OR ANY OTHER USE A FLASH WHEN YOU TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH OF AN ARTWORK.** You will do 6 Artistic Receptions. (Since we are going to 9 museums, you can knock this out pretty easily. You also aren't limited to our museum trips, you can do this when you go on a trip in your other class, or out in the world as you roam around) These count as discussion points because we will use the photos we take as the core of discussion some days. More specific information appears on our Google Classroom account.

Your **Journal** will not be shared with the class, but only with the professor. You will need to do at least 4 entries reflecting on the readings and artwork, what you find surprising, what is weird, what resonates with you. The journal will be collected as we leave Florence and at the end of Rome. If you want to hand write it, diary-style, great. If you want to type it, great. Entirely up to you. Whichever medium will give you a better chance to respond authentically to the text and images should be what you choose.

You will do 2 **Modernizations**. A modernization is writing a modern text that looks like an ancient text, and writing a commentary explaining how your text looks like the original but also reflects your 21st century feelings. One will be due before we leave Florence, one will be due before we leave Rome. These Modernizations will be shared with the class and be part of our discussion.

At the end of the course you will produce and present a final **Photo Essay**. You will take one aspect of what we discussed and present to the class in words and images your discoveries and reflections. If you want to do it by photos, great, if you want to make a PowerPoint, great, if you want to make a slideshow using a free app, also great. Once again, the medium is your choice.

The grading scale is:

A = 90-100

B= 80-89

C= 70-79

D= 60-69

F= below 59.4

8. Generative AI Policy:

Generative AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways.

Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can "hallucinate" (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI are available at: <https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:

- **Brainstorming:** You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.

- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Grammar and Style Checking: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.

You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work without attribution. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

Metacognitive Reflection. In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

"I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, grammar and style checking, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc.]."

8. Attendance Policy:

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

9. Disability Accommodation:

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIIS Program Director or other KIIIS Faculty; the KIIIS Office will notify your KIIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

10. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIIS program, attend a KIIIS event, or work in a KIIIS environment (e.g. KIIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.

11. Schedule

Overall recommendations:

- Keep an eye out for sculpture and paintings (and even graffiti) that connect with the readings of the course. You may want to report on it for an Artistic Reception Assignment
- Think about what threads you might find interesting while you look around Florence, then you can double down on those things when we get to Rome for your final project

Readings and assignments are due the day scheduled, so on 22 May you will show up having posted your response to the What Is Love question on our Google Classroom, and having read the syllabus, the Starter Kit and Roman Venus

It is also recommended you read some of the literature before we go. It'll be pleasant to sit on a bench beside the Tiber and read great literature, but you don't want to be pressed for time when there are cool sights to see.

Side note: the ordering of the literature isn't what we would follow if we were meeting in a classroom, but are ordered to give you some readings before you see well known artwork connected with our class.

This schedule will likely change. Some locations outside of the hotel are on the syllabus, others will be decided ahead of time and communicated through WhatsApp. Because we are a small class, we are more likely to meet in a park than in the hotel, also Italy might throw some good or bad surprises our way.

Pre-assignment before our first class: Go to our Google Classroom and answer the "What is love" prompt"

Week 1

19 May Leave for Italy

20 May Arrival

Evening Arrival in Hotel

- Tip: Stay awake. It's going to be super hard to stay awake, you will want to take a nap. It is far better for your jetlag for you to get direct sunlight between 10-2 (don't get a sunburn!) and go to bed early than for you to get a small nap. Note that we are going to have orientation at 10 tomorrow morning, try to get to sleep at a reasonable hour. You can be a night owl when your body adjusts in 2-3 days.

21 May 10-12 AM Orientation

1 PM Walking tour of city center

3 Basilica di Santa Croce

- Recommended watching: *Linear Perspective: Brunelleschi's Experiment*
<https://youtu.be/bkNMM8uiMww>
 - (It's recommended because you will be there, right where one of the most important developments in Western art history happened!)
- Tips for Santa Croce: look for imagery on the tombs that doesn't appear Christian; look for how statues or paintings and women appear, especially what they are holding or

wearing; see how many mural crowns (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mural_crown), lyres, and laurel wreaths you can see

22 May **2-4 Class in the hotel: Introduction, discussion of love, debrief Santa Croce**

- Homework:
 - Do the What is Love prompt **before leaving the states**
 - Read your classmates' submissions to the What is Love prompt
 - Read the syllabus, Starter Kit and Roman Venus

23 May **1-3 Class: Ovid on Love**

5:45 Duomo climb

- Homework: Read Ovid Selections.
 - Note that the readings of Cupid and Psyche are a little longer, so you may want to start reading now.
 - *(Also, if you start Cupid and Psyche, you will be able to compare the portrayal of Cupid and Psyche with the famous Botticelli Birth of Venus and the Medici Venus at the Uffizi, among other Venuses in our musea)*

- Special tip: the Artistic Reception Missions don't have a formal due-date. Just do them as you see something interesting. You should have 3 done by the time we leave Florence.

24 May Free Day

Week 2

25 May Free Day

26 May 9-12 Visit to Fiesole

3:30-5 Class: Finish Ovid; Sulpicia, Tibullus, female expressions of love in a masculine genre

- Homework: Read Sulpicia and Tibullus

27 May 8:30 Uffizi Gallery

- **VERY IMPORTANT: KEEP YOUR TICKET STUB FROM THE UFFIZI. WE WILL USE IT ON 29 MAY WHEN WE HAVE OUR BLOCK CLASS IN THE BOBOLI GARDENS**
- Tip: there are a ton of images to consider for an Artistic Reception Mission
- Keep an eye out for images of Cupid and Psyche for our discussion on Thursday

28 May A block class day

29 May **B block class day: Cupid and Psyche in the Boboli Gardens**

- Read Cupid and Psyche readings
 - Today we will have a long discussion of Cupid and Psyche, love, sacrifice and adventure, all while sitting under a tree in these beautiful gardens. We will break for lunch (there is a café in the Pitti Palace). After lunch you and a partner or two will have some time to prepare and stage a modernization of the Cupid and Psyche story – no need to prepare anything formal ahead of time, we will have plenty of time for you to work.

- **Important: your ticket from the Uffizi on Tuesday will provide your entrance to the Pitti Palace and the Boboli Gardens, be sure to bring it to class.**

30 May **2-4 Class: Sabines**

- Read the 2 accounts of the Rape of the Sabines, Livy and Ovid (read them in that order)
4.45 Accademia
- When you go to the Accademia, keep an eye out for the Rape of the Sabines statue in the Hall of the Colossus. If you can, take a picture of it, we'll discuss what you saw on 2 June
- Tip: Your first Modernization is due after the weekend, and the poets we've read so far would be excellent choices for you. Do it now and you can take your weekend trip without stress

31 May Free Day

Week 3

1 June Free Day

2 June **2-4 Class: Modernizations, final Florence discussion**

- 1st half of journal due either by hand or online
- 1st Modernization due
- Tip: by this time you should have submitted at least 3 Artistic Reception Missions
Twilight stroll to see the beautiful view and the ugly David of the Piazzale Michaelangelo

3 June 8.30 Depart for Villa d'Este and Rome

4 June **2-5 Class: Centrale Montemartini**

******* CLASS WILL MEET AT THE CENTRALE MONTRE MARTINI (Via Ostiense, 106, 00154)**

- Read Aeneid Overview, 2, 4
- Tip: as we walk through the museum consider what the point is of putting these works in this particular space
8 Night Hike (and hopefully lots of gelato)

5 June Colosseum, Forum, Palatine

6 June **1-3 Class: Debrief Montemartini, Aeneid**

- Read Aeneid 6, 12
- Note that all the remaining work in the class will be due a week from today. Use some of the free time to help draw your thoughts together.

7 June Free Day

Week 4

8 June Free Day

9 June Free Day

10 June A Block Class Day

11 June Morning Optional Papal Audience

12.45 Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel

- This is what you've been training for all trip. You will be recognizing images and concepts left and right. Pace yourself. Feel free to show off your excellent knowledge.
 - Cool weird thing to see: the garage with all the Popemobiles.
 - Hot tip that I learned through an unfortunate experience: they are going to try to get you to leave the Sistine Chapel through one set of doors, you will be out of the museum then. Find the other doors out
- I am terrified of heights but thought the view of Rome from the dome was worth the fright as well as the 551 steps.
- If there is time for lunch, I will try to go to Angry Pig, my favorite porchetta sandwich place in the world (then again, I've never been to another). It's a brisk 15 minute walk from St. Peter's. You are welcome to tag along. The address is Via Tunisi, 38, 00192 Roma
- It's also real close to a great pizza al taglio place, Pizzarium (Go to the one on Via della Meloria, 43, 00136 Roma, not the one in Chicago).

12 June

B Block Classes **Class Trip to Ostia Antica!**

Class: Debrief Sistine Chapel, More Aeneid, Fasces

******* CLASS WILL GO TO OSTIA ANTICA**

- We will leave from the hotel and take a bus to a train, the trip should take about an hour. Keep an eye on our WhatsApp for details
- Read Fasces readings
- 2nd Modernization due

13 June **11:30-1 Class: Summative Wrapup**

- Final Photo Essay presentations
- You should also have by this point submitted your last 3 Artistic Reception Missions

14 June Free Day

Final Countdown

15 June **Morning: Final Class**

- Final Journal due
- Update your 'what is love?' discussion
- Final discussion, course evaluation

16 June Return to the USA