



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Italy Program, Winter 2026-27

ART 401: Art of the Italian Renaissance

Instructor: Prof. Aaron Reynolds

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Instructor's office hours: On site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description: This course examines the emergence and development of the Italian Renaissance through immersive study in Florence and Rome: two cities central to the rebirth of classical learning and artistic innovation. In Florence, students will explore the rise of Humanism and the transformation of painting, sculpture, and architecture through artists such as Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, and Botticelli, among others. In Rome, the course examines how Renaissance ideals were adapted to serve papal authority, monumental architecture, and sacred art. Students will examine works by Raphael, Bramante, and later Baroque artists such as Bernini and Caravaggio. Through on-site lectures, museum visits, and guided discussions, students will analyze how Renaissance artists redefined beauty, the human figure, and the role of art in civic and religious life.

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:

1. **Identify and contextualize key artists, monuments, and stylistic developments** of the Italian Renaissance in Florence and Rome.
2. **Demonstrate visual literacy** through close, on-site analysis of Renaissance artworks and architecture, attending to form, material, scale, and spatial context.
3. **Explain how Renaissance art reflects the intellectual, religious, and political foundations of Western culture**, including Humanism and classical antiquity.
4. **Communicate informed art-historical interpretations** in written and oral formats based on firsthand engagement with works of art.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

- **What Was the Renaissance?**
An introduction to the Italian Renaissance and why it matters for the development of Western art and culture.
- **Florence: Art, Innovation, and the Birth of the Renaissance**
How artists and architects in Florence transformed painting, sculpture, and architecture through new ideas about space, the human body, and classical learning.
- **Renaissance Art and Architecture**
Key developments in painting, sculpture, and building design, including perspective, proportion, and realism.
- **Rome: Art, Power, and the Church**
How the papacy used art and architecture in Rome to express religious authority and cultural influence.
- **Visual Literacy on Site**
Learning how to analyze artworks and buildings by observing them in person—paying attention to scale, materials, and spatial experience.
- **Why the Renaissance Still Matters**
How Renaissance art shaped later Western culture and continues to influence how we understand beauty, creativity, and the role of art today.

5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement: This course fulfills a general education humanities or arts requirement by introducing students to major works, ideas, and historical developments that shaped Western culture. Through on-site study in Florence and Rome, students develop visual literacy, critical thinking, and cultural awareness while learning to analyze art and architecture within their historical, social, and religious contexts. The course emphasizes interpretive skills, global engagement, and effective communication, all core goals of general education curricula.

5. Required Readings and Materials:

- Gombrich, E. H. *The Story of Art*. 16th ed. London: Phaidon Press, 1995.
Assigned chapters: 10–13; available via email from the instructor. Read before the course begins.
- Pencil, notebook, and sketchpad

6. Graded Assignments:

- Participation (20%) – Actively engaging with the sites and participating in group discussion
- Daily Journal (25%) – Students keep a small journal in which they complete short, guided entries while visiting sites in Florence and Rome.
- Comparative city reflection: Florence vs. Rome (20%) – A short, 2–3 page essay, reflective comparison written near the end of the program that focuses on how each city expresses Renaissance ideals
- Site sketches (15%) – Students make quick sketches of architectural spaces or figures (e.g., a dome interior, fresco composition, sculpture). No artistic skill required.
- Final reflective photo essay (20%) – Students will take original photos (where permitted) documenting the works that stood out to them on this trip. Accompanying these images will include a short essay, reflecting on what was most meaningful about this trip and how those works feel relevant today.

Work will be graded on this scale:

90 – 100 A

80 – 89 B

70 – 79 C

60 – 69 D

Below 60 E (F)

This course will be graded on this basis, without regard to other scales (i.e., plus-and-minus) which may apply at your college or university. Note KUIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.

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.]."

9. 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.

10. 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 KIIS 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 KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS 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 KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS 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 KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

11. 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. KIIS 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 KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS 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 KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS 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 KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>.

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