



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Italy Program, Summer 2027

HON 300 / PHIL 401 Topics: From Forum to Piazza, Great Italian Thinkers

Instructor: Anthony Cashio

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description:

This class is designed as an introduction to the history of thought and ideas as they developed on the Italian peninsula. This summer we will familiarize ourselves with some classics of Western thought that were developed and written in Italy. We will also take the opportunity to think about how specific places, cultures, and historical moment can affect the development of philosophical concepts. What can walking through the Roman Forum tell us about the development of Stoicism and Epicureanism? How do the statues and ornaments of Florence's Palazzo Vecchio echo Machiavelli's understanding of the relationship between power and politics? How do the seemingly ubiquitous churches in Italian cities connect to thinking about the sacred and the profane, the holy and the secular? To guide this dual approach, we will concentrate our readings and wanderings on the relationship between the individual and the community. In Italian history the communal gathering place, whether it be the forum, the church, the university, or the piazza, has always been the locus of life, thought, and being. We will see how these places and spaces in Italy fostered community and incubated ideas that would go on to shape much of our contemporary culture.

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:

By the end of this course, we should all:

(a) Have a better understanding and appreciation for the issues faced by Italian thinkers and their influence upon our contemporary world; (b) Demonstrate a better appreciation for the relationship between place, historical context, and the formation and refinement of ideas; (c) Improve our techniques of criticism of ideas and conceptual analysis; (d) Increase our skill in reading and understanding difficult primary texts; (e) Be able to think, write, and speak clearly and articulately about philosophical issues unique to this time period and, in turn, philosophical problems generally; (f) Through rigorous and deep reflection come to better understand ourselves and our place in this world. In short, we will be engaged in the all-important project of trying to live a good life.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

We will follow key developments in the history of Italian philosophy. We will start in antiquity (Stoicism, Epicureanism, Neo-platonism) and Early Christian thought (Augustine and Boethius). From there we move from medieval thought (Christianity and Scholasticism) into Renaissance Humanism. Finally we will end by looking at early modern and contemporary Italian philosophy (Bruno, Vico, Croce, and Gramsci).

6. Required Readings and Materials:

Students will need access to either a phone or tablet to engage with readings and online course material. Readings will be provided online and could include passages from: Seneca, Lucretius, Plotinus, Augustine, Bonaventure, Cassandra Fedele, Moderata Fonte, Machiavelli, Bruno, Vico, Croce, and Gramsci.

7. Graded Assignments:

You will be graded on the following:

30% Participation

30% Journal

20% "Be the guide"

20% Final Project

All assignments will be centered on the larger question: How do ideas change when they become situated in a specific place, culture, and historical moment?

Participation

Given the nature of this course, most of your learning will come through active participation in class discussions, projects and excursions. You are expected to have read for class and be fully and respectfully engaged with the day's discussion. Any student asked to leave will not be counted as in attendance for the day's class. Participation can take many forms but I will primarily be looking for engagement with the course material.

Be the Guide

We will have the opportunity to visit many amazing sites and museums while we are in Italy. For this assignment you will have the opportunity to play tour guide on our excursions. Before we visit a site you will do a bit of research and prepare a 5 minute presentation on something at the site that directly relates to a key concept from the course directly to the setting.

Journal

We will be keeping a guided journal throughout our time there. I will be providing prompts related to reading and class discussion to guide your entries. We will use this to think about how philosophy can be a way of life. The journal can be hand written, digital, a photo journal, or whatever creative path you would like to take. You will be graded on the depth of your reflection and how it connects to class reading and discussion.

Final Project

You will have a few options for the final project. You could do a traditional essay (5-8 pages) addressing one or more of the themes of the course. You could also engage in a more creative project such as creating a philosophical travel guide for future students or an extended photo journal connecting the places you have visited with the thinkers we have encountered. Do not limit yourself. Before beginning the final project students will meet one-on-one with me to review their proposal.

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 KIIS/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.