

**ENGL 4420/CORE 3379 Travel Writing  
(Study Abroad)  
Tuscan Tales: Travel Writing in Italy**

**Contact Information:**

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Office Hours: via Teams

**Course Description:**

Italy has long been a site of pilgrimage for travelers, from the apostle Paul to Saint Augustine, through the Middle Ages, the Grand Tours of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and up to the present. Travel and travel writing have thus been deeply entwined with the history of Western culture. During this two-week study abroad course, we will study the modern and contemporary tradition of travel writing that draws from this larger history, while engaging in our own travel experience. In addition to our study of literal, geographical travel, we will consider travel writing as a genre, texts particular to the region, and literary and historical associations with the Italian culture; we will learn to write travel pieces of various lengths and sub-genres. By reading and discussing texts ranging from the early twentieth-century travel writing of Norman Douglas and D.H. Lawrence to writers such as Mary McCarthy and Graham Green. We'll also consider classic and contemporary travel fiction, including authors such as Rose Macaulay, William Trevor, V.S. Naipual, and Tom Bissell. We will also consider contemporary non-fiction such as that of Pico Iyer and Paul Theroux. In this manner, we will become conversant with the basic concepts of travel writing – among them setting, point of view, cultural analysis, and plot– and employ these in our own work. The latter will consist of daily writing exercises, journal entries, travel essays and/or short stories. Our reading and writing will be facilitated by our itinerary, which will involve travel between a variety of locales in the region, with excursions to local cultural and natural sites. In the process of writing of a “foreign” place, we will also interrogate our position as outsiders and consider how we might see past the surface of place and culture to gain revealing insights, both about what we see in front of us and about the subjective changes travel is famous for producing. Class time will be divided between discussions of travel writing and workshops of student writing.

**Required Texts (listed alphabetically, not in order of reading):**

- Bishop, Elizabeth. “Questions of Travel,” “Arrival at Santos,” “Santarém.” From *Complete Poems* 1927-1979.
- Didion, Joan. "On Keeping a Notebook." *Slouching towards Bethlehem*
- Dyer, Geoff. Excerpt from *Out of Sheer Rage: Wrestling with D.H. Lawrence*.
- Iyer, By Pico. "Why We Travel."
- Koch, Kenneth. Excerpts from *Hotel Lambosa*.
- D.H. Lawrence. Excerpts from *Twilight in Italy*, *Sea and Sardinia*, and *Etruscan Places*.
- Mary McCarthy. Excerpts from *The Stones of Florence*.

- Graham Greene, from *The Heart of the Matter*.
- Rose Macaulay, from *The Towers of Trebizond*.
- Tom Bissell, “A Bridge Under Water.” *Best American Short Stories 2011*.
- Joyce Carol Oates, “Roma!” *Conjunctions*: 52.
- Naipaul, V. S. “The Tramp at Piraeus” and “Epilogue, from a Journal: The Circus at Luxor.” *In a Free State*.
- Theroux, Paul. “The Ferry Ichnusa to Sardinia.” From *The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand tour of the Mediterranean*.
- William Trevor, “On the Zattere.” *The Collected Stories*.

### **Course Goals:**

- Students will be able to think critically about and discuss travel writing as a genre.
- Students will be more effective readers, writers, and speakers.
- Students will be able to identify and use materials, both primary and secondary, that contribute to their writing of a travel narrative.
- Students will build on their understanding of the dialogical relationship between the Catholic tradition with the larger culture, both through their experiences in Italy, and their reading of the assigned texts.

### **Course Objectives:**

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate their ability to analyze and discuss travel writing as a genre  
Respond critically to the writing of others
- Write about their own experiences of travel
- Construct two narrative works based on journal notes

### **Reading and Writing Proficiency:**

ENGL 4420 fulfills the reading/writing proficiency for the university core. A Seton Hall University reading/writing-intensive course includes a significant amount of formal and informal writing, several of hours of academic and professional reading per week, all contributing to at least one-third of the total course grade. For this course, students will read primary materials in a variety of genres; write for or in class almost every day in a variety of genres. This course is reading *and writing* intensive because these activities together provide enhanced insight into the work itself, its context, and the interaction between text and context. Furthermore, writing about the material and ideas offers command and ownership of the text, allowing students to pursue questions and issues still further. As a result, students in this introduction to literary studies will not only become more proficient in these skills themselves, but also will have an understanding of the materials augmented by their own experience with the interaction of reading and writing.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Reading Responses:**

Please note that there are generally reading assignments for every day of the trip. You will be required to write a three to four page formal response to each assigned literary text.

These responses should engage with the text on both a critical level and a craft level. What does the text say and how does it work? These responses are due on the first day we discuss a particular text (see schedule).

### **Class Participation:**

In addition to the written responses, you will be graded on your participation in class. Excellent written responses are no substitute for participation. Equal portions of your class participation grade will come from participation in our discussion of texts and from workshop discussions.

### **Writing Journal:**

You will be expected to take notes throughout our travels during the two weeks of the course. As writers, you should always be paying attention to telling details, vivid scenes, interesting places, people and so on. These fragments will, in all likelihood, make their way into your longer essays/stories. In addition to daily journaling, there are periodic written exercises assigned during class time. Some of these exercises will arise out of our immediate experience of travel and others will arise from our discussions of the literary texts. Each exercise should yield approximately one page of writing. All exercises should be submitted at the end of the course.

### **Excursions:**

In addition to our class meetings, there will be periodic excursions to places of interest, led by a tour guide, which will provide the opportunity to learn firsthand about local history and culture. You are required to attend all scheduled excursions. You should be sure to bring your journal on these outings in order to record details, observations, sensations, and other matters of interest. (10%)

### **Grade Breakdown:**

Reading Responses: 20%  
Class Participation: 25 %  
Journal: 25%  
One Narrative Work: 30%

### **Blackboard and Technology:**

There will be a Blackboard site for this course, but we may not always have wireless internet access during our travels. When there is internet access, we will use this site to post workshop pieces prior to class, as well as readings we will discuss in class.

**Plagiarism:** All members of our academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest. The academic community, and therefore this class, regards academic honesty as an extremely serious matter, with consequences ranging from probation to expulsion. For more information, please see the plagiarism policy on the Blackboard site.

### **Itinerary**

May 19 - fly from JFK to Rome  
May 20 - Arrive in Rome, Italy

May 20 – May 24 – Rome – Guided tour of ancient Rome, optional visit to the Vatican  
May 25 – May 27 – Siena – Tours of the city, lunch in a villa, Chianti country-side tour  
May 28 – June 3 Florence – Tour of the city, visit to the La Accademia, visit to the Uffizi Gallery  
June 3 – Bus to Rome and fly home to JFK

For a full itinerary, please see the Blackboard Site

**Disability Policy:**

It is the policy and practice of Seton Hall University to promote inclusive learning environments. If you have a documented disability you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in compliance with University policy, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and/or the New Jersey Law against Discrimination. Please note, students are not permitted to negotiate accommodations directly with professors. To request accommodations or assistance, please self-identify with the Office for Disability Support Services (DSS), Duffy Hall, Room 67 at the beginning of the semester. For more information or to register for services, contact DSS at (973) 313-6003 or by e-mail at [DSS@shu.edu](mailto:DSS@shu.edu).

Link to Disability Policy - <http://www.shu.edu/offices/disability-support-services/faculty-syllabus-statement.cfm>