

# English 276: “Literature, Rhetoric, and Civic Humanism”



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**Semester:** Spring 2027

**Class Day/Time:** TBA  
**Office Hours:** TBA

**CRN:** TBA  
**Credits:** 3

**Gen Ed Designations:** DL, WI

**Prerequisites:** ENG 100 or consent

**Location:** Study Abroad: Florence, Italy

## Course Overview (Rationale and Purpose):

ENG 276 is part of the longstanding “Introduction to Literature” program at UH Mānoa, which is comprised of the courses ranging from ENG 270-276. As a course in that sequence, ENG 276 serves as a prerequisite for the English major but also satisfies a number of General Education requirements for most BA degrees at UH. In addition to being taken by students in English, ENG 276 provides particular credits essential to Education, Journalism, Business, Psychology, and many other disciplines, giving students both diversification in literature (DL) and writing intensive (WI) designations. Its primary goal is to help students understand the rhetorical nature of literature and the literary nature of rhetoric, to see the ways in which works of literary fiction and nonfiction are in fact persuasive and tied to civil arguments, social movements, and political critiques. It is also a course in which students improve their analytic writing skills.

Differing sections of 276 offer differing themes, each of which can help frame the course’s content and provide a focal point for exploring relations among rhetoric and literature. In the case of this particular study abroad section, the guiding theme is “literature, rhetoric, and civic humanism.” These days, much of what motivates education in the literary and rhetorical arts is a deep and abiding sense of civic engagement—which can range from critically analyzing and responding to textual representations of groups and individuals in the world to even more direct social and political activism. The foundations for such education stretch all the way back to the Roman Empire (when figures such as Cicero and Quintilian taught civic engagement as a virtuous rhetorical practice) and to the Italian Renaissance, when the classical period was recuperated and both art and architecture embodying those same ideals flourished. Florence was

central to the Renaissance; its buildings, gardens, and museums are monuments to civic engagement and to the shift from over a thousand years of Christian reverence to humanist concerns and representations. As a student in this section of 276, you will thus read and analyze a range of iconic literary and rhetorical texts exploring, enacting, and encouraging civic humanism, most of which are set (or originated) in and around Florence and Rome.

Your engagement with such texts will be enriched by your ability to explore famous landmarks that are featured in them or honor them. For example, as we read Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, you will be able to visit The Duomo Complex (the Cathedral, Campanile, and the Baptistry of San Giovanni, where Dante was baptized), the Palazzo Vecchio (where Dante's death mask is displayed), the Casa di Dante (Dante's House Museum), the Chiesa di Santa Margherita de' Cerchi (Dante's church, associated with the character Beatrice), and the Piazza Santa Croce. In similar fashion, when we read Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, you will be able to visit the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, wherein his 10 young protagonists meet and decide to flee the plague. For those students who find the time to explore Rome, they will be able to visit the Roman Forum, where Quintilian and Cicero's lessons on rhetoric and civic virtue were enacted by the political figures of their day.

### **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):**

Based on the curricular content of the course, the setting of the Study Abroad program, and the global/international mix of students in this course, the following SLOs are anticipated:

1. Students will learn to analyze texts through both literary and rhetorical frameworks.
2. Students will improve their analytic writing.
3. Students will demonstrate awareness of their own and others' cultural values and biases in response to a particular set of texts and contexts.
4. Students will learn to collaborate and communicate effectively with others in ways that acknowledge diverse individuals' and groups' differing knowledges and experiences, grounded as those are in geography, history, culture, and identity.
5. Students will demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze social and political conditions with appreciation for disparate viewpoints and the rhetorical potentiality of art, architecture, and literature.
6. Students will learn to consider the ethics of representation enacted in popular cultural forms.

The next section explains the assignments that meet the primary SLOs above and their respective point values.

### **Assignments and Evaluation:**

- **Italian/European News Updates (10/100)** At least weekly, you will be required to post informal updates about the news in Florence and Italy overall; this will include a link to a news story from the week, plus your own commentary about it. This is individual posting that you will do on our class website, using a "Discussions" forum. You'll do this as a means of recording and reflecting on current events in Florence, Italy, and Europe, which

you'll be reading about in online news sources on a near-daily basis as a way to better understand the broader social and political contexts in which your Study Abroad experience is occurring (and within which civic humanism is enacted daily). These will be graded as an overall collection. (SLOs cultivated: #2,3, and 4.) (Note: this assignment is required in this class as well as ENG 306; if you are a student taking both courses, you may use the same post for each course.)

- **Participatory Projects (30/100)** As part of the active learning processes of this course, you will routinely be required to produce informal written reflections, analyses, explorations, and personal narratives, often in response to readings and viewings, as well as to excursions and visits in and around Florence. Sometimes these might be short, semi-formal essays that you will post to the "Discussions" page on our class website. At other times, you might work individually or collaboratively to produce multimodal content for the class's collective analyses and representations of texts and places. These will be graded as an overall collection. (SLOs cultivated: #2, 3, 4, and 5.)
- **Literary and Rhetorical Analysis Essay (50 points)** You will produce a 2500-word essay of polished prose offering an analysis of a contemporary text engaging civic humanism. This can be a film, a novel, an epic poem, a TV series, or creative nonfiction. You will develop this essay over several weeks as the culmination of the course; it will involve a collaborative process of developing, drafting, and editing with the help of peers, and it will be written from your vantage point as a student studying abroad in Florence. (SLOs cultivated: #1,2,3, and 5.)
- **Final Exam (10/100)** You will write a short-answer exam that summarizes, synthesizes, and applies the theories of rhetoric, literature, and civic humanism you have learned, drawing on the primary work you did during the semester.

### Breakdown of Grades:

The following is a tentative list of all graded assignments and their point values. The total points for the course are 100. The following are course-total grade point conversions:

A+ 98-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 0-59
A 94-97	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
A- 90-93	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

### Readings/Viewings:

In addition to regular online readings on global and local issues in Paris, accessed through sites such as *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu*, the following *likely* texts will be provided for free as PDF documents, found under the Resources page of our class site. Some of these texts may not be read in full but will be selected from:

- Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy* (1321)
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron* (1620)
- Bruni, Leonardo. *In Praise of Florence: The Panegyric of the City of Florence, and An Introduction to Civil Humanism* (newest edition, 2005)

- Castiglione, Baldassare. *The Book of the Courtier* (1528)
- Cicero, Marcus T. *De Oratore* (55 BCE)
- Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince* (1532)
- *Medici: Masters of Florence* (TV series, 2016-19)
- *Tea with Mussolini* (film, 1999)

### Other Required Materials:

- An Email account that you can easily access on a daily basis.
- A computer that can handle web browsing and cloud-based computing (such as working on blogs, uploading and downloading attachments, viewing YouTube, etc.).

### Course Policies:

**Attendance:** Regular attendance is critical to this course. Much of your work will involve class discussions, group workshops, and in-class writing. If you miss more than six of class sessions, your final grade for the course will be reduced by 2.5 points per class session over six that you miss. Importantly, there is no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences—they are all absences, and they all count the same way. In the event that you do miss a class session, you are responsible for making up any in-class work. You are also responsible for finding out about any homework assignments and completing them on time. *Do not expect to be able to hand in something late or not do an assignment simply because you were absent on the day it was assigned or due; it still needs to be submitted on time.*

**Grading:** To receive full credit, all assignments must be submitted on time in the proper format. Missing or late assignments will result in penalties from your course grade overall, as is explained in more detail on their assignment sheets (under "Assignments").

If you email me any kind of written material as a submission of work for a grade, an email that fails to reach me or has a “missing” or “non-functioning” attachment will not be excused. This means that you need to ‘cc yourself whatever you email me and test the attachment to ensure successful delivery. It also means that you have to maintain a “sent-mail” folder with all work sent to me via email; if ever I don’t receive an email from you, one that you claim to have sent to me on time, I will ask that you do the following: 1) open the original from your sent-mail folder; 2) either take a screenshot or create a pdf of that original e-mail in its original e-mail format, not a Word document; 3) e-mail me the pdf or the screenshot as an attachment. This process will ensure that you receive credit for it having been sent on time. If you do not have such a copy to attach, I simply will have no choice but to penalize your assignment according to the date that I actually receive it. This is a non-negotiable policy; your UH email accounts have nearly infinite amounts of storage space, so there is basically no reason whatsoever to not keep a sent-mail copy of all emails and all attachments for the duration of the semester. It’s simply your responsibility. Relatedly, in addition to keeping copies of all sent emails and attachments, you must also maintain copies of all your projects. If you do not keep a copy and your project gets lost or misplaced (or a server hosting the work you produced crashes), you will have to rewrite it, and if you cannot provide rock solid evidence of it having been produced and submitted on time, you will have to take the requisite penalties.

The (long-winded) advice above about how to protect yourself when it comes to emailing materials for grade also applies to anything you post on Lamaku or any other platform: you must

double-check an item after it's been submitted to ensure that what you posted was properly posted and is accessible by other users. Just take the extra thirty seconds to re-open the app, or the sent-mail box, or the platform, and click on the item you submitted. Make sure it's there and is functioning.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:** Hiring ghost writers, submitting papers written by others, and using textual materials as if they were yours are all contrary to University regulations as published in the UHM catalog. This includes using an AI program (such as ChatGPT or Gemini or any others deemed AI) to write any of your materials--unless explicitly allowed by the instructor as part of an assignment. (If/when it's allowed, it will be explicitly noted on the assignment sheet.) More on this below:

**Generative AI Policy:** If the use of AI has *not* been explicitly allowed for an assignment, you must assume it is entirely off limits as a tool. In addition to relying on his own professional research work on generative AI to assess whether this policy has been violated, the professor may use a UH-recommended AI-detector. While AI-detectors are not 100% accurate, they are rapidly improving, and arguments that they are radically unreliable are fast becoming obsolete. Thus the regular use of a sanctioned AI-detector, combined with the professional expertise of this class's writing instructor, who has read literally *thousands* of student essays, will likely result in your being identified as having used AI if you choose to do so; moreover, as per UHM's English Department guidelines, anyone's illicit use of AI will be noted and forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct.

**All UH students are responsible for upholding the codes of academic integrity available through the Office of the Dean of Students.** If you engage in academic dishonesty or plagiarism, the consequences can be severe: depending on the nature of the offense(s), the results can range anywhere from receiving a grade of zero on an assignment to failing the class to being expelled from the university.

**Student Conduct/Respect for Others:** All class activities and discussions will be conducted with courtesy and respect for each individual in the course. Any student conducting him/herself outside of this policy may be in violation of the UH Student Conduct Code (please refer to the Student Conduct Code here: [http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct\\_code](http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code)).

**Provisions for Disabilities:** If you have or think that you may have a disability and therefore need some support, you are encouraged to contact the KOKUA Program for students with all disabilities including learning, mental health, and physical disabilities. Contact KOKUA at 808-9567511 (V/T), email KOKUA at [kokua@hawaii.edu](mailto:kokua@hawaii.edu), visit KOKUA in Room 013 Queen Lili'oukalani Center for Student Services, or visit the KOKUA web site at <http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/> for further information. KOKUA services are confidential and there is no charge to students.

**Sexual Harassment and Violence:** Sexual harassment is one type of sex discrimination under Title IX, United States Education Amendments of 1972. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) states that sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual Violence is a severe form of sexual harassment. Some examples of sexual violence include threatening someone into unwanted sexual activity; sexual contact with someone who is drunk, drugged, unconscious, or otherwise unable to give a clear, informed "yes" or "no"; and rape or attempted rape. For more examples, visit the Office of Gender Equity

website. Under Title IX, responsible employees cannot ensure confidentiality. **Responsible employees must report any instance or disclosure of alleged sexual harassment.** If you would like to speak to someone confidentially about your options regarding something you have experienced or witnessed, please contact: The UH Office of Gender Equity, a confidential resource that provides information about options regarding University policies and procedures to potential complainants of gender-based discrimination, sexual violence, stalking, dating, violence, or intimate partner violence.

**Incompletes:** Incompletes may be given to students who fail to complete a small but important part of a semester's work before the semester grades are determined if the failure was caused by conditions beyond the student's control.\

## ENG 276 Schedule | Study Abroad in Florence | Spring 2027

### **Week 1: Introduction to course, to Study Abroad guidelines, and to the literary and rhetorical expressions of civic humanism.**

- Reading: Quigg, Agnes: "Kalakaua's Hawaiian Studies Abroad Program."
- Writing (Participatory Project): Personal reflection on why you have joined the Study Abroad program and what you hope to get out of this particular course.
- Reading: Bruni, plus online definitions of civic humanism

### **Week 2: Introduction to civic humanism: history and theory**

- Reading: Bruni, continued.
- Writing (Participatory Project): exploration of and response to Bruni on Florence and civic humanism.

### **Week 3: Theories of civic humanism, rhetoric, and the public sphere**

- Reading: Cicero, Quintilian
- Writing (Participatory Project): Analysis of Cicero's and Quintilian's ideal rhetorician using Bruni and online sources on humanism.

### **Week 4: The orator and the humanist**

- Reading: Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* and Machiavelli's *The Prince*
- Writing (Participatory Project): visit the Palazzo Vecchio and reflect on Machiavelli's writing and this location
- Reading and Writing (News Update): Post a news update based on your readings in *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu*.

### **Week 5: Storytelling as civic humanism**

- Reading: Tales from Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- Writing (Participatory Project): Compare and contrast tales by Boccaccio with aspects of contemporary European, American, and/or Hawaiian culture with which you are

familiar.

- Reading and Writing (News Update): Post a news update based on your readings in *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu*.

### **Week 6: Storytelling as civic humanism, Continued**

- Reading: More tales from Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- Writing (Participatory Project): Visit the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, and write a personal response to *Decameron* and this location.
- Reading and Writing (News Update): Post a news update based on your readings in *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu*.

### **Week 7: The rhetoric of poetry**

- Reading: Dante's *Divine Comedy*.
- Writing (Participatory Project): Response to readings via comparison with Boccaccio's short stories. Optional: write about visits to The Duomo, the Casa di Dante, the Chiesa di Santa Margherita de' Cerchi, and the Piazza Santa Croce.
- Reading and Writing (News Update): Post a news update based on your readings in *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu*.

### **Week 8: The rhetoric of poetry, continued**

- Reading: Dante's *Divine Comedy* continued.
- Writing (Participatory Project): Personal reflection on text and visitation (this week or last) to at least two of The Duomo, the Casa di Dante, the Chiesa di Santa Margherita de' Cerchi, and/or the Piazza Santa Croce.
- Reading and Writing (News Update): Post a news update based on your readings in *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu*.

### **Week 9: Popular culture, history, and civic humanism**

- Viewing: *Medici: Masters of Florence*
- Writing (Participatory Project): write about the relations among power, culture, and history represented by this TV series in the context of this course thus far.
- Reading and Writing (News Update): Post a news update based on your readings in *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu*.

### **Week 10: Class, power, and civic humanism**

- Viewing: *Medici: Masters of Florence, continued*.
- Writing (Participatory Project): Write an analytic commentary of your experience viewing this series while living and studying civic humanism in Florence.
- Reading and Writing (News Update): Post a news update based on your readings in *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu*.

### **Week 11: Ordinary people as civic humanists**

- Viewing: *Tea With Mussolini*
- Writing (Participatory Project): Write an analysis of the film and its characters' actions in the context of Bruni plus at least one other text studied thus far in the course.

- Reading and Writing (FINAL News Update): Post a news update based on your readings in *The Florentine*, *The American*, *Florence is You!*, *Euronews*, and *Politico.eu* and connect those readings to mainstream culture in Italy and contemporary instantiations of civic humanism.

**Week 12: Beginning the Rhetorical/Literary Analysis Paper**

- Introduce major semester assignment
- Collaboratively develop list of contemporary texts expressing, enacting, or exploring civic humanism for analyses by students
- Read/view/research subject matter for final project.

**Week 13: Drafting the Major Essay**

- You will work intensively this week on your extended literary/rhetorical analysis essay on civic humanism in rhetoric and/or literature. Class sessions will include collaborative feedback and workshopping.

**Week 14: Revising/Refining/Finishing the Major Essay and the Final Exam**

- Finalize the major essay. Celebrate writings and experience.
- Final exam.