

Concept course programme 2026 – The Making of Europe: Rome through Art & History

Rome is often presented as the ‘Eternal City’: a place where layers of history seamlessly accumulate from antiquity to the present. Yet this image is far from neutral. It is the result of centuries of selection, interpretation, and storytelling. In this course, we approach Rome not simply as a historical site, but as a constructed cultural narrative.

Through a combination of lectures and on-site excursions, we explore how different periods from antiquity to the twentieth century have shaped, appropriated, and reimagined the city. Rather than following a strictly chronological overview, the course is structured around themes such as power, religion, representation, identity, and memory.

In this syllabus you find the course schedule and literature. We would like to ask you to read Mary Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (London: Profile Books, 2015, [buy online](#)) prior to the course. In addition, we encourage you to watch the three-part documentary *Rome: A History of the Eternal City* (BBC, 2012, presented by Simon Sebag Montefiore, [watch online](#)). In preparation for each course day, you are also required to read an article and/or watch a documentary or listen to a podcast, which is indicated in the programme and will be provided by the course directors.

Lectures take place at the **Camplus Pietralata** (Via del Cottanello, 12, 00158 Roma) and excursions are on location in the city. This course has 2 assignments: (1) a presentation on location on a topic of your choice and (2) a final exam on the topics covered during the course. You will hear more about these assignments on the first day of the course.

Course directors:

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Week 1

Monday, 6 July Theme: Historiography & the construction of historical narratives		
Time	Activity	Description
9:30-10:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Camplus Pietralata – breakfast area
10:30-11:30	Start course	Camplus Pietralata – lecture room
a.m. 12:00-	JW: Introductory lecture	
1:00 p.m.	JL: Introduction to excursion	
3:00-5:00 p.m.	Excursion	Capitolijnse Musea
5:30-6:30 p.m.	Excursion	Viaggia nei Fori
Literature: P. Burke, 'How to Write a History of Europe: Europe, Europes, Eurasia', <i>European Review</i> , 14.2 (2006), pp. 233-239. Listen to the BBC podcast 'Rome and European Civilization' : Melvyn Bragg in conversation with Mary Beard, Catherine Edwards and Greg Woolf.		

Tuesday, 8 July Theme: Material culture, gastronomy & everyday life		
Time	Activity	Description
8:00-8:30	Breakfast	
9:00-3:00	JL: Excursion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ostia Antica● Piramide● Museo diffuso del rione Testaccio● Monte testaccio

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mercato di testaccio (until 15:30) Colosseo
5:00	Introductory drinks	Get to know each other!
<p>Not only “great emperors,” but also: food, trade, infrastructure What does material culture reveal about social structures?</p>		

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Wednesday, 8 July Theme: Religious transformation & visual communication		
Time	Activity	Description
8:30-9:00	Breakfast	
9:30-10:30	JW: Lecture	<i>Mediaeval Mosaics and the Transformation of Rome from a Secular to a Christian Capital.</i>
12:00-2:30	JW: Excursion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● San Sebastiano: Catacombs ● San Clemente ● Santa Prassede
<p>Literature</p> <p>D. Kinney, ‘Communication in a Visual Mode: Papal Apse Mosaics’, <i>Journal of Mediaeval History</i>, 44.3 (2018), pp. 311-332.</p>		

Thursday, 9 July Theme: Patronage, power & artistic intention		
Time	Activity	Description
9:00-9:30	Breakfast	

10:00-11:30	JL: Lecture	<i>Art and Power in Early Modern Rome</i>
1:45-5:30	JL: Excursion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Palazzo Farnese ● Borromini illusion ● Campo dei Fiori + Statue of Giordano Bruno ● Piazza Navona
<p>Notes</p> <p>Art as a tool of elites (popes, powerful families)</p> <p>Illusion and perspective → guiding the viewer's perception</p> <p>Whoever pays, decides / The patron calls the shots</p>		

Friday, 10 July Theme: Mass culture, tourism & mediated representations		
Time	Activity	Description
9:00-9:30	Breakfast	
10:00-11:30	JW: Lecture	<i>Rome on Screen: Myth, Media and Identity</i>
1:00-6:00	JW: Excursion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Antonio Monda (pidochietti) ● Cinecittà ● Optional: evening outside screening

<p>Literature</p> <p>Keating. "The Spatiality of Film Production and the Politics of Urban Planning: Rome's Pioneering Film Studio Cines (1905–37)." <i>Film History</i>, vol. 33, no. 3, 2021, p. 37</p> <p>Watch (optional) the all-time classic movie <i>La Dolce Vita</i> (by Federico Fellini, 1960) and the contemporary classic movie <i>La Grande Bellezza</i> (by Paolo Sorrentino 2013).</p>

Saturday, 11 July		
Time	Activity	Description
9:30-10:00	Breakfast	

Morning	Self-study	Preparing presentations for week 2 Let us know if you have any questions!
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Sunday, 12 July		
Time	Activity	Description
9:30-10:00	Breakfast	
Free time	Suggestions	<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papal Audience in St. Peter's Square (on Sundays at noon) • Walk along the Via Appia (one of the earliest Roman roads known for its many historical monuments) • Take a trip <i>outside</i> Rome: visit Ostia Antica (port of ancient Rome) or Tivoli (town of villas and gardens)! <p>Museums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palazzo Altemps (15th-century palace housing antiquities & Renaissance artworks) • Galleria Nazionale d'arte moderne e contemporanea (19th & 20th century art) • Mattatoio (museum for contemporary art, located in the old slaughterhouse of Rome)

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Week 2

Monday, 13 July Theme: Canon formation & institutional power		
Time	Activity	Description
9:00-9:30	Breakfast	
10:00-11:30	JW + JL: Lecture (and focus on assignment)	<i>Canon formation & institutional power</i>

1:15-6:00	Excursion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vatican Museums & St. Peter's Basilica ● Assignment Article L'osservatore Romano
<p>Literature</p> <p>S. Brevaglieri, 'Rethinking the Origins of the Vatican Ethnological Museum. Reflections and Goals of an Ongoing Research Agenda', working paper (2023) [online].</p> <p>G. Vasari, 'Life of Raphael', in: <i>Lives of the Most Eminent Painters Sculptors and Architects</i> (2nd ed., 1568), volume IV: Filippino Lippi to Domenico Puligo (translation G. du C. De Vere) [online].</p> <p>Watch the lecture of Cammy Brothers on Michelangelo, Raphael, and the Genius Paradox.</p>		

Tuesday, 14 July Theme: Memory, marginality & spatial exclusion		
Time	Activity	Description
9:00-9:30	Breakfast	
10:00-11:00 11:15-12:00	JL: Lecture	<i>Mapping Exclusion: Memory and Marginality in Rome</i>
2:00-6:00	JL: Excursion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ghetto ● Isola Tiberina ● Trastevere <p>Presentations on location #1</p>
<p>Literature</p> <p>Wie wordt zichtbaar in de stad en wie niet?</p> <p>Ruimtelijke segregatie (getto)</p> <p>Geschiedenis van minderheden</p>		

Wednesday, 15 July: Constructing the 'Other' & cultural imagination		
Time	Activity	Description
09:00-09:30	Breakfast	
10:00-11:30	JW & JL: Lecture	<i>The Romantic Imagination: Constructing the Other in Art and Society.</i>
12:30-2:30	JW & JL: Excursion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hans Christian Andersen Museum ● Piazza del popolo ● Canova caffè ● Via Margutta ● Spanish steps <p>Presentations on location #2</p>
Afternoon	Self-study	
<p>Literature</p> <p>J. Isbell, <i>An Outline of Romanticism in the West</i>. 2022.</p> <p>R. Kumar, 'Classicism versus Romanticism in Italy and the Construction of Italian Nation and Identity', IRJMSH 6.1 (2015), pp. 633-641.</p> <p>Primary literature: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, <i>Italian Journey 1786-1788</i>, London: Penguin Books, 1982. (excerpts)</p>		

Thursday, 16 July Ideology, propaganda & contested heritage		
Time	Activity	Description
9:00-9:30	Breakfast	
10:00-11:30	JW: Lecture	<i>Ideology in the Urban Landscape: Fascist Rome and its Afterlives</i>

2:00-6:00	JW: Excursion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foro Italico • Milvian Vridge • MAXXI – National Museum of 21st Century Art Presentation on location #3
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Literature

A. Franklin, “Art Tourism: A New Field for Tourist Studies.” *Tourist Studies*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2018, pp. 399–416

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Friday, 17 July		
Time	Activity	Description
9:00-9:30	Breakfast	
11:00-1:00	Final exam	Lecture room
01:00-06:00	Free afternoon	
7:00-10:00	Closing session	Evaluation of the course, drinks

Saturday, 19 July		
Time	Activity	Description
9:30-10:00	Breakfast	
	Saying goodbye	Safe flight!