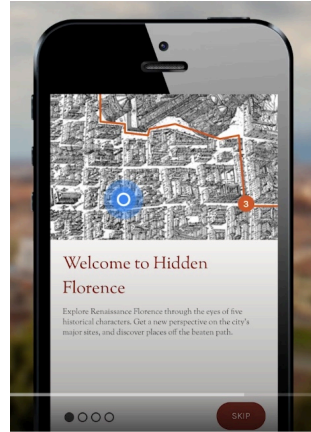


University of Manchester, Academic Year 2020-21

## ITAL20622: Renaissance Florence: Culture, History, Art

**Course Unit Director:** Dr Guyda Armstrong  
([guyda.armstrong@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:guyda.armstrong@manchester.ac.uk))



This course will provide an introduction to the culture, art, and history of Florence between 1348 and 1520, focusing on key written and artistic works by Boccaccio, Masaccio, Botticelli, and others. Using approaches from history, literature, art history, and cultural geography, we will consider these works both in terms of their formal qualities and innovations, and as representations of the city and its people and practices during this period of extraordinary cultural activity.

We begin with selections from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, set at the time of the Black Death in 1348, reading it as a way into the history, culture and civic spaces of the city. We then move into the fifteenth century, first exploring the different spaces of the Renaissance city from above and on foot, using digital humanities mapping tools and immersive apps, then relating this to the representation of two-dimensional space in Florentine artworks, following the 'invention' of linear perspective attributed to Brunelleschi in the early Quattrocento. The last part of the course will focus on selected examples of sacred and secular art, located in the public and private spaces of the city, reflecting on their various functions, subject matter, and materiality. At the end of the course students will have gained in-depth knowledge of the Renaissance city of Florence and the varieties of its cultural production.

This course aims to provide students with:

- a detailed knowledge of some of the major literary and visual works by Italian authors and artists of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries
- an awareness of key debates in relation to the construction of the idea of the 'Renaissance' and Florence's place within this
- the ability to analyse written and visual texts produced in different media (painting, sculpture, furniture, print, architecture)

- an insight into cultural production within the social and spatial structures of the Renaissance city
- an awareness of key moments in Florentine history between c. 1348 and 1520, including the Black Death, the rise and fall and restoration of the Medici, and Savonarola's Bonfire of the Vanities.

The course will make use of various online digital resources for the study of Renaissance Florence, *DECIMA* (*Digitally Encoded Census Information & Mapping Archive*: <https://decima-map.net>), the *Hidden Florence* app (<https://hiddenflorence.org/>), the Manchester Digital Collections (<https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk>), the *Decameron Web* ([https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/)), and select online digitizations of artworks and objects from museums and galleries. As part of their learning on the course, students will additionally create their own online project on the spaces of the Renaissance city.

## Methods of Delivery and Assessment (PLEASE NOTE: NO KNOWLEDGE OF ITALIAN REQUIRED)

**Delivery:** The course is delivered via a mixture of blended synchronous (seminar discussions) and asynchronous learning (lectures, videos, discussion board, etc.)

**Assessment:** The course is assessed via two summative coursework assignments: one **commentary** (40%) and one final summative **essay** (60%). Students will also contribute to a formative group wiki project, including an informal group presentation. The wiki will provide a shared learning resource for the class as a whole. (Please note that the assessments and weightings here are provisional and will be confirmed at Course Unit Selection.)

## Key Readings:

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, in English translation or Italian. (Recommended edn *Decameron*, trans. by G. H. McWilliam, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Penguin, 2003); note the text in Italian and English is also available freely on the Decameron Web: [https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/texts/](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/texts/))

Scott Nethersole, *Art of Renaissance Florence: A City and its Legacy* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2019)

*The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*, ed. by Guyda Armstrong, Rhiannon Daniels, and Stephen J. Milner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). [Free access via *Cambridge Core* via the Library Catalogue]

Selected articles from *The Experience of the Street in Early Modern Italy*, ed. by Georgia Clarke and Fabrizio Nevola, special issue of *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 16. 1 (2013) (online access via the library catalogue)

Nicholas A. Eckstein, 'Prepositional City: Spatial Practice and Micro-Neighborhood in Renaissance Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 71 (2018), 1235–71