



The AMERICAN COLLEGE
of the MEDITERRANEAN

2025
J-TERM TRAVELING SEMINAR
GREAT CITIES
France, Netherlands, Czechia, Italy

ANTH 301 Great Cities: The Artist and the City
COM 375 Great Cities: The European City in the Visual Arts
EUR 303 Great Cities: Europe and the Urban Space
GEO 201 Great Cities: Europe and its Cities
LIT 375 Great Cities: The European City in Literature

Credits: 3 CREDITS (45 CONTACT HOURS)

PROFESSORS:

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PROGRAM WEBSITE: <https://iau.edu/academics/jterm/greatcities>

Course prerequisite: Students should have successfully completed at least 1 semester of college-level course work; successful completion of ENG 101 or equivalent. An additional 3 credit hours above the 100-level (introductory) in the humanities or the arts recommended; or instructor permission.

Important Notice: *One of the goals of J-Term traveling seminars is to provide students with access to multiple cities and countries in order for them to gain as great a perspective as possible related to the course content. The travel aspect of the program is critical to its success, but can also sometimes pose logistical challenges. Therefore, due to issues related to global security, country- and industry-related strikes, inflated travel costs, and health and well-being issues that are specific to regions in which the seminars are scheduled to take place, ACM-IAU reserves the right to modify the itinerary accordingly and will communicate any changes to the students as soon as they are known.*

I. ACADEMIC & PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Students explore major cities using literature and the arts as a guide to understanding the rise and establishment of the urban setting. Through readings and media studies, students examine the artistic process from inspiration to creation. Site visits and guided tours then allow students to experience the historical, geographical, and demographical foundations that inform the fictional representations of European cities and their impact on perceptions of those cities today. Students have the opportunity to learn from and exchange their observations with experts from ACM-IAU as well as distinguished on-site scholars and local guides in order to frame their own perception of the cities and these cities' representations through the arts.

This course will explore the rise and the establishment of the urban setting as the nexus of contemporary European culture and civilization. Literature and the arts will serve as our focal point. We will concentrate primarily on the late nineteenth century up to the contemporary setting, more specifically on Aix-en-Provence/Marseille, Paris, Amsterdam, Prague and Rome. We will explore a variety of media: novel, poetry, cinema and the fine arts.

II. CONTACT HOURS

This course carries 3 credits or 45 contact hours. Students complete readings prior to the program and finalize their assignments after departure, which extends the academics of the component past the on-site components. Lectures and site visits are conducted 7-days per week throughout the J-Term.

Class schedule: The course is a traveling seminar and students can expect to have class sessions and field study excursions every day during the dates of the program.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Anthropology 301: The Artist and the City;

Literature 375: The European City in Literature;

Communications 375: The European City in the Visual Arts

Students will

- Articulate the importance of the urban setting as a catalyst for artistic production
- Through site visits, examine the process from inspiration to artistic creation
- Undertake close readings of passages and on-site scrutiny of the settings informing fictional works
- Differentiate the interplay between the historical realities and fictional and/or imaginary perspectives of European cities.

European Studies 303: Europe and the Urban Space

Geography 201: Europe and its Cities

Students will

- Have a solid basis of the geographical and demographical importance of urban settings in the context of European history
- Through observation and reflection, characterize some key European cities
- Explore fictional representations of European cities within those geographical settings
- Physically examine the historical, geographical and demographical foundations informing the fictional representations of European cities

IV. LEARNING OUTCOMES

In light of the university's values to pursue academic excellence, intellectual development and appreciation for the global community, by the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Describe major cultural works related to the European city through literature, cinema, fine arts, and media.
- Interpret the relationship of those artistic works to the European society of the time and their impact on contemporary culture and society.
- Compare the social and historical issues shared between European countries as represented through the course materials.
- Apply the core themes studied to literature, arts, and cinema in the on-site contexts in European cities.
- Demonstrate critical awareness of the connections between literature and arts, as well as with history and society, through analytical and creative assignments.

V. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

- Seminars and Lectures
- Discussions/Reading Assignments for each city on the itinerary
- Site visits
- Student Presentations
- Sketching and Drawing on-site

VI. PRIMARY TEXTBOOKS/READINGS/FILMS

Below is a list of the cities we will concentrate on, in the order we will deal with them and the essential works that reveal perspectives on the settings.

AIX-EN-PROVENCE - MARSEILLE

- Lewis Mumford "What is a City" (1937)
- Michel de Certeau "Walking in the city" (1980)
- Alexandre Dumas - *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844)
- M.F.K. Fisher – *Two Towns in Provence* (1983)
- Emile Zola – *The Masterpiece* (1886)

PARIS - Modern Urban Perfection

- Emile Zola – *The Masterpiece* (1886)
- Charles Baudelaire – *The Flowers of Evil (1857-61)*, *The Painter of Modern Life (1863)*, *Paris Spleen* (1869)
- Ernest Hemingway – *A Moveable Feast* (1964)
- Walter Benjamin – *The Arcades Project* (1927-40)
- Victor Hugo – *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831)
- Optional: Articles on the history of impressionist artistic movement and its painters
- Optional: Various Artists – *Paris, je t'aime* (film, 2005)

AMSTERDAM - Europe's Outer Edges

- Anne Frank - *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1942-44)
- Vincent Van Gogh - *The Letters of Vincent van Gogh* (1872-1890)
- Albert Camus – *The Fall* (1956)
- Cees Nooteboom's *Rituals* (1980)

PRAGUE - No Escape

- Rainer Maria Rilke – *Two Stories of Prague* (trans. 1994)
- Milan Kundera – *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1979)
- Milan Kundera – *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984)
- Optional: Philip Kaufman – *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (film, 1988)
- Optional: Steven Sonderbergh – *Kafka* (film, 1991)

ROME - Remnants of a Founding Civilization

- Virgil – *The Aeneid* (29-19 B.C.E.)
- Gabriele D'Annunzio – *Pleasure* (1889)
- Elsa Morante – *History: A Novel* (1974)
- Pier Paolo Pasolini – *Stories from the City of God: Sketches and Chronicles of Rome* (trans. 2000)

We will be dealing primarily with literature, film, painting and music. Go to <http://www.office.com> (enter your login name and password). Select the applications “Teams” and go to the Team “JTerm 2025: Great Cities” and look under “Files” ==> “Class Materials” ==> “Reading Assignments” where you will find the daily assignments and what to have read for each day. You can download these pdf readings. Students are required to purchase one novel prior to departure—*The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* by Milan Kundera.

VII. EVALUATION AND GRADING

The primary requirements are that you attend each and every class and activity, keep up with the reading, and participate in class discussion. While never impossible, the reading assignments are sometimes long and always challenging, so allow ample time to complete them. This is not a lecture course, and its success very much depends on everyone present, prepared, curious and open to debate. This is an active seminar, requiring active participation in the dialogue, curiosity and committed note-taking. Grades will be calculated according to the following distribution:

Participation: 25%

Students are expected to actively listen and contribute to class sessions and site visits, prepare study questions, and demonstrate engagement with the course content. Each day, a student or group of students will be assigned as the designated note-taker and be responsible for contributing to the course notes (Daily Chronicle).

Please note:

Punctuality, whether for class sessions, departure times, meeting times for visits, etc., will have a substantial effect on your participation grade.

Telephone use during class sessions and field studies should be reserved for class sanctioned reasons. Excessive phone use during class times will severely impact your participation grade.

Quizzes: 25%

We will have ten quizzes (one per class session) based on the reading assignments and site visits. These will be multiple choice or short answer, and the material for these will be taken from your readings, film viewings and guided visits. Be sure to take good notes on these visits to prepare yourself.

Course Notebook: 15%

In an effort to better engage with the course materials, students will keep a regular journal to document class discussions, readings, study tours, and individual assignments. To understand the inspirations of so many artists in these cities, we will also do some drawing and sketching of the cities we visit. You will also be expected to keep a regular pace of journaling on your own. You will be graded not by the quality of your entries but by your commitment. You will be required to always have your notebook (supplied) with you on every visit. Notebooks will be regularly collected during the course.

Sketches can have short descriptions. At least one sketch should be done with descriptive text to help the reader visualize the element.

City Assignments 35% total

Total 6 assignments submitted on TEAMS

5 “shorter” assignments, one for each city (25%)
Final Critical Reflection (10%).

- 5 assignments (approximately 300-500 words each)

City Assignments should combine creativity and critical thinking. All the assignments must demonstrate how students draw conclusions from the course content and the readings. Each assignment should demonstrate knowledge from the readings and field studies to create connections between the city and literature.

- *Students will create a portfolio from the following (to be used only once):*
 - Sketch analysis (of one of your sketches)
 - Museum analysis or artwork analysis that connects to the course readings
 - Monument analysis
 - City map with 5 points with description of each point as relates to the readings
 - Creative writing about the city (modeled after the readings)
 - Textual analysis on a short quote
- Final critical reflection (750-1000 words)

The Final Critical Reflection should be on three different elements studied during the course and draw connections between the cities, the readings, and the study tours.

Grading Scale:

| | US |
|----|---------|
| A | 95-100% |
| A- | 90-94% |
| B+ | 89%-88% |
| B | 84-87% |
| B- | 80-83% |
| C+ | 79%-78% |
| C | 74-77% |
| C- | 70-73% |
| D+ | 69%-68% |
| D | 64-67% |
| D- | 60-63% |
| F | 59%-0% |

Attendance: Students are required to attend all classes, site visits, and class activities barring serious illness or an emergency. All class meetings and activities are required.

Plagiarism: Submitting material that in part or in whole is not entirely one's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source is prohibited and grounds for failure. *All work must be your original creative production, and non-authorized sources are not permitted,*

Accommodations: It is ACM-IAU's goal to provide reasonable accommodations for students with a documented disability. If students need accommodations to fully participate in this class, they should contact enroll@iau.edu right away.

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

General Travel Advisory: This trip is a serious one, both academically and culturally. Students are expected to be prepared for intellectual, linguistic, social, and travel challenges. We are traveling as a team, and each member must be prepared, punctual, cautious, and professional. A significant portion of your grade on participation reflects these expectations. With those important caveats, the trip promises to be an incredible experience, including fun and adventure. That said, be always aware of your surroundings, keeping your valuables close to you. Do not leave smartphones, cameras, etc. unattended. Travel as lightly as possible. Report any suspicious behavior to program supervisors.

Pre-Departure: Leading up to departure, be sure to check your email diligently so we can get in touch with you should there be any adjustments to the program.

IX. READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

UPDATED SCHEDULE WILL BE POSTED ON TEAMS PLATFORM. Refer to Teams for the most recent version.

Updated 25 October

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Day 1 – Arrival and On-site Orientation

Class Introduction

- Welcome and Orientation
- Group dinner in Aix-en-Provence

Day 2 – Aix-en-Provence

Class 1

- **Critical readings:**
 - “What is a City?”
 - “Walking in the City”
- **Readings:**
 - Excerpts from M.F.K. Fisher’s *Two Towns of Provence* (pp. 5-28)
- **QUIZ 1**
- Introduction to sketching presentation
- Guided walks in the city

Day 3 – Aix and Marseille: Mediterranean City

Class 2

- **Readings**
 - Dumas’s *Count of Monte Cristo* (chaps. 1 & 8)
- **QUIZ 2**
- Site Visit: Marseille (Vieux Port, Notre Dame de la Garde)

Day 4 – Free day

Day 5 – Aix-en-Provence, Aix-en-Provence to Paris

Class 3

- **Readings:**
 - Zola’s *The Masterpiece* (chap. 2 & 3)
- **QUIZ 3**
- Romanticism and Realism
- Literary and artistic movements
- Travel Day, afternoon train to Paris
- Site visit: Exploring Paris on the Seine
-

Day 6– Paris and the Arts

Class 4

- **Readings:**
 - Zola’s *The Masterpiece* (chaps. 8, cont.)

Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*
Baudelaire poems
Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (introduction and pp 1-8, 39-46)
Preface
A Good Café on the Place St Michel
Hunger was Good Discipline

- Optional readings: "Impressionism Café Debates" and "Intro to Impressionism";
- Site visit: Musée d'Orsay and Latin quarter
- **QUIZ 4**
- Group dinner
- **Notebook review: sketches and notes at 5pm**

Day 7 – An Artist's Vision of the City, Paris is a museum

- Readings:
Benjamin's Arcades Project "Paris Capital of Nineteenth Century" p 3-26
- Site visit: Carnavalet Museum
- **Assignment 1 Aix-Marseille and 2 Paris due by 9pm**

Day 8 – Paris to Amsterdam - Travel Day

- No class, students work on readings
- Group dinner
- Readings:
Anne Frank Diary (pp. 1-57)

Day 9 – Amsterdam Under German Occupation

Class 5

- Readings:
The Diary of Anne Frank (pp. 1-57)
Albert Camus's *The Fall* (pp 5-31)
Cees Nootboom's *Rituals*
- **QUIZ 5**
- Site Visit: Anne Frank House, Jewish Quarter
- Field Presentations:
Anne Frank House
Amstel River
German Occupation and Deportation

Day 10 – Amsterdam's Museum and Vincent Van Gogh

- Readings:
Letters of Vincent Van Gogh
- Site visit: Amsterdam Museum and Van Gogh Museum

Day 11 – Amsterdam to Prague

- No classes, students work on readings and preparing assignments
- Group dinner

- Readings:
Rilke's *King Bohush*

Day 12 – Dreams of Old Prague

Class 6

- Readings:
Rilke's *King Bohush*
Kundera's *Unbearable Lightness of Being*
- **QUIZ 6**
- Field Presentations:
 - Spanish Synagogue
- Site visit: Guided visit of Prague and evening concert

Day 13 – Prague and Soviet Occupation

Class 7

- Readings
Kundera's *Book of Laughter and Forgetting*
- **QUIZ 7**
- Guest Lecture on the Velvet Revolution TBC
- Afternoon free, complete readings and assignments
- **Assignment 3 Amsterdam and 4 Prague due by 9pm**

Day 14 – Prague to Rome

- Travel to Rome, no class session
- Site visit: Explore Spanish Steps and neighborhood
- Sketching

Day 15 – Founding of Ancient Rome

Class 8

- Readings:
Virgil's *The Aeneid*
Pasolini's "Roguish Rome" from *Stories from the City of God*
- **QUIZ 8**
- Site Visit: Coliseum guided tour

Day 16 – Baroque Rome and Roman Streets

Class 9

- Readings:
D'Annunzio's *Pleasure* (First Book, Chapter 2)
Pasolini's "The City's True Face" from *Stories from the City of God*
- **QUIZ 9**
- Site visit: Villa Borghese
- Field Presentations:

Villa Borghese

- **Assignment 5 Rome due by 9pm**

Day 17 – Sketches of Rome

Class 10

- Readings:
Elsa Morante's History: A Novel
- **QUIZ 10**
- Site visit: independent visits
- **Assignment Final Assignment due by 9pm**

Day 18 – Explorations

Class 10

- Group dinner