

# ITAL 156: EXPLORING ROME

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*Prof. Robert A. Rushing*





# WHAT IS THIS CLASS?

- .....
- For over 2,000 years, Rome has been a central political, religious and cultural symbol for the West, a position that it still retains today. This course will give an overview of some of that history, looking at topics that include: representations of Imperial power, the enduring presence of Roman ruins in the Romantic imagination, the complex and multicultural history of Roman cuisine, the important presence of Rome in the postwar American imagination, and the enduring presence of Rome in the artistic and cinematic imagination (we will see films including, *La grande bellezza*, *Three Coins in the Fountain*, *Open City*, and the recent Italian superhero film, *They Call Me Jeeg*). All films, readings and discussion in English. Three short papers and a final exam, plus fascinating lectures and discussion.





# WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

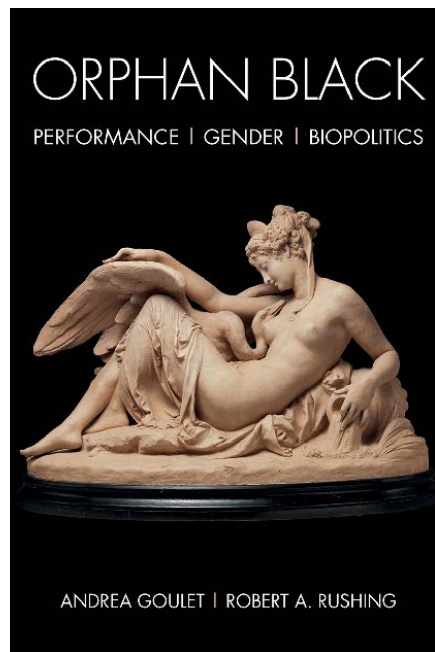
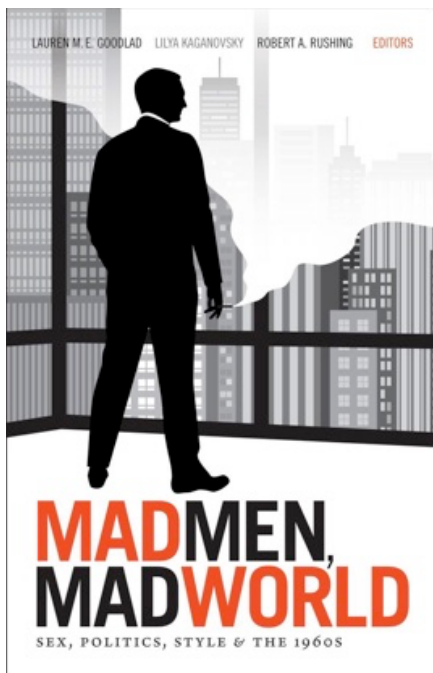
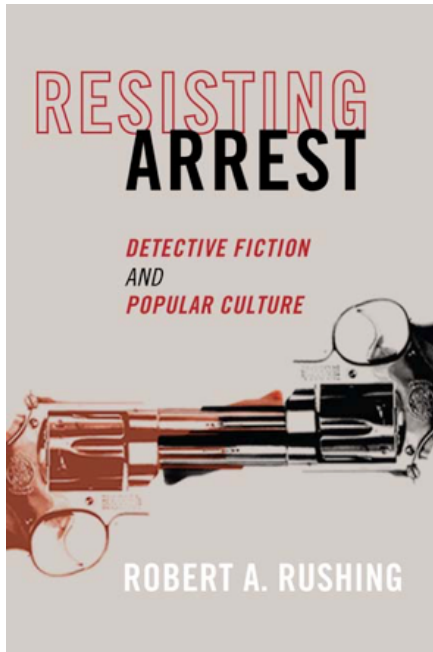
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- ▶ How to read texts, analyze their content and write clearly and meaningfully about what you've read
- ▶ Rome is a “cultural nexus,” a site where many of our ideas and even cultural institutions come from. Understanding its history will allow you to understand where contemporary culture comes from.
- ▶ Examples: bicameral legislature; a Republic; classical architecture; ideas about manly valor (Semper Fi!); innocent until proven guilty; decent roads; safe drinking water; milestones; city planning; Latin (and hence 80% of English vocab); the Roman alphabet; stadiums



# WHO AM I?

- Who am I?
- Comparative Literature—  
what is that?
- Italian
- Film, television, popular  
culture
- But particularly a long study of  
masculinity, particularly as it  
appears in modern film and  
television set in the Ancient  
world.
- And equally important long  
familiarity and attachment to  
Rome.





# WHO ARE YOU?

- .....
- A show of hands: how many of you have ever been outside the US?
  - To Europe?
  - To Italy?
  - To Rome?
  - How many of you are here for Rome and the culture of Italy?
  - How many of you are here for the Gen Eds?





# ITAL 156: THE SCHEDULE

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- The class is divided into 4 sections:
  - Ancient Rome
  - Roman art & architecture
  - Roman food
  - Modern Rome

# SCHEDULE, PARTS 1 & 2



DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	WORK
	<b>ancient Rome</b>		
8/28	introduction	—	—
8/30	Origins	Hughes, ch. 1: "Foundation"	—
9/4	Ancient Rome: the idea	Hughes, ch. 2: "Augustus"	—
9/6	<i>Rome</i> , season 1: 1-4 (HBO)	Hughes, ch. 3: "Later Empire"	—
9/11	<i>Rome</i> , season 1: 5-8 (HBO)	Hughes, ch. 4: "Pagans vs. Christians"	—
9/13	<i>Rome</i> , season 1: 9-12 (HBO)	—	—
	<b>Roman art &amp; architecture</b>		
9/18	Ancient Roman Art, Part 1	Bussagli, 7-75	—
9/20	Ancient Roman Art, Part 2	Bussagli, 76-145	—
9/25	<i>The Borgias</i> 1: 1-3 (Netflix)	Hughes, ch. 6: "Renaissance"	—
9/27	Michelangelo & the "Golden Age"	Bussagli, 354-445	—
10/2	The Baroque	Hughes, ch. 7: "Baroque"	—
10/4	Baroque Art and Architecture	Bussagli, 446-525	—
10/9	—no class—	—no class—	—
10/11	—no class—	—no class—	paper #1



# SCHEDULE, PARTS 3 & 4

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## Roman food

10/16	introduction to Italian cuisine	Parla & Gill, 1-35	—
10/18	Roman classics	Parla & Gill, 69-104	—
10/23	street food & cucina ebraica	Parla & Gill, 36-68; 105-28	—
10/25	'Quinto quarto' and verdure	Parla & Gill, 129-72	—
10/30	pizza and dolci	Parla & Gill, 173-226	—
11/1	presentations	—	presentation

## Modern Rome

11/6	<a href="#"><i>Open City</i></a> (Kanopy)	Hughes, ch. 11: "Futurism & Fascism"	—
11/8	<a href="#"><i>Bicycle Thieves</i></a> (Kanopy)	Hughes, ch. 12, "Rome Recaptured"	—
11/13	<i>Three Coins in the Fountain</i>	Hughes, ch. 9, "Grand Tour"	—
11/15	<i>Clash of Civilizations</i> (novel)	<i>Clash of Civilizations</i> , pp. 1-76	—
11/20	—no class: Thanksgiving—	No class: Thanksgiving	—
11/22	—no class: Thanksgiving—	No class: Thanksgiving	—
11/27	<i>Clash of Civilizations</i>	<i>Clash of Civilizations</i> , pp. 77-165	—
11/29	<i>Suburra: Blood on Rome</i> : 1-4 (Nflx)	—	—
12/4	<i>Suburra: Blood on Rome</i> : 5-7 (Nflx)	Renga, <i>Unfinished Business</i> : Intro.	—
12/6	<i>Suburra: Blood on Rome</i> : 8-10 (Nflx)	—	—
12/11	<a href="#"><i>La grande bellezza</i></a> (Kanopy)	Donadio, " <a href="#">Decline</a> "; Mecchia, " <a href="#">Birds</a> "	—
12/13	<i>They Call Me Jeeg</i> (Netflix)	—	—
12/15	final exam (Sat.): 7:00-10:00 PM	—	—
12/17			paper #2





## ITAL 156: GRADES

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- ▶ Your final grade consists of 2 papers (40% total), your food presentation (15%), the final exam (25%) and attendance and participation (20%).
- ▶ The final exam is comprehensive (that is, covers everything that we've read and seen over the semester. I will not test you on historical minutiae (what year was the Sack of Rome?) or things that are impossible to know or remember (on what page does Hughes say that Rome "was swarming with artists"?). I do want to make sure that you've done a substantial amount of the assigned readings and viewings, and that you've learned something meaningful over the semester.





# ITAL 156: READINGS

- ▶ While there are several downloadable articles to read, the majority of our readings this semester will come from just four books: a book of history, a book of art and architecture, a cookbook, and a novel.
- ▶ Robert Hughes, *Rome: A Cultural, Visual and Personal History*
- ▶ ~~Brigitte Hintzen-Bohlen, *Rome: Art and Architecture*~~ (evidently, this is not available)
- ▶ Marco Bussagli, *Rome: The Golden Centuries*
- ▶ Katie Parla and Kristina Gill, *Tasting Rome: Fresh Flavors and Forgotten Recipes from an Ancient City*
- ▶ Amara Lakhous, *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio*
- ▶ None is particularly expensive (each is \$15-\$20\*), and we will use all of them extensively

\* Sorry, the Bussagli is \$30-40.





# ITAL 156: VIEWINGS

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- ▶ This course has a good deal of visual material, but the moving image presents certain difficulties—in particular, students like to watch films and television, but on their own time. Fortunately, most are available available for streaming.
  - ▶ HBO's *Rome* is available through Amazon prime membership; if you are a Prime member, it is free. If you are not, you must purchase at least one month of HBO Now (available on almost all devices) for \$14.99 (generally, you can get a free trial, however)
  - ▶ *The Borgias* is available on Netflix (nota bene: the show *Borgia* is also available through Netflix, but is a different show that we are not discussing this semester)
  - ▶ Happily, *Open City*, *Bicycle Thieves* (also called *Bicycle Thief*), and *La grande bellezza* are also available through the Illinois library subscription to Kanopy, a streaming service for our students. *Three Coins in the Fountain* is available to rent through Amazon or the iTunes store (and possibly elsewhere) for \$3.99. *Jeeg Robot* is available through Netflix as *They Call Me Jeeg*.
- ▶ A student once complained that it was somehow "not fair" that they should have to rent or buy access to a film. This is a very strange idea: students regularly pay hundreds of dollars each semester for textbooks, and hundreds more for lab fees, online services, art supplies, and everything else that they need for their education. If you would prefer to purchase these films in a physical copy rather than rent or stream them, I couldn't be happier, but most students will probably prefer online streaming and rentals in my experience.





## ITAL 156: THE WORK

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- ▶ Two papers, each 4-5 pages in length. The first paper covers art, architecture, and history, and generally covers ancient Rome through Rome in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. For this first paper, you will select and read about at least two works of Roman art or architecture, one ancient, one from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance or the Baroque period. Your paper will interpret the works as Roman art, making use of what you've learned about the city, its culture and its history. The second paper will cover modern Rome in literature, film and television; here you should choose at least two works that we read or watched and again, one of them American, one Italian, and situate them in the context of what we've learned about Rome over the semester.





## ITAL 156: THE WORK

- .....
- A food presentation? We'll be reading a cookbook as we talk about Rome and Roman cuisine, but it's not simply recipes; Parla and Gill are both attentive to the history and changing traditions of the city, as well as the importance of food, and the way the cuisine reflects the long, complex past of Rome. I'll go into this in much more depth in class, but I do want you to look through the book, read about the ingredients (what you can and can't get in the US, let alone here in Urbana-Champaign), and the techniques—and then try your hand at making something. Document (photos, videos, etc.) your attempt (without setting yourself on fire or dropping your iPhone in boiling water), and then briefly present it to me and the class. Many classic Roman dishes (like the famous *carciofi alla giudea*, or really any pasta) will taste terrible if made the day before and then microwaved before class, so you don't have to bring in the results, but you may if it's something that turned out well and keeps until the next day. Here it doesn't matter whether you're a total klutz in the kitchen—the importance is what you learned about Roman food. These will likely be group presentations, given the size of the class.





# ITAL 156: THE POLICIES

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- 5 weeks absence = insta-fail
- Plagiarism = insta-fail
- Late work: will be marked down one notch (an A- becomes a B+) for the first week it is late; two notches for the second week. Work more than two weeks late will be given a maximum grade of 50% (still substantially better than nothing, however). You should always contact me about late work or work not handed in, well in advance of the due date whenever possible, or as soon afterward as you can.
- Screen time





# A QUICK TOUR OF ROME





# THE ANCIENT WORLD

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- Antiquity (3000 BC–500 AD)
- Middle Ages (450 AD–1450 AD)
- Modernity (1400 AD–present)
- Antiquity:
  - pre-Christian, polytheistic or animistic, illiterate, slaves vs. citizen, pervasive sexuality, emphasis on beauty, order
  - Nietzsche: pre-moral universe, no value judgments; you can break the law, but you cannot *sin*; some punishment, no reward





# ANCIENT ROME

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- ▶ **Legendary Beginnings** (founded in 753 BC by Romulus, descendent of Aeneas, who fled Trojan War)
- ▶ **The Kingdom of Rome** (753-509 BC)
- ▶ **Republican Rome** (509-27 BC)
- ▶ **The Roman Empire** (27 BC - 476 AD; *or* 1453 AD; how so?). The fall of the Roman Empire is coincident with the end of the Ancient World.
- ▶ **The Holy Roman Empire** (800-1806 AD: as Voltaire famously quipped, “neither holy, Roman, nor an Empire”; mostly Germany)