COURSE DESCRIPTION
I want to present a series of texts this semester that, each in its own way, break down and explore the various elements of the often disconcerting experience of living and traveling outside of one’s native culture. Therefore, this course will focus on literary texts that deal with travel/displacement and the three issues that such texts usually present within a thematic of difference, as a conflict, or in the form of a character’s personal alienation: place, culture, and language. I hope that the novellas, poems, novels, and short stories, written between the high middle ages and the end of the last century, from primarily Italy, but also England and the United States, will in some ways mirror and help us to make sense of some of the things that we ourselves are experiencing this semester as we sojourn abroad and travel throughout Italy and greater Europe. Such acculturation, that is the making familiar what is outside and alien to us, is what I believe literature does best and might here be presented as an axiom for the course: literature presents human experience in such a way as to push the reader into a position of re-considering his or her own position vis-à-vis humanity at large and to philosophically re-interpreting their own life experiences.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Our objectives will be three-fold: Primarily we will focus on the literature of displacement and travel, gaining a familiarity with its themes and the various textual strategies that it employs. Secondly, we will enrich our knowledge of Italian and European culture and history by examining literary texts within their cultural and historical contexts. Lastly, beyond simply digesting this material in your written work, I would like to invite students to work on their rhetorical and essay writing skills by inviting you to re-write your papers based on my comments as well as allowing me to look over and comment upon your written work in advance of its due date. Combing these three-fold objectives, the measurable objective of this course will be to make its students capable of writing a coherent and knowledgeable critical literary essay on any aspect of Italian literature.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Beyond the completion of the requisite reading and participation in the class discussions, students will also be expected to write two papers during the course of the semester. The written work will consist of two 5-7 page papers that either closely examine one of the texts that we study or examine trends that you have isolated in two or more texts, explores an applicable novel outside of our reading list, or examines a current of literary criticism, a sub-genre, or a historical topic related to Italian literature, literature focused on or set in Italy, or literature dealing with place and otherness. These papers will spring ideally directly from our class discussions I hope and will be due no later than one week after we have finished discussing the novel or poem upon which you choose to write. The due dates of these papers are marked on the syllabus with a F. All papers and re-writes are absolutely due no later than Mon. December 9th.
Grades will be based on the written work with positive or negative considerations for attendance and participation in the class discussions: roughly that’s 40% for each paper and 10% for participation and attendance. Note: A student who does not complete one of the written assignments or who is absent more than 4 times during the semester will not receive a passing grade regardless of the percent values of the individual assignments on the grounds that they have not completed the course requirements.

A NOTE ON METHOD

I do not believe that I (or anyone else) can coerce or cajole anyone into “learning.” Rather I believe that intellectual progress is made through the sharing and discussion of reactions and interpretations. Therefore this course will be conducted as a seminar and be totally dependent upon your individual contributions and courtesy. Obviously, then, it is absolutely necessary that each of you take control of your own education not only for your own sakes, but also in accordance with your responsibility to the rest of those participating in this class. You must both keep up with the reading and begin the process of digesting the material by coming to class with something either to say or ask about it. I strongly recommend that you take notes while reading with both questions and observations and that you come to class prepared to challenge and/or benefit from the group’s discussion. You cannot depend on me to lecture on material that you have not read, nor will I accept the role of monitor for your reading or policeman for discourtesy to the class during the discussions. Concerns of this kind should be voiced and dealt with by the community during the class sessions. Remember that I am only one in a group of people here to explore and learn from this very interesting group of texts.

That said, I am extremely available both in class and out to offer my expertise and experience to help you digest and write about this material. (I also have a lot of experience living, studying, and now teaching here in Florence and I offer a sympathetic ear to culture shock concerns as well!) Though I have no official office hours I’m always available for private conferences and very open during the in-class discussions to address both our method and the material of our study if the group as a whole is in agreement as to the utility and feasibility of changing them. All of this is said and done to clarify from the start my particular approach—based on the assumption that we are each mutually dependent individuals demanding of respect and ultimately responsible for our own intellectual progress—and to allow the greatest flexibility in our proceeding so that the most appropriate and useful materials and methods are addressed in this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Elio Vittorini, *Conversations in Sicily*
Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini*
Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

All texts marked with a 4 on the calendar are to be found in the course photocopy packet.
CALENDAR

Week 1

Class 2: Traveling and Cultural Diversity in Medieval Italy
Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* I, 1 (Ser Cepparrello); IV, 2 (Friar Alberto)

Week 2
Class 3: Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* II, 5 (Andreuccio da Perugia);
II, 2 (Rinaldo d’Asti); IX, 4 (the two Ceccos)
Class 4: Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* I, 2 (Abraham the Jew); I, 3 (Melchizedek the Jew and the three rings); III, 10 (Alibech the hermit)

Week 3
Class 5: Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* II, 4 (Barnabo'/Ginevra);
IV, 1 (Tancredi/Ghismonda)
Class 6: Modern Italy and Regionalism
Salvatore Quasimodo, “Before the Staue of Ilaria Del Carretto”
Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Apennine”

Week 4
Class 7: Giuseppe Ungaretti, “Rivers” (Boccaccio papers due)
Aldo Palazzeschi, “The Palatine”
Dino Campana, “Woman from Genova”
Eugenio Montale, “Eastbourne”
Class 8: Italy from the Outside in
Edith Wharton, “Roman Fever” (1934)

Week 5
Class 9: Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* (1912) (Poetry papers due)
Class 10: Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* (1912)

Week 6
Class 11: Europe and Otherness
Giuseppe Ungaretti, “In Memoriam”
Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Rital and Raton” (1965)
Class 12: Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini* (part 1) (Wharton papers due)

Week 7
Class 13: Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini* (part 2) (Mann papers due)
Class 14: Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini* (part 3) (Pasolini papers due)

Week 8
Class 15: Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini* (part 4)

Class 16: The View from Afar: Haunted Italy
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Oval Portrait” (1842) & “The Assignation” (1835)
Week 9
FClass 17: Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (1844) 4 (Bassani papers due)
Class 18: F. Marion Crawford, “For the Blood Is the Life” (Written 1900, published 1911) 4

Week 10
Class 19: The World Re-imagined
Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities (I-III)
FClass 20: Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities (IV-VI) (Gothic papers due)

Week 11
Class 21: Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities (VII-IX)

Last chance for all papers and re-writes! ALL PAPERS DUE