

**Art in Rome**  
**John Felice Rome Center**  
Summer 2026  
Monday and Wednesday | 9:00 am-12:20 pm  
Dr. Paolo Alei  
Email: [palei@luc.edu](mailto:palei@luc.edu)  
Office Hours: after class

### **Course Description**

Rome is not merely a city; it is a living palimpsest, where the past is not erased but continually reinterpreted. In its streets and buildings, temporal layers from antiquity to the present coexist and converse: pagan temples reborn as churches, ancient forums repurposed as civic spaces, medieval structures embedded within Renaissance palaces, and fragments of classical architecture—*spolia*—reassembled into new symbolic orders. This interdisciplinary course traces the evolving identity of Rome from its origins as the capital of the Roman Empire, through its central role in Christian history as the seat of the Papacy, to its transformation into the modern capital of a unified Italy. The course follows a chronological arc spanning Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Baroque, and the Modern era, while weaving in thematic and cross-disciplinary perspectives drawn from philosophy, theology, political history, science, literature, and the arts.

Central to our inquiry will be a selection of key monuments and urban projects—architectural masterpieces, iconic paintings and sculptures, and city planning initiatives—that both reflect and shape Rome’s unique historical trajectory. We will analyze the ideological and artistic legacies of pivotal figures such as Emperors Augustus, Hadrian, and Constantine; Popes Sylvester I, Boniface VIII, Julius II, Urban VIII, Innocent XI, and Alexander VII; as well as King Victor Emmanuel II and Benito Mussolini, each of whom left a profound mark on the city’s physical and symbolic fabric.

Artists such as Michelangelo, Raphael, Caravaggio, Bernini, and Borromini will be studied not only for their individual brilliance but also for the cultural, political, and spiritual contexts in which their works emerged—contexts that made Rome the unrivaled heart of artistic innovation for centuries.

A distinctive feature of this course is its immersive approach. Students will engage directly with the urban and artistic landscape of Rome through regular on-site visits. These include explorations of the Roman Forum and Colosseum, the Pantheon, major Early Christian basilicas, the Vatican complex and St. Peter’s Basilica, and the city’s vibrant piazzas, churches, palaces, and museums. In walking the city, students will not only study its monuments but experience the rhythms of a place where time folds upon itself, inviting reflection on continuity, transformation, and identity.

This course offers students the rare opportunity to study the Eternal City as both subject and classroom—encouraging them to think critically, historically, and creatively about the intersections of art, power, memory, and space.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- **Visual Analysis:** Students will develop the ability to identify and analyze specific artworks, buildings, and urban projects, enhancing their visual literacy through the decoding of iconography, style, content, and form.
- **Art Historical Vocabulary:** Students will acquire and apply the proper terminology in the description of artworks, facilitating a deeper understanding of artistic expression.
- **Interpretation and Argumentation:** Students will be equipped to construct well-supported, coherent arguments concerning works of art, integrating critical analysis and evidence derived from both visual and contextual observations.



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- **Chronology and Context:** Students will engage with the chronological narrative of the Eternal City, comprehending its historical and cultural layers through an interdisciplinary lens.
- **Empathy and Viewer Response:** Students will analyze and consider the varied responses of viewers to artworks, incorporating iconography, allegory, and affectivity, thereby fostering both intellectual and emotional engagement with art.
- **Recognition and Interpretation:** After identifying and contextualizing artworks, students will cultivate the ability to interpret and explore multiple meanings, acknowledging the complexity inherent in the visual arts. Develop visual literacy. Students will learn how to interpret ideas communicated through a visual language.

### **Required Text / Materials**

There will be a series of mandatory weekly readings (articles or book chapters) with Jstor links or posted on Sakai. The average reading per week is 60 pages (including images). Certain weeks there will be an article of about 30 pages and others a book of about 120 pages. Readings will be tested as part of the preparation and especially in the exams' essay questions.

### **Methods of Instruction**

The course consists of on-site lectures in the piazzas, streets, churches, palaces, villas and museums of Rome and a few in-class lectures. This course is not a guided tour of the city of Rome, but an academic course with lectures to follow with attention. Punctuality and note-taking are extremely important. Because of heavy traffic and crowded buses, in some cases you should leave the Rome Center more than one hour before the beginning of class. It is the student's responsibility to study how to reach the precise appointment for the on-site lecture. Audio headsets will be handed out at the beginning of each on-site meeting. Please handle these with care and return them at the end of class. If you arrive late you will not only miss class but also the distribution of headsets. Please do not eat, smoke, take photographs or use cell phones during the on-site lectures.

### **Midterm Exam and Final Exam**

The midterm and final exams aim at evaluating the students' memorization of all the art works seen during the lectures, note-taking, understanding of the readings as well as the students' development of their own critical thinking and ability to synthesize. The mid-term exam will cover the material of all lectures up to the date of the exam, the final exam will not be cumulative and will cover the material from the midterm on. Both exams will consist of 5 slide identifications. Students will have about 10 minutes for every slide and they are supposed to write the name of the artist, the work of art, name of the patron, date, location and finally write a one-page analysis. 1 contrast/comparison analysis of two images in 20 minutes. 1 unknown slide to discuss in 10 minutes. Finally, an essay question in which students are supposed to show their capacity to integrate their notes taken during the lectures and the assigned readings in a well-constructed analysis of the artworks.

### **Research Paper**

Critical thought and analytical writing are fundamental components of the course and the final grade. Students will submit one five-page assignment, relating to a specific topic chosen together with the instructor. Students will write and present an original individual research paper about a relevant topic within the scope of the course using scholarly sources (journal articles, book chapters, photographs, etc.) as well as other pertinent sources such as original documents and archival papers if necessary. Essays will be 5 pages long and will include an introduction, main body, and conclusion. Essays must be typed, double-spaced in Times New Roman (12pt), and 2.5cm/1-inch margins on all four sides. Ideally, they should adopt Chicago style. One copy

of the essay will be submitted via email and a hard copy given directly to the professor on the day in which it is due.

### **Preparation and Participation**

Preparation refers to reading the materials in a timely fashion. Participation refers to the responsibility of the students in relation to the lectures, the discussions, and the exams. It is essential that students respect the calendar and be always on time. It is fundamental that students take good notes from every lecture for these will be very helpful during the exams. Presence, attention, enthusiasm are considered an essential form of participation in an on-site course. Students should not scatter around when on-site, but always remain as a class group (in the range of visibility of the professor) during an academic lecture being this in the Pantheon, in Piazza Navona or at the Galleria Borghese. It is important that students dress properly when visiting churches and holy places and bring umbrellas in case of rain. Attendance of recorded lectures.

### **Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student. Any lateness or leaving class early will impact the final course grade. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Absence due to sickness or injury needs to be corroborated by a doctor's note. Students late to class twice will be credited with one absence in accordance with the JFRC's Attendance policy. Three (3) absences will result in an automatic failure (F). Travel does not constitute reason to miss class.

### **Assessment Components**

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|-----------------------------|------|
| • Participation/Preparation | 20 % |
| • Midterm Exam              | 30 % |
| • Paper                     | 20%  |
| • Final Exam                | 30 % |

### **Grading**

94-100: A  
 90-93: A-  
 87-89: B+  
 84-86: B  
 80-83: B-  
 77-79: C+  
 74-76: C  
 70-73: C-  
 67-69: D+  
 60-66: D  
 59 or lower: F

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: [http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml). You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

In this course students may not plagiarize. The use of AI can be used to formulate a bibliography (if double checked by the student) or rewrite notes (just to improve the form) but not to write a paper or any other work. Students may not fabricate data. Students may not collude. Students may not cheat. Students may not facilitate academic misconduct

### **Late or Missed Assignments**

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without presentation of a valid excuse (such as a medical certification) and authorization of the instructor.

### **Accessibility Accommodations**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

### **Statement on Title IX**

The Rome Center follows Loyola's [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation](#) and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

## **Calendar**

### **Week 1**

#### **Monday May 18**

Meeting point in-class at 9 am

Presentation of the course and Introduction to the history of Rome

Reading: Schorske, Carl E. "Freud: The Psycho-Archeology of Civilizations." *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 92, pp. 52–67- available through link

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25080867>

#### **Wednesday, May 20**

Meeting point in front of the Ara Pacis Augustae (facing Mausoleum of Augustus) at 9.00 am

Mausoleum of Augustus and Pantheon

Reading: Smith, Hailey. "Cultural Imperialism in the Roman Empire: A Give and Take Relationship between Imperial Rome and Provincial/External Cultures." *Venture: The University of Mississippi Undergraduate Research Journal* 6 (October 2, 2024). University of Mississippi.

<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umurjournal/vol6/iss1/11>. A. Claridge's Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide (available in the library). Chapters: "The Imperial Forums," "Field of Mars (Campus Martius)," (about 100 pages) Available via your on-line library or in the JFRC Library

### **Week 2**

#### **Monday, May 25**

Meeting point outside the Colosseum Subway Station (ground floor, do not go upstairs) at 9 am

Colosseum, Arch of Constantine and Saint John the Lateran

Readings: A. Claridge's Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide (available in the library). Chapters: "The Roman Forum," "The Palatine," and "Colosseum Valley and Esquiline." (about 120 pages) "The Imperial Forums," "Field of Mars (Campus Martius).

Remember to be punctual and always bring your earphones.

**Subjects and bibliography (two books or two articles or one book and one article) for your papers due after class**

**Wednesday, May 27**

Meeting point in-class at 9:00 am

Michelangelo and Raphael in Renaissance Rome

Readings: T. Verdon, "Pagans in the Church: The *School of Athens* in Religious Context," ed. M. Hall, Raphael's *School of Athens*, Temple University Press, 1997, pp. 114-130. (about 15 pages) (in Sakai)

L. Partridge, "Sistine Ceiling," 1996 (100 pages with many images) (available in the Library)

\*Visit the Vatican Museum on your own within this week. Be sure to buy your tickets in advance from the official website of the Vatican Museum and read carefully all the instructions

<https://tickets.museivaticani.va/home/calendar/visit/Biglietti-Musei>

**Week 3**

**Monday, June 1**

Meeting point in class at 9 am

**Mid Term Exam**

**Wednesday, June 3**

Meeting point at the Galleria Borghese, Piazza Scipione Borghese at 8:55 am

Bernini-sculptor and poet

Readings: Bolland, Andrea. "Desiderio and Diletto: Vision, Touch, and the Poetics of Bernini's Apollo and Daphne." *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 2 (2000): 309–30. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3051379>

Attend video lecture on the Via Pia through <https://vimeo.com/741985133> password:ayf

**Week 4**

**Monday June 8**

Meeting point in class at 9 am

Saint Peter's Basilica

Readings: T.A. Marder, *Bernini and the Art of Architecture*, available as pdf in Sakai week 4

\*Visit the Basilica of Saint Peter's on your own listening the Vimeo video lecture available through link

<https://vimeo.com/721954852> password: ayf

**Wednesday, June 10**

Meeting point at Piazza Navona (around central fountain) at 9 am

The Kircherian Mile: Piazza Navona, Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Sant'Ignazio Loyola, Il Gesù

Readings: I. Rowland, "The United Sense of the Universe: Athanasius Kircher in Piazza Navona," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol. 46, 2001, pp. 153-181, available through the link

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4238784> (about 30 pages); Connors, Joseph. "Borromini's S. Ivo Alla Sapienza: The Spiral." *The Burlington Magazine* 138, no. 1123 (1996): 668–82. Available through link

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/887143>

**Papers are due via email by 8 pm Friday June 12**

**Week 5**



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**Monday June 15**

Meeting point at Piazza del Popolo (Porta Flaminia) at 9 am

Piazza del Popolo, Piazza di Spagna, Trevi Fountain, Piazza Venezia

Readings: C. Mazzoni, "Capital City: Rome 1870-2010." *Annali d'Italianistica*, vol. 28, 2010, pp. 13–29, available through the link <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24016385> (about 20 pages)

**Hard copy papers are due today after class**

**Wednesday June 17**

Meeting point in class at 9 am

**Final exam**