The Writing of Fiction: Writing Rome - Engl 318 / ROST 390
Loyola University Chicago—John Felice Rome Center
Summer I - 2017 – Mon/Weds 9m-1220pm
Location: Classroom TBA & On Site
Prof. Elizabeth Geoghegan; Email: egeoghegan@luc.edu
Office Hours: Room 102 – M/W by appointment

Course Description: This On-Site, Writing Intensive, Core Course will discuss techniques of fiction writing and offer guidance in generating original fiction that utilizes the city of Rome as inspiration. Students will examine works of literature that reflect the city’s vast influence on Western creativity and culture throughout the ages while simultaneously navigating the Eternal City, itself. Students are encouraged to look beyond the veneer of the Rome depicted in travel guides and observe the ways that the Mediterranean city, so thoroughly rooted in history and the concept of “empire”, struggles with contemporary European issues such as immigration and social justice. On site classes take place amidst the quintessential intersection of the ancient, medieval, and modern world, inviting students to respond to, participate in, problematize, and incorporate Rome’s layered history and influence—as well as their own experience of it—into their prose. Through the studied practice of descriptive writing and the examination of the Rome setting as a vital literary component, students will produce their own fictional interpretations of the Eternal City. (Note: English 318 is an elective for non-English majors and English majors not in the CW Concentration & a requirement for English majors in the CW Concentration.)

Outcome: Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the technical vocabulary and critical skills necessary for discussing, analyzing and formulating arguments about fiction writing, and will produce a portfolio of their own original fiction. Through experiential learning, students will gain a deeper understanding of the multidimensional and ongoing influence of the city of Rome upon Western culture, history, art, and ideas and, in particular, literature and literary fiction.

Learning Objectives: Knowledge Area (Artistic Knowledge): In order to meet the objectives outlined above, the work of the course will be structured so as to meet the following specific learning outcomes: A) Study, create, or participate in the creation or performance of some forms of artistic expression as a means of exploring human experience and understanding the creative process: Upon successfully completing the course, students will have immersed themselves in the creative process and demonstrated their ability to generate descriptive prose via reading, discussion, writing (both on and off site), and participating in peer reviews. B) Demonstrate visual and aural literacy: The workshop format will allow students to demonstrate visual and aural literacy. Students will be required to present their ideas both orally and textually during class discussions as well as during readings and peer reviews of works in progress. Students will be responsible for reading their work aloud and analyzing their own work, as well as the work of their peers. C) Acquire the critical and technical vocabulary enabling them to describe and analyze, and formulate an argument about literary productions: By devoting an entire semester to the writing process, students will gain confidence in their writing and garner writing skills that will aid them when writing for any field of study. These skills include a broadened knowledge of the language and vocabulary one uses when to analyze fiction and the ability to identify and work in a variety of writing styles and genres. D) Access how formal qualities of artistic expression are intrinsically tied to an audience: Students will gain experience writing their own creative work with a particular audience in mind. Students will acquire the skills to identify the “intended audience”; by examining works within an historical context, as well as discussing their role as contemporary audience for those works. They will also learn about the impact of authorial decisions (such as voice, tone, point of view, and so forth) and how those choices impact audience reception. E) Recognize and participate in the artistic-cultural lives of their communities: Students will be encouraged to attend readings or performances during the course of the semester, as well as to participate in a final reading from their own work at the end of the term. F) Acquire collaborative skills through group problem solving and negotiation: Students will critique each other’s creative work in a workshop environment. Various classes will be devoted to workshops. Students will be provided with copies of their colleague’s work and expected to respond both in writing and orally to the work or works in progress. Student fiction will be discussed and evaluated in a supportive, yet critical, environment. Suggestions for revision will be negotiated among workshop participants.
Skills (Critical Thinking): In order to meet the objectives outlined above, the work of the course will be structured so as to meet the following specific learning outcomes: 1) Comprehend, paraphrase, summarize, and contextualize the meaning of varying forms of communication, including, but not limited to: written work (fiction and nonfiction), speech, film, visual art, multimedia, and music. Students will have successfully demonstrated comprehension of and the ability to contextualize the meaning of varying forms of prose. Compulsory notes and responses to the readings will be recorded in the Writer’s Sketchbook, as well as discussed in class. In discussions we will examine gender, cultural and historical influences, the diversity of narrative forms, and particularly the relationship of the author to the Mediterranean landscape and the city of Rome. 2) Analyze relationships between statements, questions, concepts, descriptions, or other forms of representation intended to express beliefs, judgments, experience, reasons, information, or opinions: Students will encounter and analyze a range of texts, encountering writers whose expressions represent diverse beliefs, experiences and judgments. 3) Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of varying points of view: via encounters with various writings, both historical and contemporary, as well as the student work, itself, students will learn to evaluate varied points of view. 4) Generate new ideas, hypotheses, opinions, theories, questions, and proposals; and develop strategies for seeking and synthesizing information to support an argument, make a decision, or resolve a problem: Discussions of readings and student work will aid students in the generation of new ideas and strengthen their own creative decision making process. 5) Construct cases, adapted to appropriate audiences, contexts, forms, and media, in support of reasoned judgments, and to engage in a process of argument and counterargument in order to express and test those judgments. Workshops for the fiction produced will aid students in the practice of both critique and defense of their own work and the work of others. Critiques allow for editorial decisions and the resolution of problems revealed in drafts of a particular work. 6) Monitor individual thinking or behavior in order to question, confirm, validate, or correct it. The workshops and discussions will arm students with information and tools to approach their work in the writing and revision process, which is essentially solitary. The revision process is essential to producing strong writing and allows students to profit from earlier analysis and critique.

Learning Activities: a) Classes will include lectures and discussions of assigned readings depicting Rome’s influence upon literature, art, and ideas, both historically and in a contemporary context. Lectures will inform students about the varied literary history produced by both a fascination with and a reaction to Rome through the ages. In-class discussions will be an important component. Students will be expected to participate in the discussions of reading assignments and other topics covered, as well as during in-class critiques and analysis of the work produced by their colleagues. Students will often be required to write responses to the assigned readings. b) Classes include site visits coordinated with readings and homework assignments to enhance and inform the writing produced in class. On-site classes take advantage of the Rome location, providing physical access to the settings evoked in the readings and serving as a springboard for the generation of student work. On site, students will document their observations of Rome in writing. Students should be prepared for site visits, having read the required readings and/or completed the homework c) Students will be called upon to share their works-in-progress with their peers. This will aid student flexibility and build confidence in oral competency, descriptive and analytical writing skills, and sensory perceptions. It will also help build vocabulary and verbal language skills. d) In addition to other writing assignments, each student will maintain a “Writer’s Sketchbook” in which they will write during class and use as a place to draft early work. The Sketchbook will function as a place for risk-taking and “sketching” or recording and drafting ideas for further exploration. It will also serve as a document of the city of Rome and the writing generated over the course of the term. e) A portion of some of the classes will be devoted to peer reviews of the creative work in development. Students will be required to give written and oral feedback to their colleagues. This is born of the philosophy that all creative work, especially writing, benefits from thoughtful critique and careful revision. Students will learn how to improve their own work by reviewing and responding to the prose developed by their peers. Students will occasionally be required to present their work orally in class. g) Discussions of & written responses to the required readings will demonstrate the student’s ability to think critically and analyze theme, structure, content, form, and other literary devices that they will later employ in their own writing. h) Discussions on the selected readings will provide a contextual foundation for the writing that the city of Rome has inspired through the ages, as well as for the myriad ways that writers have interpreted the Roman landscape. The readings will vary widely with respect to period, content and style and will work in conjunction with the, lectures, discussions, site visits, and writing assignments.
Evaluation Methods: Participation (in class & on site) writing assignments, reader response assignments, peer reviews of story drafts, and a final portfolio to include polished revisions and a process analysis for each piece.

Grade Breakdown:
10% Participation / Preparedness / Attendance
10% Peer Reviews for Workshops (Conscientiousness of editing classmates’ work)
10% Homework (Reader Responses & other assignments, usually posted on Sakai, details TBA)
10% Free Writes from Sketchbook & Presentations (e.g. poem, lists, etc. all required for full credit)
60% Final Portfolio containing the following items:
   - Roman Snapshot
   - Roman Postcard
   - Roman Micro-fiction
   - Roman Story

Grading scale A = 100 -93; A- = 92-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D+ = 69-67; D = 65-60; F = 59 and below

Requirements: Participation is of the utmost importance. Discussion and lectures will provide a foundation for the course, however students will be expected to come prepared to contribute to class discussions. Site visits make up a large portion of the classes, so you should also buy yourself an excellent map for the city of Rome. This will be as indispensable as the sketchbook and texts. If you miss a particular site visit, you are required to visit the location on your own time and write about it in your sketchbook and/or follow up on any on-site writing. There will be writing prompts distributed in class that coordinate with homework assignments. You will be responsible for following up with any missed work. Specific guidelines will be handed out before each assignment is due.

Attendance Policy: Our discussions – and your participation in them – along with the site visits are a large component of this course, therefore attendance is mandatory. Please note that three (3) unexcused absences may result in failure for the course. Two (2) unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final grade by one complete grade. If you have a valid reason to miss class, please try to let me know in advance of your absence or follow up with me as soon as possible afterward. Medical and other excuses need to be cleared via the JFRC Dean’s office, not by me.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is considered a serious offense, will be reported to the Dean of the Loyola Rome program, and could result in expulsion. Please see me with any questions you may have about the written assignments.

Required Text & Course Reader: Both may be purchased in the JFRC Bookstore

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<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Fiction: The Practical Guide from New York's Acclaimed Creative Writing School</td>
<td>Gotham Writers Workshop</td>
<td>Bloomsbury USA</td>
<td>1582343306</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone</td>
<td>Tennessee Williams</td>
<td>New Directions</td>
<td>9780811212494</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Reader (Stories)</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Available in JFRC bookstore</td>
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Course Reader & Map: Along with the textbooks, you are obliged to purchase the course reader, which contains all of the short stories for the class. It is available in JFRC bookstore. You are also required to buy a notebook for class & a detailed map of Rome (with street names.) The map – not a smart phone but an actual physical paper map -- is indispensable & compulsory. SEE COURSE SURVIVAL GUIDELINES (Sakai).

Course Schedule: A detailed schedule of assignments, readings, and site visits will be available in class.