

New Spring Course

Italian 50 Imagining Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond

Tu-Th 3:30-4:50 HH 143 Professor Deanna Shemek



The tradition of spending an extended period in Italy goes back at least to the Renaissance, but it was in the 17th and 18th centuries that such journeys became a cultural rite of passage for young European elites (and even wealthy North and South Americans) who embarked on what was called the Grand Tour. Travelers arrived in Italy with their servants, their chaperones, their sketchpads, and their notebooks to spend months or even years there. They also carried with them romantic ideas and a wealth of stereotypes about Italy, the Italians, and Mediterranean culture more generally. In this course we will read about the journeys of travelers who undertook the Grand Tour, examining both the insights and the cultural clichés that these experiences fostered, and how historical events helped shape travelers' views. We will also compare the accounts of those earlier journeys with more contemporary ones, as recorded in fiction, journalism, films, and websites about Italian tourism, and consider the phenomena of study abroad and mass tourism today.