

Seeing Florence: A Walking Observation Exercise.

- On the reverse of this sheet is a map. This is your assigned route through the city. Write the assignment detailed below based on your mapped route.
- Please label your essay with your route number.
- This essay needs to be typed, double-spaced, and submitted by the start of class on week three's second class meeting (Wednesday or Thursday, depending on when your class meets).
- This is also your chance to practice writing a paper and figuring out the printing situation at Marist/LdM on a low-stakes assignment.

The assignment:

Part one: Write a 300-600 word observation essay, building off of Carlson's discussion of the role of the medieval and renaissance city in performances by assessing how the contemporary city performs. Consider the elements he raises: symbolism, participation vs. spectatorship, control of sightlines, pathways into or out of major symbolic centers, etc.

What does the path you are taking suggest about Florence? What elements are highlighted? Downplayed? What meanings does this part of the city convey? How is symbolism deployed, intentionally or unintentionally, and how does the juxtaposition of symbols create meaning? Consider buildings, landmarks, paths, street width, street restrictions, interruptions, masses of humanity, etc. How does the city perform Florence – and which Florence is the city performing in this stretch? What observations and details lead you to these conclusions?

*This essay does not need to be a formal paper (intro, thesis, etc.).
See it as a short blog post or similar writing exercise.*

Part two: At the end of your paper, in a separate section, write a one-sentence thesis statement which summarizes your assessment of the city and presents a clear argument for how and what you think the city is performing. (This is early practice to see where you all are with thesis construction as we move towards argumentative essay writing.)

Grading: This is a SWA, so it will be graded accordingly. Unlike your last SWA essay, the feedback on this essay will be primarily conceptual and based on your analysis of what you saw. To make that analysis more successful, be sure to remain observant and attentive to detail as you walk.

Some advice:

- Don't walk like you're trying to get through Times Square as quickly as possible to avoid being accosted by the flock of Elmos. Stop, pull to the side of the street, look up and around. Experience the world. Use your senses. Think about the experience of walking as well as the world you're walking through.
- Consider all of the elements of performance we have discussed. Think about groups of people vs. individuals. Think about how space is being used.
- Remember – this is an exercise in deploying ideas and practicing the use of new terminology. You will want to edit and proofread, but the focus of this exercise should be on playing with new ideas.
- Try to stay focused and on task as much as possible. This is not the best assignment to do with friends because you're more likely to be distracted.

Paper Topic Options

The city is your subject for all papers this semester. What follows are some ideas that you can use for short papers and your final research paper. This is not an exhaustive list, however. If you wish to write about an event that is not listed here, then please contact me and have your topic approved by me in advance.

- In the first few weeks of the semester, we will be developing a vocabulary and analytical framework to help you with these assignments. What follows, thus, is a list of events, sometimes with relevant aspects noted. You will choose an approach to each event, using the frameworks we discuss in class.
- Please keep in mind that your short papers and your research paper need to cover different territory. Thus, if you find that your short paper is extending past its “short paper” length, then you might have found your research paper topic.
- All of your papers should cite scholarly sources.
 - Your research paper *must* use multiple scholarly sources (see that assignment sheet.)
 - For your short papers, you do not need to conduct additional research (beyond the materials on iLearn), but you should do so if it will help you to write a stronger paper. Let your topic and approach determine your plan here.
- Please also keep in mind that you may not write about specific individuals without obtaining their informed consent and going through an institutional IRB proposal. This is a long process, too long for most of your work this semester. You’ll notice, thus, that the paper ideas listed below do not focus on individuals and instead focus on spaces, intentional public performances, and the intersections between groups and venues. You should not be writing about identifiable people, except if you are doing a formal theatrical review (where you should use your program to accurately credit the artists with their choices).

Performing Museums:

- Pick a particular museum and analyze its performance, using Garoian or Casey as a model. As this is a short paper, you will want to consider only one aspect in your analysis (use of space/place, interaction with audience, organization of exhibits, etc.)
 - Consider: How do you know you’re in a museum? What do you know about the value that the museum places on antiquity (or not) based on the physical surroundings? What kind of information is the institution providing for

Performing the City:

- Consider Carlson’s assessment of Florence’s street design as a vehicle for performance. How does contemporary Florence use, alter, or otherwise engage with his ideas? How does the current layout continue those medieval and Renaissance traditions, or how does it complicate them? What happens when you add modern tourists to the mix?
- Think about how you can read the Milan Expo as a city in the manner in which Carlson describes. How is the Expo designed to control the flow of crowds, to create meaning, to emphasize or de-emphasize audience interaction with certain places, spaces, or events?

Performing Tourism:

Your options are legion, but consider the following:

- Note what parallels you see between your time in Florence and Edensor's argument. What happens when you apply some of his theories to this city?
- Analyze an aspect of the sunset activities at Piazzale Michelangelo.
- Tour groups/ the masses of humanity: Consider how these groups are part of Florence's performance of tourism.
 - How does the Piazza del Duomo read differently at dinnertime (when relatively few groups are out) vs. mid-morning and mid-afternoon? How does the city change in these times?
 - How do the mechanisms of tour groups impact the experience of Florence?
 - Consider the different devices that groups use (headphones, guide books, maps, umbrellas, giant stuffed flowers, etc.). How might those devices create different experiences of Florence?
- Watch one of the markets from a position where you can observe the flow of business. How can you read the market as a performance venue? What mechanisms are in place to enhance business transactions?
- Analyze the physical placements of the street musicians. How does a specific performance location create meaning through its frame – and how many frames are those musicians operating within?

Ritual Events & Festivals:

- Festa de Santa Reparata, 8th October. Florence. Consider how the parade portion of this event functions as either a ritual event, a festival, or a tourism event, using the relevant sources from our course readings to help you with your analysis.
- Grape Festival at Impruneta 27th September (<http://www.lafestadelluva.it/>). You have numerous options here, including an analysis of the parade carts.
- La Fiera di San Luca, Impruneta. The week of October 18th.
- Sagra del Tordo, Montalcino. Last weekend in October
- La Sagra del Tartufo Bianco, San Miniato. Last three weekends in November.
- Keep your eyes open for notices of various small festivals and feasts in area towns, too.

Sporting Events:

- Run for Life/ Corri la Vita. Florence. 27th September. <http://www.corrilavita.it/>
- Firenze Marathon 29th November. (Note: this event happens at the end of the semester, so your choice to write about it for one of your short papers will mean that your short paper will be due at the same time that you are working on your research paper. Balance your schedule.)
- Attend a football match at Stadio Artemio Franchi.
 - How do you know you are at a football stadium? What seem to be the expectations for audience participation and behavior?
 - Analyze how the event can be read as following a climactic plot structure using Freytag's Pyramid. How does the venue (physically or institutionally) emphasize this progression to enhance the audience's experience of the event?
- Consider the differences between events which occur within the city vs. events which occur in a place framed as a sporting arena. How do you know which you are in? How do those frames impact audience participation, athlete participation, and perhaps the outcome of the event? How does a space change based on its use?

Fiesole: Ancient Spaces, Modern Performances

- First, visit the ancient Roman theatre in Fiesole (and see the reference materials on iLearn.) Then, attend a modern event at the theatre or observe how the theatre is now operating as a site for tourism. Analyze the audience's interaction with the space and with history at this event. What happens when antiquity is overlaid with modernity? How is the venue using antiquity?

Other Places, Events, and Ideas.

- If a venue (stadium, museum, etc.) offers a behind-the-scenes tour, then go on the tour and consider the differences between public and private spaces at this venue. (See Gammon reading on iLearn, too)
- The Performance of Cooking/ Dinner Theatre: Attend a dinner and performance at Teatro del Sale. As with many of these events, your options are numerous. How is cooking turned into a performance at this venue? How is eating turned into a performance? How is community built through theatre and the sharing of food?
- Museo del Calcio (how is sports history performed by this museum?)
- Da Vinci Alive exhibit. <http://www.davincialive.it/>
- Milan Expo. You will have numerous options here. Pick one!
- Walking Tours abound. How does a walking tour change your experience of a part of the city? (Try walking the route before the tour or after it, too.)

For all events:

- Consider how an event is plotted according to Freytag's Pyramid and analyze how that structure might inform an audience's reception of the event. How might the event's organizers be using that structure to create an experience?
- How do commercial sponsors interact with the other messages that might be conveyed through the event?
- Do you see any political agenda to any part of the event performance? How is that being conveyed, and to what end?
- What are the messages the audience is supposed to take away from any particular event? How are the frames, audience involvement devices, and participants impacting those messages?
- Who is the target audience for an event? How do you know?
- Consider how organizers frame events. How do audiences experience those frames/ those events? What potential meanings are created by these intersections? What elements are beyond the control of the organizers (or the audience) and how do those impact reception?