

## OCL\_210 SUSTAINABLE ROME

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**Instructor:** Prof. Tom Rankin (M.Arch) thomas.rankin@gustolab.com

**Learning Facilitator:** Erica Cacopardo, courses@gustolab.com

**credits:** 3

**contact hours:** 45

**offered:** spring

**language of instruction:** English

**prerequisites:** none

**UIUC Articulation:** To be discussed with your UofIllinois Academic Advisor

*Open to all majors and minors for general elective credit. Recommended for students in Food Studies, Architecture, Environmental Studies, Italian Studies, Sustainable Food Systems.*

*In chemistry, in physics, in technology, we have laboratories. The laboratory is where you develop an experiment. and then you take the experiment to the breaking point so that through this failure. you learn about the subject. Well, we should do the same thing with those urban problems which are the most complex. the most demanding.*

—Paolo Soleri, The Urban Ideal

### Introduction

The course will examine Italian culture, past and present, through the perspective of environmental and cultural sustainability. After a general introduction to Italy and its regional traditions the course will examine contemporary issues of sustainability related to urban space, social equity, energy, mobility, waste, water and agriculture with lessons devoted to the success of the Mediterranean diet, food production, distribution, and consumption. As the course is taught on-site in Italy, it will inevitably introduce students to Italian vocabulary related to cultural and environmental sustainability.

The course looks at Rome as a laboratory for urban sustainability in an increasingly urban world; it is estimated that in the 21st century, cities will produce around 90% of world population growth, 80% of its wealth and 60% of energy consumption. In the urgent clamor to redesign urban environments we will look not only at technological solutions and “smart city” strategies but also traditional approaches to improving social, economic and environmental conditions. Adapting to an urban planet in the age of climate crisis will necessitate a critical awareness of social inequalities as a basis for socially responsible actions. Thus the course is both technical and ethical in scope.

We will look at new trends in urban agriculture, community gardens and activist movements such as “guerrilla gardening”, advanced integrated urban agriculture systems on the roofs and facades of buildings, and innovative projects for mini and macro food-scapes that can efficiently deliver high-quality products and help solve the problem of food security.

Among the topics addressed, we will investigate ways in which architecture and design of the built environment can contribute to, or impede, the preservation of cultural heritage.

The intended result is that students develop a rich understanding of the operational technologies of cities and a critical attitude towards the negative impact these technologies have on our environment and build an intellectual foundation for open-minded, ethical opinion forming.

Students will learn and use basic analytic techniques and terminology through readings, lectures, seminars and local site visits and apply these observations and interpretations in the creation of the required short video.

Keywords: community development, rethinking design for social housing, ethical urban design for social justice, transition towns, remaking of community identities, crossing conventions in localized food networks, changing faces of the eternal city, food culture, interior design and urban planning, architecture, etc.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- speak with authority on the relationship between environmental sustainability and urban culture
- show a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical roots of today's Italian culture
- understand how current environmental challenges have been addressed by past cultures such as Rome
- understand a variety of food cultures from different periods, regions, and gender roles that they would not normally be able to see.
- design solutions and develop ideas related to sustainable urbanism.
- find the extraordinary in the ordinary, to exalt everyday food, life and activities and to focus on the journey—not just the destination, to draw our attention to the whole process—not just the final product.

## Expectations

It is expected that students participate with their full attention and ask questions whenever something is unclear. Note-taking is a key component of the course and strategies for recording information will be addressed early on; students are expected to come prepared to take notes throughout the lessons.

In all activities in or outside the classroom students are expected to behave with maturity and respect for their classmates, professors, and the general public. When on-site, the group must stay close together.

All work must be completed on time following precise instructions regarding file-types and names.

Students should expect professional performance from instructors and staff.

## Attendance and Participation

Classroom attendance is a necessary part of the course. Students are allowed no more than 2 unexcused absences; after the 3rd absence the grade will decrease by 1/2 letter grade or 5% per absence.

Unexcused absences include injury and illnesses that do not require medical attention; therefore, while it is your choice to skip class to travel or spend time with a guest who is visiting, you may regret that choice if you later become ill and have already used up your allowed absences. If you experience prolonged illness or more than 3 days that will adversely affect your attendance, you will be asked to provide documentation of the illness, an absence letter from the Office of the Dean of Students, and a plan approved by the instructor for making up for the missed work.

As soon as you know you will not be attending a class for whatever reason you are responsible for informing both your Instructor and Learning Facilitator by text message.

This attendance policy is to be considered integral to the University of Illinois policies on class attendance as described in the [Student Code](#).

Participation is part of your grade in the course. To participate you must attend class having prepared the material for the day. All students are responsible for reading all materials assigned.

Punctuality is a requirement for the course; students are expected to come to class on time and remain for the full class period. Please calculate appropriate time for transportation depending on the meeting place. Eating is not allowed during classes, in churches, museums, galleries.

All cell phones or any other electronic devices must be absolutely turned off during classes unless arrangements have been made to use them to take notes. Photographs may only be taken to record relevant information only; selfies and touristic shots can be made outside of class time.

In case of remote participation, students are required to have access to a laptop/computer with audio capabilities and a functional webcam. Participants are required to have reliable access to internet/WiFi.

## Course Organization

The course is structured in **three phases**, accompanied by **on-site visits**, **lessons** and **activities**.

### Phase 1. Storie(s)

The course begins with three weeks dedicated to the complex history of the city of Rome and its people. In chronological order from its foundation to the present we will examine and question the traditional notions of rise and fall as we discuss the phases of Rome's evolution from antiquity through the middle ages to the Renaissance and up to the contemporary city. This phase will include quizzes to test students' understanding of the material.

### Phase 2. Rome as a Laboratory

In this phase we will begin to use Rome as a backdrop for investigations about how humans live in cities, and why? Why is urban living inherently more sustainable than life in rural settlements? What interconnected systems make urban living possible? Where do we get our water and food, and what happens to our waste?

To quote Carolyn Steel, whose book we will read from in this phase, "Food shapes cities, and through them, it molds us — along with the countryside that feeds us."

The first part of the course posits that we will examine the city of Rome with its rich history and traditions, its many problems and innovative solutions, as we discuss these themes:

- interconnected flows that fuel our cities: water, food, energy, people, etc.
- the role of the Tiber River and its port
- cultural and culinary traditions of Italy
- productive landscape
- food distribution, from farmer to consumer

You will be expected to discuss course readings and activities in class and prepare **short media posts**. You will also begin research for your "Urban Identities" presentations.

### Research Project and Other Activities

Having visited sites in the city connected to the production and distribution of water, food, and other essential resources (energy, information, health care, art, etc.) we will now look more carefully at specific places in the city as case-studies. Students will consciously document the places visited as a class and on independent explorations. Interviews with local residents and/or experts in urban design, placemaking, architecture, public space, or food systems will complement the visual material.

### Notes on on-site lessons

Apart from occasional in-class lectures most of the information in the course will be delivered on-site. These notes are to help students get the most out of the unique field learning experience:

- Stay close and stay alert. Ask questions.
- Take notes and maintain sketches from the lectures and the sites that we visit to draw from for your assignments.
- Students will be required to have all the needed material with them, including the right clothes for outdoor visits.

During the visits the students will need the following material/items:

- Map, meeting address and suggested bus route. Don't forget your monthly bus card
- Comfortable walking clothes and shoes
- Bottle of water
- Depending on the weather, umbrella and rain boots /sunscreen, hat, sunglasses
- When visiting church: no shorts or short skirts, no tank top
- Notebook with rigid cover, pen

During the onsite classes students will be provided with audio headsets. All students are responsible for the integrity and safety of their own headset and headphones.

### **A note on “Critical Field Studies”**

At the Borromini Institute we use ‘critical field studies’ to refer to courses where considerable time is spent observing and participating in activities in the ‘field.’ We recognize this as a distinct method of learning and one quite distinct from normal classroom activities. It requires students to be active learners, and to seek out learning opportunities often while working with or observing local people or specialists. Such opportunities are often explored with other members of the student group in research or ethnographic projects. Projects give students the opportunity to grasp the significance of behaviour occurring in a second culture and to situate it using the best available ideas in today’s academy.

In the same way, we encourage our students to always carry a notebook and to use it to take notes or draw sketches whenever confronted by unusual behavior. Increasingly students are taking advantage of digital ways to record and edit local culture. Indeed, it is not unusual for students to present digital portfolios at the end of courses as part of their assignments.

Our courses are ‘critical’ in the sense that we ask students to study the way the world “is” but also to think about or design how it “might be” or “should” be. This argument goes beyond a “value neutral” position and suggests that we have created ourselves – and our world -- in the Anthropocene era and bear responsibility for our collective future. It is, indeed, ‘our world’ and its future is in our hands.

### **Learning Facilitator**

Students may also reach out to the Learning Facilitator (Erica Cacopardo, [courses@gustolab.com](mailto:courses@gustolab.com)) to discuss general matters related to the course. The GLi Learning Facilitator is available to provide practical support as well as assist students should any misunderstandings emerge in relation to their academic courses. For instance, any needs related to learning accommodations, drop/add period, or attendance policy should be taken up directly with the GLi Learning Facilitator.

The GLi Learning Facilitator is not a Teaching Assistant and as such cannot provide personal assistance related to course content.

### **Assignments**

Specific assignment briefs will be given during the first week of the course; the description here is generic and subject to modification.

#### **15% Phase One Quizzes**

Throughout the course it is essential that students absorb the information given in the classes and readings; these quizzes given during each week from 2-4 will evaluate the degree to which this takes place in the first phase, reviewing Roman history. They will test factual knowledge of the readings, lectures, places visited through short answer and multiple choice questions.

## **20% Media Post Assignment**

To demonstrate their full attention and curiosity about the course material each week students will capture images and combine them with thoughtful captions. Starting in Week 3, each week (with the exception of break week) each student must choose ONE photograph and write a 40-50 word caption.

(The paragraph above is 50 words.)

Posts should represent sustainability-related urban situations uncovered during the course or during students' independent explorations. For example, a photo might demonstrate how food is consumed in the city, how people live that experience, the ways in which they acquire and prepare it, the company they keep, how they cook and eat, their preferences and practices which reveal a larger economic, social, cultural and political world. Other valid post topics are those that show the intersections of sustainability and ethnicity, gender and class, food hybridity, innovation and creativity, heritage and change, or juxtapositions of global and local..

Each post should have a reasonable and interesting caption/comment that explains it (related to information learned in class on through the readings).

**DEADLINES:** Posts must be submitted by email to [thomas.rankin@gustolab.com](mailto:thomas.rankin@gustolab.com) each week by Thursday at midnight, being sure to provide jpegs and caption text in the body of the email and the subject heading "WEEK 3 Sustainable Rome Posts Rankin, Thomas."

## **35% Research papers**

Students will be required to carry out research and analysis regarding one or more of the seven themes addressed by the course. Students will choose a specific focus applying the assigned theme (i.e. "urban fabric") to the geographic destination of a specific class site-visit (i.e. Piazza di Spagna), widening the research to cover comparable cases, historic transformation, and other relevant material on a case-by-case basis.

Work will be done in groups of 2-3 and graded individually. Grading will evaluate individual students' contributions to group efforts; students will not be penalized for non-performing team members. Research Topics must be submitted in Week 5, Outlines are due in Week 7; In each case material should be submitted by email to [thomas.rankin@gustolab.com](mailto:thomas.rankin@gustolab.com) by Thursday at midnight, with the subject heading "Sustainable Rome Research Topic\_Lastname,Lastname,Lastname" or "Sustainable Rome Outline\_Lastname,Lastname,Lastname". Final papers are due in Week 12 submitted as pdf by email with the subject heading and file title "Sustainable Rome Research Paper\_Lastname,Lastname,Lastname"

## **15% Presentations**

This work will first be presented as an on site student-led "work-in-progress" discussion (with handouts). These may be done on site or in the classroom as determined by the instructor and students together.

## **10% Video Interviews**

As part of the research students must interview Italian students or professors or residents regarding their topic. These short interviews will be recorded on video and audio and presented during the work in progress presentations.

## **5% Class Participation**

Students are required to attend all scheduled classes (as well as the design, filming, editing, studio project sessions). Informed and active participation in-class discussion is essential, and will be taken into account in the final course grade.

## **Grading Criteria**

The following general criteria will be used when grading all assignments:

1. Research: the degree to which the student demonstrates that the subject matter has been adequately investigated. Grades will be determined by the ability to demonstrate in the assignments that material

supports knowledge building by using empirical research –such as field observations–, theory, and practice wisdom.

2. **Conceptual Ability:** the ability to grasp abstract concepts, think logically and organize ideas into a conceptual whole. Grades will be determined on the basis of the student’s ability to move along a continuum from abstraction to concreteness, to deal systematically with material presented in class, in readings and in field observations.
3. **Communication:** the ability to organize and transmit ideas in written, graphic, and, when appropriate, oral form. Students should strive to use proper syntax; express ideas clearly, punctuate, spell and, where appropriate, employ symbolic and visual modes of communication.
4. **Analytical Thinking:** the ability to analyze, present and evaluate concepts.
5. **Timeliness and Completeness**

Final grades are reported at the end of each term in the following way:

100%	A+	Exceptional; significantly exceeds the highest expectations for undergraduate work
95%	A	Outstanding; meets the highest standards for the assignment or course
90%	A-	Excellent; meets very high standards for the assignment or course
85%	B+	Very good; meets high standards for the assignment or course
80%	B	Good; meets most of the standards for the assignment or course
75%	B-	More than adequate; shows some reasonable command of the material
70%	C+	Acceptable; meets basic standards for the assignment or course
65%	C	Acceptable; meets some of the basic standards for the assignment or course
60%	C-	Acceptable, while falling short of meeting basic standards in several ways
55%	D	Minimally acceptable; lowest passing grade
50%	F	Failing; very poor performance

## **Freedom of Speech**

Borromini Institute supports and upholds the protection of freedom of speech and the principle of academic freedom in order to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech as long as student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and conveyed in an appropriate manner.

## **Academic Integrity**

It is the responsibility of each student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions. The university [policy on academic integrity](#) should be consulted

Plagiarism is a serious academic violation and should be taken seriously. One is responsible for plagiarism when: the exact words of another writer are used without using quotation marks and indicating the source of the words; the words of another are summarized or paraphrased without giving the credit that is due; the ideas from another writer are borrowed without properly documenting their source. For more information on plagiarism policies see: <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-402/>

## **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

Per our policy, students with a documented disability are entitled to, and will receive, reasonable academic accommodations to ensure their ability to successfully participate in and complete this course.

According to University of Illinois policy, such students must "disclose disability-related condition(s) in a timely manner within the planning process to study abroad and initiate discussion or communicate needs to DRES, study abroad coordinator, and host institution—these offices will be unaware of any questions or concerns unless they are brought to their attention." Please make an appointment during office hours to

discuss any such disability with the instructor. Students are responsible for bringing to the instructor's attention any accommodation needs prior to or early in the term.

### COVID-19 health and safety requirements

Students are responsible for abiding by their university's and COVID-19 health and Borromini Institute's safety expectations. All students attending this class in-person are required to follow university policy regarding health, safety, and face coverings.

WEEK	Content	Tasks
WK 1	Lecture: Course <b>Introduction</b> <b>Historical background: ancient Rome</b>	Reading: Hibbert, C. <i>Rome: the Biography of a City</i> , ch. 2 p. 24-44. Reading: Claridge, A. <i>Oxford Archaeological Guides: Rome</i> . Upper Via Sacra, p 100-118
WK 2	Lecture: <b>Historical background: late antiquity and the middle ages</b>	Rome's <b>Ancient Mediterranean Port</b> ; Ostia Antica (excursion by train) Reading: Hibbert, C. <i>Rome: the Biography of a City</i> , ch. 4 p. 64-80 Circus Maximus <b>Farmers' Market</b> , San Gregorio, Appian Way by bike (farm visit) Quiz: Historical Background
WK 3	Lecture: <b>Historical background: the Renaissance and Baroque</b>	Walk: Vicus Caprarius and Trevi Fountain Reading: Hughes, <i>Rome</i> , p. 203-219 (note, beyond p. 219 is optional!) Quiz: Historical Background
WK 4	Lecture: <b>Historical background: modern Roma</b>	Walk: Botanical garden and American Academy Reading: Insolera, I. <i>Modern Rome</i> , p. 70-81. Quiz: Historical Background
WK 5	Lecture: Ecological Urbanism, intro to the 7 themes. Water/Waste	Walk: Testaccio neighborhood and market <b>Deadline: Research topic</b> Reading: Heiken <i>The Tiber Delta</i> , ch. 5. Reading: McDonough and Braungart, <i>Cradle to Cradle</i> , p. 45-67. Audio: The History of Wastefulness: Rubbish Through The Ages. BBC World Service <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3csy52s">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3csy52s</a>
WK 6	Lecture: Green Space, Neighborhood and daily life	Walk: Trionfale market with Chef Andrea Consoli Walk: San Saba and Garbatella Reading: Rosenthal, E. "In Rome, the Academy Learns to Cook" <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/15/fashion/15rome.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/15/fashion/15rome.html</a> Video: The <a href="#">Sustainable Food Program</a> at the American Academy in Rome Reading: Carolyn Steel, excerpt from <i>Hungry Cities</i> , "Supplying the City" Video: Carolyn Steel: How Food Shapes our Cities

WEEK	Content	Tasks
WK 7	Lecture: Mobility	Reading: Safdie, M. <i>The City After the Automobile</i> . p. 151-166. Workshop: Ecological Urbanism with Sapienza students <b>Deadline: Research outline</b>
WK 8	BREAK	
WK 9	Lecture: Energy	Walk: Esquiline & Pigneto Reading: Owen, D. <i>Green Metropolis</i> p. 1-10. Student Presentations
WK 10	Lecture: Community	Walk: Aqueduct Park Reading: Jacobs, Jane, <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i> , p. 3-25 Student Presentations
WK 11	Lecture: Smart Cities	Workshop: Research work session Reading: Ratti, C. <i>City of Tomorrow</i> , p. 1-8 Student Presentations Trip south prep
WK 12	Student Presentations	Workshop: Research work session Student Presentations Deadline: Research Papers Due
WK 13	Trip East Prep Lecture: Compact Cities	Reading: <a href="#">Borgo Abruzzo 2030</a> View: <a href="https://youtu.be/26rZURITjtQ">https://youtu.be/26rZURITjtQ</a>
WK 14	Earth Week Service Learning Activities	
WK 15	Final seminar and evaluations	

## Course Related Trips

Field Trips to Southern Italy and the countryside north of Rome (Tuscia) are included in the program with class activities specific to the course.

## Bibliography

The principal readings this semester are listed below and noted in the course calendar. A digital copy of all required readings will be provided in pdf format. An additional bibliography of suggested and recommended readings is provided below to assist students in their research. Some of these readings will be provided as digital downloads.

### Required

Steel, Carolyn, *Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives*. New York: Random UK, 2015.



Heiken, Grant, et. al. *The Seven Hills of Rome: a Geological Tour of the Eternal City*. Publisher: Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2005 (extract)

McDonough, William and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle*. New York, NY: Northpoint Press, 2002. (extract)

Christopher Hibbert. *Rome: the Biography of a City*. London: Penguin. 1985. (extract)

Robert Hughes, *Rome*. New York, Knopf. 2011. (extract)

Claridge, Amanda. *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*. New York: Oxford. 1998 (extract)

Jacobs, Jane. *Life and Death of the Great American City*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1961. (extract)

Insolera, Italo. *Modern Rome: From Napoleon to the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018. (extract)

David Owen, *Green Metropolis*, Riverhead Books, 2010. (extract)

Safdie, Moshe, *The City After the Automobile*, New York: Harper Collins, 1997. (extract)

## Recommended

Ponting, Clive. *A Green History of the World*. New York: W.W. Norton. 2005.

Rogers, Richard. *Cities for a Small Planet*. London: Faber and Faber, Ltd. 1997

Schumacher, E.F. *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973.

Hawken, Paul. *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*. Penguin Books. 2017

Denise Scott Brown, "The art in waste." talk given to Basurama, Madrid. c. 2001

Mumford, *The Human Prospect*, in *Interpretations and Forecasts 1922-1972*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World. 1979.

Rankin, Tom. *Rome Works: An Architect Explores the World's Most Resilient City*. Rome: Peruzzi Press, 2015.

Jones, Kay Bea "Rome's Uncertain Tiberscape: Tevereterno and the Urban Commons" in Rinne, K. ed. *The Waters of Rome* N. 6. Feb 2009.

Lynch, Kevin. "The Waste of Place" in *Places: Vol. 6: No. 2*. 1990.

Kunze, D. "The Big Architectural Adventure of Giambattista Vico." *Built Environment* (1978-), vol. 31, no. 1, 2005, pp. 49–59. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/23289499](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23289499).

de Rita, Donatella and Chrystina Häuber, "The smart city develops on geology: Comparing Rome and Naples", in *GSA Today*, <https://www.geosociety.org/gsatoday/archive/25/5/pdf/i1052-5173-25-5-4.pdf>, 2014. retrieved 12 June 2021.