



## SYLLABUS

**TUSCAN TRAVEL JOURNAL**  
**Instructor: Shelley Jordon**  
**Language of Instruction: English**  
**UO Credits: 4**  
**Contact Hours: 40**

**SIENA, ITALY**

*"The Journey is the destination" Artist Dan Eldon*

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

For centuries artists and writers have created sketchbooks and journals inspired by Italy's rich culture, physical beauty and history. Through direct observation and engagement with the natural landscape, architecture and culture of daily life of Tuscany and its surrounding regions, students will record their impressions and create personal travel journals that capture the "zeitgeist" (spirit) of Tuscany. We will explore a variety of writing, sketching, and mixed-media techniques, both traditional and experimental, to help students find their personal voice. Using Siena as our base, we will visit nearby hill towns and larger urban cities to provide inspiration and context for the *Tuscan Travel Journal*.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Each travel journal is a unique in record of what is distinctive about a place, how an individual responds to a place and how one expresses it. In this course students will become keen observers of the physical and social characteristics of Tuscany. The individual journals created in this course will serve as a personal form of creative expression, a unique record of their travel experience and an enriching educational experience.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY**

No prior drawing experience is necessary, but students will be challenged at their own levels, from beginner to advanced. We will review drawing techniques, including; perspective, line quality and value, and experiment with both traditional and innovative approaches to collage. Instruction will be given in on-site sketching techniques in a variety of media including; graphite, ink, wash (ink and watercolor), and colored pencil.

Writing assignments and exercises are designed to foster creative responses and develop writing skills. They will include; descriptive writing techniques, free-writing, interviews, personal reflections, and informal responses to readings.

The balance between the written and the visual responses in the journals will be determined by each individual's skills and interests; in some cases the journal will emphasize the written word while others will be primarily visual. In each case, the journals will function as complete synthesis of a visual and written response to the Tuscan experience in the form of a unique and personal travel journal.

## **METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)**

### **Students**

Your grade will be based on the quality and ambition of your term's work. Students will be required to keep a weekly journal with specific writing and sketching assignments based on readings and excursions. Active participation in exploration and discussion of personal engagement with the "zeitgeist" of Tuscany. A minimum of five to ten pages of journal entries each week. Each entry should be dated with location.

1-Response to readings and descriptive exercises	20%
2--The Journal	50%
3- Final Project	15%
4- Class Attendance and participation	15%

**-The travel journals will be collected on a regular basis and graded twice, once at mid-term and once at the end of the term.**

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

Each week you will write a one-page informal response to assigned readings and or topics. Disagree, discuss issues that confuse or inspire you. Let new ideas evolve as you write. Each week the journal will have a specific focus. Due beginning of each class on Tuesday (or Monday).

### **Assignment #1-Pre-departure Assignment**

The travel journal is a not the same as a diary, in the sense that it should not include personal details or activities that you don't want me or other people reading. Rather, it should focus on observations both inside and outside of yourself in drawn/painted and written form. In anticipation of the upcoming Tuscan experience, it is normal to have many thoughts and feelings, excitement, fears, anticipations, etc., so let's begin the practice of sketching and writing in your travel journal. (see handout)

### **Week 1**

**Introduction to Travel Journals, show examples of historical and contemporary versions.**

Introduce journal writing techniques, visual note-taking, recording and reflection.

Share pre-departure journal entries.

**Introduction to sketching techniques:**

Pencil, line and shading, compositional sketches and studies, ink line, ink washes

**Focus:** Stranger in a foreign land. First Impressions.

**Reading:** Introduction ,pp.xv-xviii, , Mathew Spender, pp 292-299.

**Drawing: The Campo**

**HW:** How does life in Siena compare with your life back home? What are the smells, tastes and sounds that distinguish the place? Think about things that are distinct to Italy rather than just different from your home.

List ten things that you notice that are distinctly different and describe them in written word and or sketches. Five –ten pages of entries.

**Week 2**

**Introduction to sketching techniques:** colored pencils and watercolor.

**Focus:** History and culture.

**Excursion:** The Contrada Museum

**Excursion:** The Cathedral

**Reading:** Eleanor Clarke pp 50- 59, John Mortimer, pp220-235, Michael Ondaatje pp 246-251, Tim Parks, pp. 252-259

**HW:** As you know Siena consists of 17 contradas (neighborhoods). How do those divisions inform the culture and geography of Siena? Walk around Siena and locate and draw on-site versions of each contrada. Reflect and respond to them. You have two weeks to complete this assignment.

**Week 3**

**Introduction to:** Collage and mixed media techniques.

**Focus:** Using ephemera to describe a place.

**Excursion:** Palazzo Publico

**Reading:** Harold Brodkey, pp 10-13, Mary McCarthy pp 208-212, Mary Morris 216-219, John Ruskin pp 260-265, Gore Vidal, pp 318-323.

**HW:** How do the public spaces of Siena inform Italian life? Spend a minimum of two hours drawing in The Campo. Do at least on large drawing and find a minimum of five architectural details.

**Week 4**

**Introduction to:** Contemporary artworks and installations.

**Focus:** Contrasts, Venice/Siena

**Excursion:** Venice Biennale

**Reading:** E.M. Forster, pp 98-111, Henry James, pp153-167, R.W.B. Lewis, pp 176-186,

**See handout.**

**Week 5**

**Introduction to:** Sketching the figure.

**Excursion;** Biccherne Museum

**Excursion:** Florence

**Focus:** Art and Culture

**See handout.**

**Midterm Grade of Journal.**

## **Week 6**

Café life. We will spend class time exploring cafes and other public and private spaces observing, reflecting, sketching and writing.

### **Excursion: Spedale of the Santa Maria della Scala**

**Reading:** Paul Hoffman, 142-152, Kate Simon, pp 280-285, Susan Sontag, pp 286-291

**HW:** Observe and reflect on how Italians interact. What do you notice that is different or distinctive about both public and personal interactions? How does this make you feel?

## **Week7**

Discuss final project. Continue journal.

**Reading:** Bernard Malamud, pp 187-207, Edith Wharton, pp 324-338

**HW:** Interior spaces. As the weather cools and we spend more time indoors. Reflect on how the architecture is different and how it defines family and cultural life.

## **Week 8**

Reflections on an ancient city and layers of civilization.

### **Excursions: Rome**

**Reading:** Ann Cornelisen, pp 60-68, Calvin Trillin, pp 300-308, William Murray, pp 236-245.

**HW: see handout.**

## **Week 9**

### **Excursions: Fisiocritici Museum**

Reflections on how your experiences living in Siena have changed your perspective and broadened your horizons. Work on final project.

## **Week 10**

Present Final Projects.

### **Recommended Advance Readings:**

Schiwy, Marlene, *A Voice of Her Own; Women and the Journal*

Abdelouahab, Farid, *Journeys and Journals*

Shapiro, Michael, *A Sense of Place*

Calvino, Italo, *The Italian Folk Tales* (New York, 1980)

Goethe, JW *The Italian Journey* (New York, 1982)

Morton, HV, *A Traveler In Italy*, (New York, 1964)

James, Henry. *The Italian Hours* (New York), 1909

Goethe, JW *The Italian Journey* (new York, 1982)

Truitt, Anne, *Daybook*, (New York, 1984)

Spender, Stephen. *The China Diary* (New York, 1976)

Eldon, Kathy. *The Journey is the Destination; Journals of Dan Eldon* (San Francisco, CA, 1997)

Robinson, Duncan. *Worldviews; Watercolor Diaries of Tony Foster* (Seattle, WA 2000)

Hoptman, Laura, *Drawing Now; Eight Propositions* (New York, 2002)