



# *Savonarola*

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*Kent State University 50<sup>th</sup> Summer Institute*

*Florence, Italy*

*6 July – 11 August, 2022*



## About: the subject

Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) may be Florence's most infamous resident. Born in Ferrara, he arrived as a Dominican assigned to teach at the Convent of San Marco. From humble and inauspicious beginnings, he came to dominate the city's religious, cultural, and political life – quickly becoming a significant figure on the stage of Kings, Emperors, and Popes.

Inspired by prophetic visions of Florence as a divinely ordained “new Jerusalem”, Savonarola led the city and its citizens in a descent into madness, culminating in the famous “Bonfires of the Vanities”. He was eventually hung and burned in the city, but even in death served as a messianic figure for Florentine citizens struggling to navigate a quickly changing political landscape during the early Italian Wars.

Scholars have discovered his influence exerting force well after his demise, inspiring on one account the entire Atlantic Republican tradition. It can even be seen at the root of contemporary American politics, for example in Ronald Reagan's “City on a Hill” speech.

## About: the course

We will explore late 15th-century Florentine life through the lens of Savonarola's biography to discover how the most important cultural center in Europe seemingly engaged in its own self-destruction, inspired by the ravings of a charismatic, populist leader.

Students will engage in live-action role-playing (LARPing), site visits, and the reading of significant historical sources on location to develop an understanding of the crucial role which experiences of a place have on our connection (or lack thereof) to the past. We will also consider what lessons Savonarola's life and influence might have for our societies today.

Classes will be held in the Renaissance-era *Palazzo Vettori* (pictured). Students will live in apartments in downtown Florence, with the city's charms waiting just outside the door.





## About: the instructor

Alan van den Arend is a Ph.D. candidate in History at Johns Hopkins. An engaging and highly accomplished teacher, he has been repeatedly recognized by students on the K-12 and undergraduate levels for life-changing learning experiences that creatively blend teaching methods and resources to “bring history alive”. He is passionate about introducing students to remains of the past that persist in and exert influence on the present.

Alan earned an AB in Classics at Cornell University (2010), an MA in Classics at the University of Kentucky (2017), and an MA in History at Johns Hopkins (2020). His dissertation, *Feeling Ancient: Pasts Present in the Quattrocento*, explores the ways in which sensations of, experiences with, and emotions about “contact” with antiquity influenced the intellectual and cultural worlds of Renaissance merchants, politicians, and scholars. In his spare time, he likes baking fresh breads and spending time with his wife and cat.

# The Perks:

## *Giulio Giannini & Figlio dal 1856*

On the second day of class, we will visit *Giulio Giannini & Figlio*. Family-owned and operated since 1856, the store specializes in traditional, Florentine hand-marbled papers and leather bookbinding services.

Students will study the importance of book production in Florentine while they learn to marble paper and construct a personalized course journal. The product will be their repository for assignments, reflections on the course, and musings about the experience of studying abroad for the summer. The book will be a souvenir of the living, laughing, and learning students achieved during their month in Florence.



# Immersive Study Experiences

Students will visit historical and cultural venues across the city to bring class readings face-to-face with relevant places and artifacts. Highlights include:

- Palazzo Vecchio
- Basilica di San Marco
- Cattedrale Santa Maria del Fiore
- Galleria degli Uffizi
- Piazza della Signoria
- Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana
- Piazza Girolamo Savonarola



# Fringe benefits

- No work outside of scheduled classes
- Live in Florence, explore Italy/Europe
- Learn/study in a Renaissance palace
- Events with VIPs & visiting dignitaries
- Classmates from around the world
- Optional trips to Siena, Rome or Venice

## Other courses in:

Airport Management, Art History, Business, Cinema, Classics, Communications, Criminal Justice, Design Innovation, Economics, Engineering, Geography/Geology, History, LGBTQ+ Studies, Marketing, Music, Political Science, Psychology



## More Info. or Registration

For more information about my course in Florence, including on how to register and enroll, please contact me via e-mail at:

[alan.vandenarend@jhu.edu](mailto:alan.vandenarend@jhu.edu)

OR visit the KSU Summer Institute Website at:

<https://www.kent.edu/globaleducation/kent-state-florence-summer-institute>