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The American  
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**Stony Brook University** and **The American University of Florence (AUF)** are pleased to announce their 15th Annual Conference, taking place in Florence on **Friday, December 4, 2026.**

The title of the international conference:

## **Florence and Water:**

### **The Flood, the City, and Six Decades of Urban Transformation**

Sixty years ago, on November 4th, 1966, Florence was struck by the devastating flood of the Arno, the most recent in a long history of inundations, yet one that left an unprecedented mark on the city's identity. Images circulated worldwide revealed an unfamiliar Florence, its most intimate spaces and priceless cultural heritage violated by water and mud. At the same time, the disaster triggered an extraordinary international response. Local residents, students, and volunteers from across the globe, the "Mud Angels" or "angeli del fango," joined in a collective effort of rescue and recovery. This mobilization also involved the nascent community of study-abroad programs in the city, demonstrating Florence's internationalist spirit and the profound bond between the city and the global academic community.

The 1966 flood became a turning point, reshaping global awareness of Florence's cultural significance and contributing to its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985. Six decades later, this conference invites scholars to use the 1966 event as a catalyst for a broader investigation into how water has shaped the urban, sociological, and artistic fabric of historic cities across the globe.

As climate concerns intensify, the lessons of 1966 inform new strategies for urban planning, design, and environmental resilience. This conference intends to explore the flood's enduring legacy and the evolving challenges it continues to pose to a dynamic, ever-changing urban landscape. We invite interdisciplinary contributions that address these themes across various cities and disciplines.

**We invite interdisciplinary contributions that address these themes. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:**

- **Urban Planning:** Using the 1966 flood as a lens to examine how river-cities worldwide reshape hydraulic engineering, safety protocols, and modern urban planning.
- **Sociological Implications and Collective Action:** In the spirit of Mud Angels, we encourage an examination of the 1966 mobilization as a precursor to modern global volunteerism and the role of civil society in international disaster response.

**AUF | The American University of Florence Fondazione di Partecipazione - ETS**

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- **Artistic Production and Re-production:** The influence of the flood on restoration science, the visual representation of the event in media, and art created in response to the catastrophe.
- **The Role of International Education:** The historical and current impact of study abroad communities and international academic hubs on the civic life and cultural stewardship of global heritage centers.
- **Climate Change and Future Trajectories:** Addressing sustainable design, flood prevention strategies, and urban adaptation in the 21st century.
- **Memory and Media:** How photography, film, and digital archives have shaped the collective memory of the 1966 inundation.
- **Heritage and UNESCO:** Navigating the path from catastrophe to protected status and the challenges of managing UNESCO cities in the face of environmental and demographic shifts.
- **Myth, Ritual, and Folklore:** Rivers in civic imagination, including legends, popular traditions, and historical rituals that define the symbiotic relationship between cities and their rivers.
- **Tourism and Recreation:** The river as a contested space between tradition, tourism, and recreation; examining the sustainable use of urban waterfronts and the global phenomenon of over-tourism in historic river-cities.

### Abstract Submission

Please submit a one-page abstract (not exceeding 300 words) and a brief curriculum vitae in English to [conferences@auf-florence.org](mailto:conferences@auf-florence.org) no later than **Friday, August 28, 2026**.

All proposals will be reviewed by the Conference Committee, and selected candidates will be notified by **Monday, September 14, 2026**. Conference presentations must be conducted in English and should not exceed 20 minutes. Selected papers will be published in an online volume of the conference proceedings.

### Conference Venue

The American University of Florence, Corso dei Tintori, 21, Florence, Italy 50122