In 2018 an estimated thirty million people visited Venice. While New York City gets about twice as many annual visitors, Venice has a stable population of only 55,000 inhabitants and occupies an area smaller than Central Park. Venice is also, famously, a city built on water in the middle of a tidal lagoon. Its small size and unusual site render Venice exceptionally vulnerable to the more pernicious effects of modern mass tourism, including over-crowding, pollution, and an economy increasingly reliant on a single source of revenue. Indeed, for Venetians it has become commonplace to describe the situation as both a social and environmental crisis. Venice, locals often say, is drowning in tourists and under rising sea levels. But in many ways this situation is not new. Venice has always been overrun with outsiders, whether medieval pilgrims, crusaders, and merchants; eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cosmopolitan elites on the so-called Grand Tour; or twentieth- and twenty-first century mass tourists arriving by train, plane, and cruise ship. This seminar will explore the longer history of Venice as a travel destination through documents, literature, and film. In so doing we will consider how Venice has been shaped by its history as a travel destination; how representations of the city affect people’s desire to visit it and their perceptions of the challenges it faces; and how the city’s current tourism-driven economy, when combined with rising sea levels, threatens the city’s very existence.