

INSIGHTS

A look inside innovative programming with ACCENT



PARIS • FLORENCE • LONDON • MADRID • ROME • ISTANBUL



First Edition: ACCENT Launches New Newsletter

We are pleased to publish the first ACCENT *Insights* newsletter, highlighting some of the many engaging and innovative events that have taken place over the last year in our Study Centers. Each newsletter will feature two of our six Study Centers and the unique resources that they offer to facilitate both academic and cultural engagement. This inaugural newsletter will focus on our Paris and Rome Study Centers.

ACCENT is proud to have made a name for itself over the last twenty years as a leader in custom study abroad programs, collaborating with more than 50 U.S. colleges and universities to develop exciting and experiential academic programs abroad. We believe that each program should be designed to take full advantage of the rich resources of its distinct location. Our goal is to send students back to the U.S. with an appreciation for the cultural and historical complexities of our cities, enabling them to better tackle the challenges of today.

A Conversation with Novelist Amara Lakhous in Rome

Three courses from three different disciplines with the University of California, the University of Minnesota and Kenyon College came together during the fall semester in Rome for a lecture and discussion with Amara Lakhous, author of *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio*. Lakhous, who emigrated from Algeria to Italy in 1995, uses the popular Italian *giallo* genre (murder mystery) to tell the story of the Rome's immigrant community in Piazza Vittorio. In his novel, and in conversation with the students, Lakhous explored themes of identity, cultural conflict, and linguistic citizenship.

The novel investigates the contradiction presented when groups of people share an intimate space—an elevator, building, neighborhood, city or country—with people of diverse cultures, while remaining isolated

from each other and ignorant of each other's culture and condition.

The protagonist's experience in the novel represents Lakhous' own experience gaining fluency in Italian as an immigrant in Rome, a concept that he terms "linguistic citizenship" and described to the students as essential to both defend yourself in a new country and to establish meaningful relationships. His works are critical of the Italian reality for its many immigrant communities, but in person he describes the day of his arrival to Italy as his second birthday and the Italian language as his second mother tongue.

After his presentation, Lakhous fielded questions about his writing process and his experience as an immigrant in Italy. He described his challenges in translating *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio* and explained that he simultaneously wrote his most recent novel in both Italian and Arabic, creating two original language versions of the same novel.



When asked to give advice to the newly arrived students, Amara made the following relevant points for students beginning their semester abroad:

- 1) Without asking others we cannot have the answers;
- 2) Be modest, in both your learning and in understanding this new culture;
- 3) Engage—not only with the place, but also with the people;
- 4) Be courageous—take chances and admit your mistakes.

GlobalNews

- ACCENT, in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, opened its new Istanbul Study Center this month. Istanbul is a thriving and dynamic metropolis and the ideal city to base studies across disciplines, from religion to sustainability, design to politics. Complete information online at www.accentintl.com/cities/istanbul.
- At the end of the month, ACCENT London will move to a new, independent Study Center in Bedford Square. Occupying a beautifully restored, Georgian building, the new London Study Center will be just steps away from the British Museum, the British Library and the University of London Student Union.
- The ACCENT Madrid Study Center will be co-hosting a symposium titled, "Comparing and Contrasting Civil Responses in Times of Crisis: Lessons from The Arab Spring, Madrid's 15-M Movement & Occupy Wall Street." The symposium will take place on Wednesday, April 24th at 7:30pm at the Instituto Internacional, Calle Miguel Angel 8. For more information, email: madrid@accentintl.com.

Faculty Focus: Academics on the Move, LGBT Paris

by Linda Levine and David Buseck, San Jose State University

We believe that the best way for students to learn about Paris and the mix of cultures that make it vibrant is to use the city as the classroom. In 2012, we turned to ACCENT to help us identify many guest speakers who could teach while walking, and they were essential elements to making our first “Paris: City of Cultures” program out of San Jose State University a huge success. One example was the tour given by Will Bishop on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) life in Paris. Much to our surprise, Will started with a history of Jews in the Marais since this vibrant district hosts an unlikely pairing of Orthodox Jews with the gay community. He drew parallels between the challenges of these two minority groups, and in the process also set the stage for the walking guest lecture on Jewish Paris by Christina von Koehler, another ACCENT connection, a few days later. In a fast-paced 90 minutes, Will traced the origins of gay life in Paris and showed us some of the vibrant bars and shops that cater to this community. He took us to historical locations that played roles in the evolution of the district, from gay bars that acted as community centers to agencies that advocate for health and other issues that are pertinent to the community. Along the way he honestly addressed some of the conflicts, both within the community and with their neighbors. Will was also able to introduce us to some of the sub-cultures, such as a club that is focused on preserving the tradition of drag queens. Finally, this experience prepared our class for the gay pride parade the following week, where many groups marched for marriage and parental rights, and other equality issues in France.



SJSU's “Paris: City of Cultures” program explores Paris through a series of neighborhood visits and on-site lectures, studying the city's cultural groups and social systems through the lens of diversity and equality.

ACCENT on INTERNSHIPS

GE Healthcare Worldwide, Paris

An internship abroad can make the difference when interviewing for a full-time position after graduation. Teddy Altepeter from Washington University in Saint Louis learned just that after his internship with General Electric Healthcare in the suburbs of Paris. GE is currently working on a series of projects oriented toward cancer prevention in emerging markets in Africa and the Middle East, including the concept of a unique center for breast cancer patients, where all services from testing to treatment are provided within a single structure.

As part of the GE team, Teddy was tasked with developing an iPad application for an international seminar in Barcelona and also took responsibility for preparing a new version of GE's European oncology website. He led meetings with product managers to present GE's new approach, negotiating the budget for the iPad application with a partner company in the UK and learned about the legal complexities of producing written content for professional use.

As a student of Healthcare Management, Teddy feels this experience will be invaluable to his career. In his own words: “Every company I interviewed with this past fall was



thoroughly interested in my experience with GE. During my time there, I was constantly learning and absorbing as much information as I could, something that has played an integral role in both my professional development and acceptance of a full-time position in the healthcare industry.”

The American Academy of Rome

Internships provide not only hands-on training, but also allow students to develop relationships with mentors in their field. These relationships provide valuable perspective to undergraduates, who are often unaware of the full breadth of professional options available after graduation. Ellie Ziaie, currently in her final year of a Bachelor of Science in Architecture at the University of Minnesota, was exposed to the world of academia within architecture during her internship at the American Academy of Rome. It was here where she, “realized that there are opportunities in other countries and other branches of architecture, apart from ‘licensed architect’ work in architectural firms.”

Ellie and another classmate worked alongside two visiting scholars at the American

Academy of Rome, collaborating on a submission to a competition in Seattle. She assisted scholars in their research, eventually diagramming and creating data visuals that were included in the submission. Later in the semester Ellie worked with the team to build the physical model of the project, learning new computer software to extract the dimensions from the digital model and translate them to the physical model. Finally, she wrapped up the semester with a series of data collection projects, taking measurements of church interiors around Rome and creating digital models for further exploration.

While she had already completed an internship in Minnesota with an architectural firm, the experience in Rome was Ellie's first exposure to architecture in academia. She valued the relationship built with her mentors, both professors of architecture in the U.S. She reflects, “My mentors were great sources of knowledge about graduate programs, both having graduate degrees from recognized universities and having graduate-level



teaching experience as well. They made me aware of the value of working and interning between undergraduate and masters degrees. I now realize that it is in my own hands to guide my career the way I desire.”



Abandoned Asylum in Monza and Brianza, Italy

Kenyon College 2012 Resident Director, Dr. Irene Lopez, taught two courses: "Cross Cultural Psychology" and "Abnormal Psychology."

Faculty Focus: Investigating Italy's Modern Mental Health Movement

by Irene López, PhD

In 1978, Italy passed *Legge 180* (Law 180), which initiated the most radical mental health reform in all of Europe. Spearheaded by noted Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia, *Legge 180* effectively banned all asylums and compulsory mental health admissions, and dramatically changed the treatment and lives of the mentally ill in Italy. With the help of ACCENT, the Kenyon in Rome psychology program made a number of site visits to former "insane asylums" throughout Italy to discuss the destruction of the mental hospital. One of our most notable visits was to the Centro di Franco Basaglia, a small non-profit institution in Arezzo dedicated toward promoting the emancipatory vision of mental health care first envisioned by Basaglia. As part of our site visit we met with a number of original members of this mental health movement, including the President of the Association Dr. Bruno Benigni, who explained the pivotal role that Arezzo played in the realization of *Legge 180*. Students were given unprecedented access to the original stakeholders of this movement who detailed how the province of Arezzo decided to, in Benigni's words, "set the mentally ill free" in order to best ensure their treatment. This site visit also allowed us to discuss what Carla Yanni describes as the "architecture of madness" which details how our theories regarding the mentally ill affect the spaces we create for treatment. In short, students learned that, contrary to standard practice in the U.S., coercion and confinement are not always necessary for the treatment of the severely mentally ill. Instead, societies can decide, through sheer will and community cooperation, that the mentally ill can be best treated when freedom is given to all.

Multiculturalism in Paris' Goutte d'Or

Nearly twenty percent of Paris' residents are not of French origin, making it one of the most multicultural cities of the world today. There is no better illustration than in the Goutte d'Or neighborhood, where residents of African and Arab origin bring a different flavor to this central Paris district.

Students taking the "France and Islam" course taught by local faculty, Dr. Mariam Habibi, tour Goutte D'Or in order to break down the preconceived ideas they might have about the Muslim community in France and to demonstrate that different cultures can live together easily in spite of what political debates might suggest. The visit takes students to a part of Paris they would unlikely discover alone, and past participants have commented that they "felt like they were in a different country" and that their experience was a "great eye-opener." Until the ban in 2011, students were able to observe Muslim



street prayers on Fridays and always found this to be a serene and peaceful event, worlds apart from the violent controversy often associated with Islam in France and portrayed in global media.

Encounters with the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See in Rome

During the fall semester, students from the University of Minnesota met with Philip Assis, Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See. On a Thursday morning at the embassy, Assis talked to the students about his unique position as a diplomat and press officer to the Vatican, along with his role within the wider Italian context.

The students of Seán Patrick Lovett's "Italian Communications: Popes, Politicians and Popular Culture" course regularly analyzed the Italian media environment in the classroom, comparing headlines in local and international publications and debating the effectiveness of Vatican communications content and channels. They took advantage of the opportunity at the Embassy to ask Assis about his personal career development, his role within the Embassy, and his relationship with the press. The visit to the Embassy gave the students valuable insight into diplomatic life in Rome and also helped them to understand, from an American perspective, the role of media and the press at the Vatican.



Later in the semester, ACCENT invited Mario Mesquita, Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy, to give an address at the University of California Education Abroad Program's 50th Anniversary celebration. Himself an alumnus of UC Davis, Chargé d'Affaires Mesquita spoke on the value of international education in his life. In his address he did not refer to study abroad as the source of his international education, but rather to his years working in Colombia, Poland and now Italy as a diplomat. He reminded the students that education does not end, but rather begins after graduation, and that each interaction with a new culture is an opportunity to further reflect on your beliefs, assumptions and culture.

The ACCENT Rome Study Center was pleased to provide these two unique experiences to the students last fall and looks forward to a continued relationship with the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See.

Paris Students Take to the Streets to Explore Child Development

Students often arrive in Paris with a long checklist: the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Eiffel Tower and Champs-Élysées, to name a few. Portrayals of the City of Light are omnipresent in popular culture, and images of these well-known sites abound in film: it's only natural that they be top priorities for newly arrived American students in Paris. While these most popular sites offer many lessons to students, they do not scratch the surface of the local resources available in Paris. Recently, a group of students from the University of Delaware, studying child development in Paris, dug into some of the capital's lesser-known riches.

During their Paris program, ACCENT was able to connect the University of Delaware students with various local organizations, all providing fascinating insights and both a French and a European perspective on child development. Paris City Hall provided the first of these experiences, where the development team presented their work on reducing inequalities in a deprived area of the 11th arrondissement. Students learned how housing, health and education issues connect and how local residents are encouraged to participate in community projects that aim to improve their situation. The group then visited a local kindergarten and met with the leader of a Franco-Chinese association who explained the linguistic and cultural



difficulties faced by the school's large number of pupils from immigrant Chinese families. Next, the group toured a new toy-lending library that aims to bring the members of the different communities together by providing a space where children can interact. ACCENT also organized a visit to Parrains par Mille, an association that pairs children in need with adults who act as godparents, providing them with opportunities their own families feel unable to provide, either in terms of educational and cultural activities or quality time.

These diverse learning experiences were a valuable addition to the academic coursework, pairing practical application to the theory learned in the classroom, and encouraging the students to explore the city and engage with practitioners in their field of study.

Luxury is Business as Usual at Louis Vuitton

What better place than Paris for an insider's view of the luxury goods industry? Purdue University's annual group of MBA students would certainly agree. This program regularly includes a visit to the Louis Vuitton workshop in Asnières-sur-Seine. The workshop is dedicated to special orders for wealthy clients, which can include anything from a custom-made iPad case to a satchel for an English lord's rubber duck—quality leather goods worth tens of thousands of euro. Together with the Louis Vuitton team, students observe artisans at work and see how different kinds of leather and fabric are turned into beautiful, high quality products for the luxury market. The workshop has been in operation since the 19th century and its goods are still hand made and built to last: something which is perhaps surprising for a firm with such a global reach, but typical of French quality.

Together with the LV team, the students explore topics such as the effect of recession on the luxury goods market, legal issues associated with patents and licensing in a market saturated with counterfeits, and LV's corporate strategy. In the setting of the luxury leather workshop, the group learns the history of the brand and how it developed into the giant it is today, critically analyzing the challenges and opportunities in the global luxury goods market today.

Facilitating Local Connections for Rome Students

The University of California in Rome has a long-standing relationship with the University of Rome La Sapienza, where UC Academic Director, Julia L. Hairston, worked as a foreign lecturer for twelve years. UC Rome students have many opportunities to engage with local Sapienza students: language tandems included in the Italian curriculum; conversation groups with Sapienza interns at the Study Center; and by teaching their own English classes at the Sapienza campus.

In addition to these elements of the UC academic program, the ACCENT Rome Study Center has a strengthening relationship with the American Literature department at La Sapienza as well as Tor Vergata, Rome's second-largest university. Students from these universities can complete their required extracurricular hours by participating in ACCENT language exchanges, film evenings and a book club. The ACCENT Rome team advertises all of the Study Center's cultural events at La Sapienza and the students regularly attend, opening the door for both linguistic and cultural exchange—a valuable opportunity for American students in Rome.

Look for ACCENT's Next Newsletter in July

The second edition of the newsletter will highlight custom programming in Madrid and Istanbul, where we will have just completed our first semester at the new Study Center.

The next and future newsletters will share insights on...

- Custom programming • Innovative courses
- Engaging site visits • Enhanced faculty-led programs
- Workshops with local experts • Excursions and study tours
- Exemplary local faculty • Student internships

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