

INSIGHTS

A look inside innovative programming with ACCENT



PARIS • FLORENCE • LONDON • MADRID • ROME • ISTANBUL



Innovative Programming Across Multiple Cities

This issue of *Insights* discusses two cities that are commonly included in dual-city programs. Florence is often paired with Rome, providing a multilayered representation of Italian society through the ages. Florence – Rome programs have studied business, art history, and the history of science. Since the launch of the Istanbul Study Center, a number of programs have linked the megacity with other ACCENT cities, such as: Paris (studying secularism, multiculturalism), Rome (religion, history, design), and London (sustainability, sociology).

In nearly 25 years of operations, ACCENT has developed a number of unique program models. For US college and university partners considering multi-city programming, ACCENT can advise on program structure, timing, curriculum development, and recruiting. These programs expand comparative study beyond the “home v. host” paradigm to add another distinct European reality, reflecting the true diversity of a multifaceted and contemporary Europe.

Farming Against the Mafia

Students coming to Florence may expect that their *History of Food and Culture* course will discuss the Slow Food movement, but they are often surprised to learn the role of politics in food production and how, in Italy, certain products are being used as resistance against one of Italy’s most infamous social problems, the mafia. This spring, Professor Peter Fischer accompanied University of California students to the headquarters of ARCI (Italian Association of Recreation and Culture), where they learned about a project in Sicily that has operated in collaboration with an organization known as Libera Terra (Free Land) since the mid-1990s.

Recently identified in *The Global Journal* as one of the top 100 NGOs in the world, Libera Terra takes land that was confiscated by the state from property owners affiliated with the mafia and uses it to harvest crops. They then package, distribute, and sell the

goods grown on the land, even using some of the materials to produce traditional artisan products. All of this is done in a way that is socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable, providing a model of legal employment that is closely tied to the cultural heritage of the community and its land. The proceeds are used to fund anti-mafia and anti-corruption initiatives.

The visit focused on a project led by young volunteer farmers who banded together to help the community of Corleone, a village in Sicily. As local residents who refuse to be complacent with mafia activity are often oppressed, the volunteers showed their support by temporarily relocating to the affected town in order to lend a hand in all aspects of food production, even to repair equipment when local mechanics refused to be involved. The project has continued for nearly twenty years and UC students had the opportunity to meet a group of college-aged volunteers who worked in Corleone just months prior.

After speaking with our students about their experiences, the ARCI and Libera Terra volunteers offered a *degustazione*, or tasting, of the breads, olives, wines and jams that they produced in Corleone. While sharing these delicacies, students reflected on how important it is to know where your food comes from, which after all, is the true aim of the Slow Food movement.

An expanded account of the visit with ARCI – Libera Terra was recently posted on the ACCENT Blog (accentblogs.com).



GlobalNews

- Last month, ASU students in London explored Greenwich in a walking lecture titled, “Tall Ships and Tropical Diseases.” Medical historian Dr. Richard Barnett, a lecturer at the universities of Cambridge and London, led the walk. Barnett was awarded one of the first Wellcome Trust Engagement Fellowships in 2011 and is the editor of the Sick City Project.
- Queens University of Charlotte students are exploring Spain’s complex relationship with Latin America and will visit APLA, an NGO providing job training, legal services, and psychological support to immigrants in Madrid.
- The UCEAP summer program in Paris is piloting a new course, *Taste of Paris: the Anthropology of Food*. Prof. Vincent Bloch, a research fellow at the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, has taught sociology and anthropology courses throughout France, the US, and Latin America.
- Rona Commins collaborated with ACCENT on thirty-two programs while teaching in the Sacramento State University Music Department. This fall, she will publish a book based on her experiences in Florence, *Forever Florence: True Tales of Italian Intrigue*.

Lecture: Transforming the Existing

On May 6, ACCENT Istanbul hosted the first lecture in the Forum Lecture Series. This regular series will be comprised of three lectures each year and is organized in collaboration with Mark and Nedret Butler, Turkey-based alumni of the University of Minnesota.

The lecture, entitled “Host: Interpretations of Transforming the Existing”, featured Michael Gordon and Jamuna Golden, both architect-designers based in Minneapolis and alumni of the University of Minnesota. While in Istanbul, Mike and Jamuna led workshops with both undergraduate and graduate groups of architecture and landscape design students. Their lecture addressed the challenge of incorporating new design into an existing “host” environment. Michael and Jamuna analyzed seven different sites from around the world where the existing and the new engage with one another in an intriguing manner, each reflecting different factors such as scale, program, and purpose.

Istanbul was an especially appropriate setting for this lecture, as a city where architectural interventions are constantly challenged to fit in the city’s complex and multi-layered historic context, while reflecting the city’s many dichotomies: religious/secular, traditional/modern, East/West. Students applied these theories in the final presentation of their design projects, exploring the relationship between new and existing in planned developments along the Bosphorus.

Intercultural Learning in Istanbul

by Gülrü Göker, PhD - Istanbul Faculty

During the spring semester, I taught my first group of students on the University of Minnesota semester program in Istanbul. In the course, *Intercultural Engagement – Creating a Culture of Respect*, students were asked to reflect on their cultural identities in the process of noticing, observing, understanding, and respecting various elements that make up Turkey’s complex and multifaceted cultural identities. The class met every Friday to talk about the students’ week – their personal encounters, difficulties, observations, group dynamics, and other coursework - and aimed to integrate their academic learning experience with a simultaneous individual and group learning process of self/cultural awareness.

A reflection on leadership proved interesting for the students, as they investigated their own leadership style, its transformation over the course of the semester, and the impact of Turkish and American cultures on these changes. Individual reflection on

leadership was coupled with an understanding of social movements and effective citizenship in Turkey. Visits to several NGOs and community organizations, together with guest lectures with activists and academics, allowed students to contemplate the forms of social movements, leadership, and diversity, as well as the plurality of cultural identities in Istanbul. For many students, a highlight of the course was a screening of *In Transit*, an award-winning documentary about migrant communities in Istanbul. The documentary’s Director, Berke Bas, visited the Study Center for a lively discussion with the students.

As the semester unfolded, the course prepared students to reflect more critically on their multiple, sometimes conflicting identities, using this self-reflection as a platform to understand the similarities and differences between their home and host cultures. Students enjoyed their time in Istanbul immensely and it was clear by the end of the semester that the city had begun to feel more like home.



ACCENT *on* INTERNSHIPS

Misericordia Psychology Lab in Florence

Psychology is the top major at UC Santa Cruz, and selection for research opportunities are highly competitive. Though student Michelle Mecca gained clinical experience in Santa Cruz working with youth advocacy, suicide prevention, and domestic violence projects at the Walnut Avenue Women’s Center, it was her year in Florence that provided her first research experience as an intern in the psychology department of Misericordia, a health service NGO founded in the 13th century.

During the 2013-14 academic year, Michelle was part of a team researching intellectual disabilities. Her principle task was to translate

research findings from Italian to English, working directly with the researchers to ensure that the translation accurately conveyed the team’s conclusions. As her internship developed, Michelle was able to use her academic background and clinical experience to engage more substantively with the project and its leaders: “It was not just translating, but a dialogue about the research process and findings. I found it extremely interesting.” Michelle worked closely with a study of autism and found the work to be a valuable lens through which to explore differences in the field between Italy and the US – in this case, the diagnosis and treatment of autism.

Michelle’s experience was greatly influenced by her internship mentor, Daniela Scuticchio, who pushed and guided her to write her own article for publication. Daniela’s mentorship extended beyond research to Italian language and culture, spending time with Michelle to explain linguistic nuances and current

events. “I’ve learned so much more about Italian culture and language through my experience working with her,” says Michelle, “I feel really close to her and she seems to really want to help me pursue my own career in the field.”

Reflecting upon the beginning of her internship, Michelle says: “When I approached ACCENT about psychology internships I didn’t expect much, but I showed up on my first day and was completely surprised. It was exactly what I had been missing from my college experience.” Her resume now includes an experience as a research assistant in a foreign context.

Back in the US and finished with her degree, Michelle is considering further experience with psychology and international women’s issues through the Peace Corps or World Teach. She would ultimately like to pursue a PhD and continue to research.

Orientation to Italian Design

ACCENT orientations cover important information regarding health and safety, housing, and the academic structure of the program. Beyond logistics, these first days also serve to orient students to the study of the host city and culture, setting in place cultural and historical frameworks with which to approach coursework. This will be the case for students from Texas Christian University, who, just days after arriving to Florence in Spring 2015, will walk into the workshops of local artisans and experience firsthand the complexity of the country's history and tradition.

This experiential, workshop-based model will teach students to engage design as a natural, yet innovative extension of craft, culture, and identity. Design in Italy is an intrinsic element of cultural identity; an identity that is regional, based on traditions and quality local materials, and characterized by innovation. As they orient themselves to Florence, students will examine the historical layers of the city as represented by local designers, artisans, and craftsmen.

After a discussion of the history and principles of Italian design, Professor Patricia Silva will lead the students out of the classroom and into the Oltrarno neighborhood to the workshops of local *artigiani*. The students will visit a silversmith, jeweler, framer, and cobbler, before joining a local papermaker and bookbinder to create a book that will serve as a portfolio for the semester.



The goal of the experience is to inspire a curiosity and thoughtfulness in the history and production of Made in Italy products that will inform the group's semester studies in subjects from art to business to sociology.

Comparative Perspectives in Social Work

In May, ACCENT Istanbul hosted a group of graduate students from the University of Minnesota School of Social Work. The group visited several leading NGOs, universities, and rehabilitation centers to study the policies and practices of social work in Turkey.

During an excursion to Ankara, the group spent a day with faculty and graduate students at the Hacettepe University Department of Social Work. In a series of lectures and workshops, the groups compared training for social workers in Turkey and America. While at Hacettepe, the Minnesota faculty delivered a lecture on motivational interviewing, a counseling technique developed by American psychologists. Later, the Minnesota students had a chance to present on various subfields within the US context of social work.

After a productive morning with their Turkish peers, the group proceeded to visit two private organizations: a nursing home and a child group home. Students received a tour of both facilities before meeting with social workers to discuss daily routines, institutional policies, finance, and operations.

Finally, the group ended their day in a meeting with social workers and law students from Ankara University School of Law, exchanging ideas on trends, challenges, and developments regarding domestic violence in the two countries. The groups spent much of their meeting debating the relative effectiveness of Turkish and US legal systems and advocacy work in protecting victims of domestic violence.

Opportunities to exchange ideas with local peer groups are often the highlight of a program abroad, and institutions in Turkey have been particularly open to collaboration. The Istanbul Study Center has a wide and growing network of contacts across academic disciplines and professional fields, often extending outside of Istanbul, as was the case for this group of graduate students.



Faculty Focus: A First Run in Istanbul

by June Nobbe, PhD - University of Minnesota

For the past four years, I have led a short-term global seminar in Northern Ireland on the topic of leadership and social change. I was asked to shift the course to the context of Istanbul, Turkey for the 2014 May term and was excited to test the course outcomes in a different part of the world.

As we boarded the bus at the Atatürk Airport and entered the "organized chaos" of traffic in Istanbul, a bit of panic set in as I realized that the students' first impressions would not be the rolling green hills of Ireland, or encountering people who looked similar and spoke the same language as them. Instead they were in a densely populated city with mosques on almost every block, public call to prayer, alphabet letters with dots and squiggles, and Muslim women whose head covering ranged from full burqa to decorative

hijab. The housing was located in a local community so the students experienced the benefit of buying fresh and local fruits, meats, breads, and sweets. They embraced the challenge of learning survival Turkish and were engaging with locals by the end of the seminar. They became confident users of public transportation including trams, metros, buses, water ferries, and funiculars.

As a relatively "young Republic," Turkey is a perfect location to examine different leadership strategies. We heard different



viewpoints from individuals involved in the Gezi protests, and met with a diverse range of business organizations such as TUSIAD, which advocates for equality of women and MUSIAD, which is a vocal supporter of Prime Minister Erdoğan. The female executive director of KADIGER emerged as an authentic leader role model for many in the group.

Of course Istanbul is well known for stunning architecture, the beautiful Bosphorus, and amazing food. However, the biggest take-away for our group was the unexpected hospitality that we encountered throughout the seminar. We learned that this is an important value in Turkish culture and it made all the difference in helping students to navigate a more intense cultural experience. I cannot reflect on this experience without acknowledging Deniz Bingöl and Selin Aycil. They were instrumental in co-creating and delivering a program that far exceeded expectations. *Tesekkurler!*

Hollywood Comes to Piazza S. Spirito

Last fall, ACCENT Florence welcomed two special guests, Debi Mazar and her husband Gabriele Corcos. Debi is an American actress who made her film debut in *Goodfellas* with Martin Scorsese, and has acted in famous films such as *Batman Forever*, *Malcom X*, and *The Insider*. Gabriele was born in Florence and raised in the Fiesole countryside. His grandmother and mother taught him all there was to know about Tuscan food and traditional farmers' cuisine. Although they met in Florence, Debi and Gabriele now live in the US where they host the hit Cooking Channel show *Extra Virgin*, inviting viewers into their Brooklyn home to share family recipes and a contagious passion for food.

Students were curious to find out how the couple moved from casual cooking videos on YouTube to a successful cooking show. They had no doubts about the source of their success – a passion for simple, genuine food, shared with family and friends. As students discover in Florence, this attitude is not unique to Debi and Gabriele, but common throughout Italy. The couple discussed the differences between



“Italian food” in the US and Italy, and told students about the feedback they receive on their traditional approach to recipes. While the original purpose of their YouTube videos was to recover family recipes and to prepare meals for their children, the project quickly revealed an opportunity to promote healthful eating through television.

ACCENT students from multiple universities showed great interest in the event, and beyond the opportunity to meet a Hollywood actress, the event highlighted the importance of following one's passions in life.

Women and Entrepreneurship

Last month, students in the University of Minnesota Leadership & Social Change seminar in Istanbul, led by Professor June Nobbe, visited the Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey – KAGIDER. The visit served to investigate women's evolving role in Turkish society through the lens of women and work. Yeşim Müftüler Seviğ, the organization's secretary general, gave the group a warm welcome and introduced KAGIDER's mission and nationwide activities, illustrating issue areas with data, survey results, and case studies.

Established in 2002 as a non-profit civil society organization, KAGIDER serves as a women's advocacy group for public and private sectors. The organization provides networking opportunities, training events, and consultancy around Turkey, and sponsors



a series of business incubation centers for female entrepreneurs. KAGIDER lobbies and advocates for women's issues to national and European parliaments, in particular regarding the education of young girls.

Ms. Seviğ explained that KAGIDER contributes to a number of annual reports published by UN organizations, as well as progress reports published by the European Commission regarding Turkish accession into the EU. Seviğ also talked about their collaborations with the other local and international non-profit organizations with which KAGIDER leads a number of media campaigns.

During a lively Q&A session, students compared the situation in Turkey to the US, considering women's rights and gender as it relates to the workplace, wages, and entrepreneurship. Having already met with representatives from business associations and social activism groups, the students drew interesting connections to other aspects of contemporary Turkish society, including immigration, scarcity of resources, and technology use, creating a valuable session for both students and the hosts.

Prize Faculty in Florence

Cecilia Martelli, instructor of a popular Renaissance art course on the UCEAP Florence program, was recently honored with the prestigious Salimbeni prize for her monograph study on the Quattrocento artist Bartolomeo della Gatta. When asked to reflect on the significance of the prize, Martelli says: “To me, the most gratifying aspect of the prize is that it acknowledges the innovative scientific value of my research on Bartolomeo della Gatta. This is the first volume dedicated entirely to his work and it restores this important but somehow underestimated artist to a position of prominence within 15th century Italian art. Up until now his work has wrongly been viewed as somehow minor compared to that of other artists of the period.”

Martelli brings her research into the classroom and believes that it is fundamental for a professor to maintain research activity: “[Research] provides constant nourishment and motivation to your teaching and takes it beyond what you can find in a manual.” Though many of her students have never studied Art History before arriving to Florence, Martelli believes that the experiential nature of the course makes the subject accessible to students of all backgrounds and interests: “A lot of them express gratitude and awe at the opportunity to study

on-site and learn about art in a way that would be impossible on campus.”

Martelli is currently collaborating on a number of exhibits in Italy, including one on foreign art collectors in 19th-century Florence that will open at the Accademia Museum in June. This fall she will travel to London to present her volume at the Courtauld Institute. Though she has a number of projects lined up, Martelli knows she will ultimately return to the study of Quattrocento painting.

Look for the 6th Issue of Insights in November!

The next issue of ACCENT's newsletter will highlight custom programming in London and Rome.

For past issues of *Insights*, visit our archives at:
www.accentintl.com/program-development

Start developing your program with ACCENT
E-mail progdev@accentintl.com
or call 1.800.869.9291