

A Rome Study Tour for Students Who Are Not Classicists

We know international travel broadens students' minds and improves their understanding of education, even their commitment to education (Walters 2017, Morgan 2010). But international travel is often limited to "elite" students, those at institutions with branches abroad, or those who can afford to enroll in independent programs. At the other extreme, study abroad is often seen by students as a vacation and by their parents as a boondoggle. But we ourselves may place other barriers to international travel by our students. As classicists, we may think of travel to Rome or Greece as something that can only be appreciated by students with extensive academic backgrounds in classical languages or history. If you don't already know what the Forum is, how can you appreciate seeing it for yourself? How can I make you hear Cicero's voice in the Forum, if you don't know who Cicero is? If several years of Latin are required for a Rome study tour, my students will never go. My university has no major in Classics and offers two semesters of Latin and Greek. History majors are not required to study much ancient content, and Humanities majors are not required to study classical languages. But several of my colleagues and I have come to believe that we can take students from a wide variety of backgrounds to Rome and not only teach them some substantial knowledge of history and art, but also awaken in them a desperately-needed understanding of their place in the wider world.

Since 2010, I have been involved in co-leading a two-week summer study tour that focuses only on Rome. Of necessity, we must recruit students from across the university. Because our students come to us with a wide range of preparation, we have developed several tools to get them up to speed before and during their travel. This paper outlines the methods used to give these students the background needed to understand the almost three millennia of history

and art that they see in Rome. In addition, the paper will outline some methods we have used to make international travel accessible to students from diverse backgrounds.

Work in the Academic Disciplines (not all used every time)

1. Three-day seminar the week before departure
2. Visit, before travel, to a local art museum, where students are introduced to the concept of formal analysis (“how to look at art”)
3. Student-created timeline, with major sites, artworks and historical figures seen on the trip placed in their correct eras
4. Journal kept by students during travel, with responses to a prompt each day and reflections on the day’s sites
5. Reading a historical novel set in Rome
6. Research projects, completed before travel, on major sites to be visited
7. Oral reports in Rome at the monuments students have researched
8. Reading assignments in a collection of literary sources, primary and secondary, with emphasis on literature created by travelers to Rome from a variety of eras (e.g., Byron, Goethe, Hardy, Hawthorne)

These activities are informed by the two disciplines in which we offer credit: History, requiring chronological periodization, and Humanities, requiring interdisciplinary dialogue between the arts.

Activities not in the Academic Disciplines

1. FAQ handout with practical information on money, cell phones, food, and etiquette
2. Meetings throughout spring semester to discuss practical travel information

3. Bite-sized lessons in survival Italian at each meeting (with emphasis on etiquette and cultural awareness)
4. Show-and-tell packing demonstrations
5. Writing assignments before and after travel: before travel, your expectations about Italy, and after travel, the changes in your perceptions

Few of our students are experienced travelers; some have never been on an airplane, while others have never traveled beyond the next state.

Results of these efforts show anecdotally that the study tour increases retention and recruits for our majors or Latin classes (Stone and Petrick 2013). At least three alumni have returned to Europe for semester-long study abroad, and two have enrolled in international graduate programs. Above all, we believe that our study tour helps produce students who are more aware of themselves as global citizens in an interconnected world (Perry 2012).

Bibliography

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