U.S. Students Abroad: Lessons from Rome in Cultural Immersion

Explore, Engage, Discover

John Felice Rome Center
July 1-14, 2018
Rome, Italy
ELPS 529: Selected Topics In Higher Education
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Influenced by the perspectives advanced by Gerardo Blanco Ramirez (2013), this seminar is designed for students seeking to become reflective practitioners in the field of international education who share interests in exploring challenges and opportunities within education abroad that enhance cultural competence leading to authentic global citizenship. Students are invited to explore multiple aspects of the education abroad experience of U.S. undergraduate students from the unique vantage point of personally experiencing a short-term, education abroad immersion simultaneously with focused study of this topic. The international city of Rome is each student’s “learning laboratory” and serves as the cultural context for the exploration of study abroad. Students are challenged to continuously reflect on their own personal experience as they undertake their academic sojourn in Rome and to integrate their learning experiences with the research and topics that the course addresses. Utilizing a model of active and engaged learning the course includes both classroom discussions and reflection in addition to moving beyond the classroom setting into the city of Rome thus enabling students to engage with each other and with key informants at selected cultural, educational, religious, and historical sites. In many respects, all classroom and out-of-classroom experiences while in Rome are viewed as valuable in gaining a holistic understanding and appreciation for course topics—even while students are on their own and not engaged directly in course-related activities (e.g., while touring and exploring, while dining, while shopping, etc.).

Stakeholders. This course is appropriate for learners seeking to explore and understand the intercultural dynamics involved in international study, those wishing to reflect and critically understand their own previous international study experience, those seeking to work in education abroad offices within colleges and universities and/or with international students who travel to the U.S. to study, those desiring to work at international campuses of U.S. colleges and universities, those planning to have responsibility for coordinating and leading educational excursions to other nations, and those with scholarly (teaching and research) interests in international education.

This course is accessible to students with wide-ranging international experience including those with no education abroad experience to those with extensive engagement with study abroad. Often, but not always, engagement for the first time with a totally new culture may result in varying degrees of discomfort or disequilibrium (what researchers label as ‘culture shock’). Experienced sojourners in the class are invited to support and engage those
in our learning community who may experience the discomfort of culture shock in order to enhance all students’ learning.

**Seminar Objectives**

1. To enhance student understanding about the diversity that exists among post-secondary education abroad programs;
2. To contextualize study abroad programs within systems of student and academic mobility in the global economy;
3. To reflect on the social justice issues involved with cultural immersion while abroad;
4. To reflect on the challenges and issues experienced by students, program coordinators, faculty and administrators engaged with education abroad; and
5. To identify learning outcomes that may arise from different types of education abroad experiences and the many factors that contribute or influence that learning.

**The Eternal City as Classroom**

The international city of Rome provides an exciting and culturally rich environment for student learning about cultural immersion through study abroad. Through visits to cultural, historical, educational, religious, governmental, and other sites and through talking directly with key informants, students will have the opportunity to examine their own immersion experiences while involved in scholarly exploration of the study abroad experience itself. The following field experiences reinforce and complement (i.e., “make real”) the topics under examination in this course.

- **Perspectives on Education Abroad.** In an effort to gain an appreciation for different approaches to and perspectives on the provision of education abroad as well as potential learning outcomes that may arise in each setting, students will visit selected organizations and meet with staff, faculty, and/or students to explore topics and themes addressed in this course. While engaged at the John Felice Rome Center of Loyola University Chicago, students will compare and contrast their own education abroad structure and experiences with those of other programs investigated. While scores of education abroad programs exist in Rome, time and summer program closures will not permit a visit to all of them (e.g., we will discuss third-party providers such as IES, CIEE, etc. but will not visit).

Students will engage with the following sites and are asked to review each site’s websites carefully prior to arrival and to be prepared with discussion questions for our various hosts.

1. **Italiaidea** [https://www.italiaidea.com] (a private Italian language and culture school where U.S. students often enroll in language courses for academic credit, usually through their home campuses). Students will engage at Italiaidea with Paolo Bultrini, Academic Program Director and with Dr. Carolina Ciampaglia, Director of Italiaidea including experiencing a ‘sample’ Italian Language Survival Class.

2. **John Felice Rome Center** (JFRC) [www.luc.edu/rome] (a residential, full-service international campus of LUC). Students will engage with Dr. Michael Andrews, JFRC Director; Dr. Michael Beasley, JFRC Dean of Student Life; Prof. Nadia Cristiani, Summer Internship Coordinator, and with a small number of undergraduate summer interns.

3. **Università degli Studi Roma Tre** [www.uniroma3.it] (one of 3 major, public Italian universities with 35,000 students founded in 1992 where U.S. students may opt to direct enroll for courses in coordination with their home campuses). Students will engage at Roma Tre with Prof. Lucca Marcozzi, ERASMUS+ Coordinator for Roma Tre and with Italian students who have studied in other
nations through ERASMUS+ (EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students +).

4. Jesuit Refugee Service [www.jrs.net, go to ‘About Us’ and then to ‘International Office Team’ and click on profiles for David Holdcroft, S.J. and Cindy Bomben]. JRS is an international Jesuit Catholic organization with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. JRS provides services in 10 regions across the world with the support of an international office in Rome. JRS was founded in November 1980 by the Society of Jesus. Students will engage at JRS with Fr. David Holdcroft, S.J., Professional and Postsecondary Education Specialist and with Cindy Bomben, Executive Assistant.

- **International Dimensions of Teaching and Scholarship.** Meet with Italian and U.S. faculty/administrators to explore through a faculty lens the international dimensions of academic work and experiences with cultural immersion in international education. Many education abroad organizations in Rome utilize faculty and scholars from Italy as either full- or part-time faculty. Our class will meet with a few of these scholars through our engagements at Italiaidea, JFRC, JRS, and at the University of Roma Tre.

- **Critical Reflections on Education Abroad.** Both through in-class sessions and when out of class, students will engage with cultural, historical, geopolitical, religious and other experiences that arise from education abroad. Throughout the course, students are asked to record informal observations (e.g., through ideas discussed in class, site observations, engagement with significant informants, etc.) that elicit meaningful, discomforting, and/or surprising responses. These data will likely inform each student’s culminating autoethnography that captures key aspects of their Rome experience.

*Students are asked to bring a camera or other device with digital photo capability (for downloading to a p.c./memory stick for report to the class) and a paper journal booklet for recording daily observations, questions, discussion topics, etc. as these will be helpful for relevant class activities and when visiting off campus sites.*

- **Co-Curricular Activities.** Throughout the School of Education summer program at JFRC, all students will have the opportunity to engage in class-related and program-wide activities that may significantly enhance their education abroad cultural and educational experience. These activities are typical of many education abroad programs and include faculty-led class visits to:

  1. **Piazza di San Pietro and Basilica Papale di San Pietro** [www.saintpetersbasilica.org] (Dr. Williams leads this visit)
  2. **The Colosseo** [http://greatbuildings.com/buildings/roman_colosseum.html] [note timeline link for information on other world class sites in Rome] (Dr. Williams leads this visit)
  3. **Piazza Navona** [www.romainteractive.com/pznavona.htm] (Dr. Janis Fine leads this visit)
  4. **Vatican Museums** [http://mv.vatican.va] (Dr. Fine leads this visit)
  5. **Tempio Maggiore di Roma and Museo Ebraico di Roma** [www.museoebraico.roma.it/en/the-museum ] (Dr. Fine leads this visit)

**Seminar Readings**  [Complete Prior to Arrival in Rome]
Selected readings examining topics addressed in this course have been assembled and made available either on the course Sakai site (https://sakai.luc.edu) or through web links found on the course reading list (also found in Sakai) that take the student directly to the reading. The list of readings is found in the ‘Resources’ menu tab. Students are asked to complete the required readings prior to the first class session in Rome as these will be integrated into both formal and informal class discussions in the classroom setting and during site visits.

While some class sessions may have a topic/theme/focus (e.g., our visit to Roma Tre with a focus on student mobility across borders within the EU and student experiences), we will typically address multiple topics and themes during site visits. While students are not required to bring print copies of readings to Rome, readings will be available through Sakai in the JFRC Information Commons. Note: Many students mark up readings with notes and/or questions. If this is your experience you should bring your annotated articles saved on a memory stick which you can easily access at JFRC.

Seminar Assignments

Personal reflection is an important and meaningful part of any education abroad experience and accordingly students are asked to continuously reflect on their experience while in Rome. These reflections may be recorded electronically at the Rome Center. Students are advised not to bring laptops to Rome; however, a small journal booklet which they can easily carry to site visits (and to class) is required so that observations, feelings, and questions while in class and during class-based site visits can be recorded. (Note: your instructor prefers student recordings in written journals, and not phones or tablets, especially during site visits as in past this practice has mistakenly conveyed to our hosts that students are surfing the web or checking emails which are poorly received by faculty and staff hosts).

- **Participation and Engagement in Class and at Field Sites [20 points]**. Student participation includes an expectation that required readings are completed as these serve as an important foundation for all site visits and a measure of the extent of readiness we will have to engage with our various hosts who are generously giving their time to meet with us. Thoughtful consideration (both in advance and on site) regarding what questions and topics you wish to raise is very important.

- **Journal Reflection [15 points]**. Students will prepare one journal entry describing your personal reflections on your experience, the questions that have arisen for you related to education abroad, and new insights you have gained about your learning while in Rome. You may select a particular theme for your reflection; however, the reflection should be clearly supported with evidence based on your experiences during site visits, the assigned reading, class discussions, and other experiences.

The reflection should be uploaded into Sakai using the Assignments tab. The entry should be 500 words (12 point font, double spaced). While the journal can be submitted prior to its due date do not submit sooner than Friday morning of Week 1 and prior to end of Week 2.

- **Group-Led Classroom Discussion [15 points for each student in the group]**. Given the engaged learning seminar format, 4 groups of students will be identified and responsible for generating and leading a class discussion (with emphasis more on motivating discussion and engagement than presentation) on a topic relevant to education abroad. Each topic should be broad by design in order to generate wide discussion. No absolute ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ views regarding these topics should be expected; and, diverse viewpoints should be encouraged. Course readings may serve as the basis for discussions. Discussion groups and topics will be generated by the class early in Week 1.

Because classroom-based discussion time may be limited, groups should assume that students will be prepared (through prior reading and reflection) to fully engage in the discussion—thus basic
background/contextual presentation information should be limited to ensure good ‘coverage’ of the substantive ideas raised through discussion. The length of each discussion will be determined in class.

• **Report on Critical Engagement with Cultural Learning [30 points for each student in the group].** This project is a variation on an assignment used previously which involved students leading cultural learning immersion walks throughout Rome. These walks were designed to illuminate some aspect of Italian culture that was of interest to group members. This summer these ‘walks’ will occur inside the JFRC classroom using a wide variety of approaches/methods to provide all students with a comprehensive ‘virtual’ engagement in cultural learning regarding life in Italy. Early in Week 1 students are encouraged to discuss in their project groups a wide variety of Italian cultural attributes that may be of interest to them for further exploration and may find the Gannon (2001) article, along with others, especially helpful in this discussion.

This project asks each group for the following:

a) **By Friday, 6 July at noon:** Provide on Sakai (select one of the four group slots available in the Assignments Tab) names of group members (must be different from earlier discussion groups) and the group’s cultural learning focus/theme for the report describing the focus or theme in detail. Your instructor encourages groups to submit their themes as early as possible and will ask that no two groups use identical themes.

b) Student groups are asked to acquire and then, for the report, prepare a diverse body of evidence you have collected within Rome that, taken together, provides insights illuminating a cultural theme or focus regarding some aspect of the day-to-day lives of Romans and/or, more broadly, Italians.

c) A 60-minute cultural learning oral/visual presentation with discussion will be designed with the following in mind:

   a. A theme or focus that is well-reflected in the evidence presented;
   b. A visual component is required and may include photos, brief videos that your group has created at various sites, music, brief audio narratives, interview data, relevant artifacts that you bring to the class session, literature, etc. (evidence must be formatted for overhead/p.c. projection inside the classroom and any physical artifacts can be photographed);
   c. A presentation that actively engages your classmates including leaving ample time for questions/discussion; (e.g., you could decide to present only your ‘evidence’ first visually to the class (without identifying your theme) and then ask class to discuss any relevant themes that may be present and why….followed by your group presenting the theme you have identified).
   d. Each student in the group is expected to participate equally in the report’s presentation.
   e. Note: because time is limited for group collection of evidence and preparation of the report, no essay or written report is required. Each group however will submit to instructor via Sakai a complete file containing all visuals and an outline of which group members addressed which aspects of the report.

• **Final Reflection (20 points).** Students will use techniques drawn from biographical/autoethnographic research, as exemplified by Ramirez (2013), to craft a 5-page final reflection. You are asked to consider the Ramirez quote below as you reflect on what to include in your essay.

   [A]bove all, I am a reflective practitioner interested in exploring challenges and possibilities embedded in study abroad experiences with the intention of presenting insights that might inform and improve existing study abroad programs. I am interested in making a contribution to the field
of International Education by dissecting some of the challenges that study abroad programs might present. (Ramirez, 2013, p. 3)

Specifically, you’re asked to consider these questions in an integrative personal essay:

- What cultural knowledge or skills have you gained from education abroad experiences (especially while in Rome) that wouldn’t otherwise be acquired through exclusive classroom-based learning?
- For the above cultural learning outcomes, what specific learning processes or activities during education abroad most facilitated your learning and why?
- In what ways will you apply this cultural knowledge and skills in your professional life and in your work with current and/or future students?

This assignment is due Saturday night, 14 July by midnight (Rome Time). Other than technical formatting (APA, 12 point font, double-spaced, an essay ‘title’—you know the drill), this culminating document is otherwise fairly “free-form.” As long as you provide a thoughtful, well-argued reflection of your Rome experience, you may add any materials as appendices to illustrate specific moments, places, people, that/who were meaningful to your learning in Rome. You are encouraged to use excerpts from your journal entries. Consider the totality of class time, field trips, hosted visits, and leisure time as data-collection points to use in your final reflection.

Grading Protocol

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 - 94</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>85 - 89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 - 84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>75 - 79</td>
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C+ 70 - 74
C  65 - 69

LUC Conceptual Framework --

Our mission is social justice, but our responsibility is social action through education

A conceptual framework that emphasizes Social Action through Education guides instructional, extracurricular, and professional activities at Loyola’s School of Education. The Loyola School of Education faculty are dedicated to promoting professionalism in service of social justice by developing students’ knowledge, skills, ethics, and service to improve educational opportunities for all members of society. This course contributes to the realization of this framework by helping students to:
• Develop an understanding of, and ability to reflect critically on, historical and contemporary issues within international higher education with a direct focus on student academic mobility across nations;
• Reflect on how international higher education actors can address these issues in a just society;
• Strengthen a personal and professional commitment to advancing social justice;
• Foster an appreciation of and respect for diverse perspectives, cultures, lifestyles, ways of knowing, and a commitment to serving others.

The topic of diversity is central to this seminar which is offered in an international multi-cultural context in Italy that exhibits poverty, homelessness, and overt and covert discrimination, racism, and sexism. The course by its design will contribute to student learning about diverse institutions, students, and learning environments within international higher education including the absence of student racial and gender diversity in education abroad among U.S. undergraduate students. Students wishing to read more about the conceptual framework that guides the School of Education may visit: [www.luc.edu/education/mission/](http://www.luc.edu/education/mission/)

No Conceptual Framework Core Standards are assessed in this seminar.

**Dispositions**

Each course in the School of Education focuses on one or more professional dispositions. Students are offered opportunities to receive feedback on the dispositional growth in the areas of professionalism, fairness and/or the belief that all students can learn. The specific dispositions and descriptions for expected behaviors can be found on the rubric posted below and in LiveText for this course.

**Dispositional Rubric**

Beginning with Fall semester 2013, the School of Education requires all programs to assess students not only on knowledge gained and skills developed or enhanced but also on attitudes and dispositions that connect with specific behaviors expected of professional educators regardless of their field of study. Each graduate program has developed a comprehensive rubric that will be used by faculty in each graduate course to assess students on those dispositions deemed important for those preparing to work with students in higher education. During each academic year, all students are evaluated by faculty based on their collective assessments in courses completed during the year. The assessment rubric for Summer 2018 International Higher Education courses is included below and students are expected to become familiar and to strive to adhere to each set of expectations. The course rubrics are completed by faculty in LiveText and these rubrics will also be available to students for review. Depending on the results of the annual review, students may be asked to meet with program faculty to discuss specific aspects of the assessment.
Please rate the candidate using: Target (above average), Acceptable, Unacceptable

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<th>Target</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Student demonstrates exceptional ability to work well with others, lead educational initiatives, and show leadership qualities in professional settings</td>
<td>Student demonstrates an ability to work well with others in a professional setting through exhibiting behaviors such as punctuality, meeting deadlines, and being open and responsive to feedback</td>
<td>Student fails to demonstrate professional behavior in the academic or work setting</td>
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<td>Student meets all deadlines</td>
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<td>Student attends class and is punctual for all professional obligations</td>
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<td>Student communicates promptly with faculty, supervisors, employers, and peers (no longer than 2 business days)</td>
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<td>Student is able to express himself or herself appropriately (verbally and in writing) with faculty, supervisors, employers, and peers</td>
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<td>Student is able to work effectively with peers on assignments</td>
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<td>Student demonstrates ethical behavior in all professional and graduate student work</td>
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<td>Student adequately addresses feedback provided on coursework (e.g., grammar, APA style, content)</td>
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<td>Student accurately cites material in academic work ascribing appropriate credit for information conveyed</td>
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<td><strong>Fairness</strong></td>
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<td>Student demonstrates exceptional ability to understand the situations of others and responds in an appropriate, proactive manner</td>
<td>Student demonstrates ability to understand the situations of others and responds in an appropriate, proactive manner</td>
<td>Student fails to consider the situation of others in making professional decisions and acts inequitably</td>
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<td>Student is considerate (verbally and nonverbally) of appropriately expressed feelings and opinions of others</td>
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<td>Student exhibits active listening skills</td>
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<td>Student is able to accept constructive feedback</td>
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<td><strong>All students can learn</strong></td>
<td>Student exhibits exemplary</td>
<td>Student believes and demonstrates in</td>
<td>Student fails to understand and/or</td>
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understanding and practice reflecting the belief that all students, regardless of contextual influences, are capable of learning

practice that all students, regardless of contextual influences, are capable of learning

demonstrate in practice that all students, regardless of contextual influences, are capable of learning

Student is sensitive to cultural differences

Student respects the diversity of learning styles

Student uses the framework of social justice in decision making

Comments:

IDEA Outcomes Designated for this Course

The following learning outcomes are considered either essential or important within this course based on the IDEA course rating system:

- Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories)
- Developing knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or other cultures
- Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view

Loyola University Chicago
School of Education
Syllabus Addendum

IDEA Course Evaluation Link for Students

Each course you take in the School of Education is evaluated through the IDEA Campus Labs system. We ask that when you receive an email alerting you that the evaluation is available that you promptly complete it. To learn more about IDEA or to access the website directly to complete your course evaluation go to: http://luc.edu/idea/ and click on STUDENT IDEA LOGIN on the left hand side of the page.

Dispositions

All students are assessed on one or more dispositional areas of growth across our programs: Professionalism, Inquiry, and Social Justice. The instructor in your course will identify the dispositions assessed in this course and you can find the rubrics related to these dispositions in LiveText. For those students in non-degree programs, the rubric for dispositions may be available through Sakai, TaskStream or another platform. Disposition data is reviewed by program faculty on a regular basis. This allows faculty to work with students to develop throughout their program and address any issues as they arise.
**LiveText**
All students, *except those who are non-degree*, must have access to LiveText to complete the benchmark assessments aligned to the Conceptual Framework Standards and all other accreditation, school-wide and/or program-wide related assessments. You can access more information on LiveText here: [LiveText](#).

**Syllabus Addendum Link**

- [www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/](http://www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/)

This link directs students to statements on essential policies regarding *academic honesty*, *accessibility*, *ethics line reporting* and *electronic communication policies and guidelines*. We ask that you read each policy carefully.

This link will also bring you to the full text of our conceptual framework that guides the work of the School of Education – *Social Action through Education*. 