

## A Taste of Roman Culture and Cuisine - Hobart and William Smith Colleges - Daily Updates

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*Hobart and William Smith Colleges*

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As both tourists and residents of Italy, 14 HWS students are spending the fall semester exploring the traditional cuisine and culture of ancient Rome. Led by Professor of Anthropology and Sociology Jack Harris P'02, P'06, and his wife, Deborah Harris '73, P'02, P'06, students are fully immersed in Roman culture while taking a sociological and anthropological approach to examining tourism as a worldwide phenomenon.

"Students are being asked to think about tourism as a global phenomenon, and also to think reflexively about their own experience as students, tourists and residents of Rome," Harris says. "I expect the students to learn how to observe, describe, explain and demonstrate sociological and anthropological understanding of the food tourism phenomenon, its structure, narratives and symbolics."

Central to Roman culture and integral to the program and many students' experiences so far has been traditional Roman food. The students are required to take the course, "Food and Culture in Italy," at Gustolab Institute, which is the first educational program in Italy dedicated to food studies. During the semester, students will learn inside and outside of the classroom as they study the relationship between food and culture in Italy from pre-historical times to the present. In addition to class readings and discussions, students will tour markets, participate in a cheese tasting event, learn about olive oil production, and partake in several cooking classes.



Alex Lamonte '17, a public policy major, explains that throughout the course the students will visit various restaurants, food stores, and outdoor markets in Rome to see what the locals eat compared to what tourists eat when they visit Rome. In just one class period, they spoke with a three star Michelin Chef at Da Armando al Pantheon; learned about coffee making and sampled espresso at Sant'Eustachio Caffé, which the *New York Times* recently called one of the best places for espresso in Rome; and heard how GROM Gelateria makes gelato "like it used to be made" with top-quality ingredients from their own

farm.

"I hope to come away from this experience with a better idea of what I want to do when I leave HWS, as well as a better idea of how I want to spend my remaining time there," Lamonte says. "The Food and

Culture course, in particular, has exposed me to a lot of different careers that I didn't even know existed. The Gustolab has also connected me with professionals who work on issues related to food and health, so that international professional network is something I'll be very fortunate to have when I return to campus."

For Sam Solomon '17, a self-proclaimed "foodie" who hopes to open a restaurant after he graduates from HWS, the experiential aspect of the "Food and Culture" course, as well as the opportunity to travel to the birthplace of traditional pizza, have been highlights of the trip so far. Majoring in sociology with a minor in entrepreneurial studies, he was awarded funding from the Center for Global Education to take pizza making classes in Naples, where pizza was invented. Next summer, he hopes to return to Naples to learn and teach the art of pizza making.



"Each course is intended to be part of a mosaic providing a more coherent framework for understanding Rome and our experience," Harris says. "Through the 'Food and Culture' and 'Contemporary Italy' courses, they will learn about the rich relationships of food, celebration, family, religion, multi-culturalism and identity that are so expressive of Italian society and culture."

After just three weeks in Rome, the students have already begun to feel less like tourists and more like residents. Housed in Prati, a quiet residential community, the students are living in apartments just outside the "hustle and bustle" of central Rome, explains Hannah Brooks '17, adding that they've started to build relationships with local business owners.

"Professor Harris perfectly tailored the Rome program this fall into a sociological and anthropological experience of a lifetime," says Brooks, an anthropology and sociology and international relations double major. "He has big goals for us, with the number one that we step out of the tourist sector and become residents of this incredible city. We learn everyday through experience how different our cultures are. The anthropology and sociology Department does a great job of helping students create a cross-cultural perspective to better understand how and why cultures are what they are."

While becoming acquainted with the city of Rome, the students will be challenged to step beyond their comfort zones on extended trips to cities throughout Italy. The first excursion planned is to Calabria, known for its antiquity and rich culture, but not as a traditional tourist destination.

Emily Kellogg '17, an American studies major, says that so far the best part of the trip has been the excursions planned by HWS that have allowed the students to travel as a group guided by Harris. Learning by "seeing Rome firsthand rather than through the lens of a textbook," she says, has been the most valuable part of the academic experience. From traveling to other cities across Italy to simply walking back to their apartment each day, going grocery shopping, and eating at restaurants, Kellogg says they've been learning "who the locals are and what it means to be Italian."

In October, the group will travel to Venice and Milan, where they will experience the Milan World's Fair Expo. A platform for the exchange of ideas and shared solutions on the theme of food, the Expo brings together 140 participating countries to showcase their most innovative technology related to providing a more sustainable global food system.

The students have also had the opportunity to explore Rome, having already spent time studying ancient Rome, including the Palatine Hill and the Roman Forum, and the Colosseum. Harris says they've also

visited a regional office and showroom devoted to the foods of the Lazio region, a market in Testaccio, and the Emigration Museum as preparation for their trip to Calabria.

"The Colosseum and Vatican have been especially incredible, but the fact alone that our everyday commute takes us through some of the most beautiful landmarks in the world is the best, hands down," says Brooks. "By the end of this experience, I want Rome to feel like a second home and form friendships, have experiences, and take away life skills that will see me through the rest of college."

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