



Our Vision

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Our vision is to provide a space for students to learn, grow, and critically analyze global challenges in order to create solutions for current and future human and global needs.

We are a group of educators from diverse backgrounds who believe in our students and their potential to understand — critically — the world we live in. We provide our students with opportunities to engage the world at select fieldsites and we challenge them to become thoughtful citizens of the world of today and tomorrow. Experiential learning lies at the center of our work. Our students learn to move from the physical constraints of the university — its classrooms and libraries — to the complexities and depths of real world settings.

We provide strategic support to faculty and students to ground them, their pedagogies, and learning plans in the world of field studies. We do this in many ways.

We design, or assist faculty in designing, courses, lectures, and syllabi bridging between the field site and departmental or college requirements. We employ local faculty who draw on their cultural backgrounds and their graduate training to present powerfully academic and often also profoundly local perspectives on salient issues.

We create *colloquia*, opportunities for students to listen to and talk with local experts. *Colloquia* often begin with presentations by such experts and end with wide ranging discussions with our students. We also have *practicum* — opportunities for our student to visit specific field sites and to observe and discuss aspects of the field site with local people.



And most importantly, we *facilitate* teaching and learning for our international scholars and students by borrowing methods from anthropology. Our team includes well educated *learning facilitators* – playing a role similar to the native informants of an ethnographer. They accompany students into the field and respond to questions bridging between the familiar and unfamiliar.

Such facilitation of learning and teaching lies at the heart of study abroad and assumes our students are entering a second culture where they must struggle to understand the background knowledge of local peoples. Our goal is to introduce students to the complexities of local knowledge.

We see our students as driven by curiosity on the one hand and by encounters with the world on the other. These combine to provide them with enthusiasm for a transformative experience, one they will take with them as they return to their homes.

By drawing on their knowledge, intelligence, and critical analysis of complex issues, our students can become leaders at home working for positive and enduring change.

WE ARE EXPANDING - THE BORROMINI INSTITUTE

Born as an initiative of Gustolab International, the Borromini Institute is a new academic organization which provides educational opportunities for students both in and outside the classroom and support for institutions and faculty-led programs.

The Borromini Institute springs from the nearly 20-year history of Gustolab International investigating food systems and sustainability, fields which simultaneously involve the physical place (which produces food), the people and cities (which consume the food) and the technology (used in its production, processing and distribution).



Emerging from the traumatic experience of the pandemic — and facing the greater challenge of climate crisis — we have been drawn to widen the focus of the organization from food studies to the broader context of human cohabitation within the planetary ecosystem. At present the Borromini Institute is expanding its partnerships with other institutions.

Message from our CEO



Dear Students and Faculty, as CEO of Gustolab International (GLi), I am pleased to welcome all of you here in Rome! As an Italian, I know the importance of food culture in Italy and have always considered Italy to be the perfect laboratory for studies related to food. I am happy to share that our center is celebrating its 10 anniversary this year. I remember when in 2005, following my true passion and through the opportunity to work with an enthusiastic team, I proposed and launched the idea for the first program on Food and Culture in Italy together with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This idea became a reality in 2007. Since then, Food Studies as a field of study has increased in importance by becoming a field that is fundamentally interdisciplinary, and therefore many food-related study abroad programs are now flourishing as a response to the increasing awareness and demand in society. I am sure that, through our programs, you will be able to appreciate food as a cultural product of Italy but also to use food as an instrument of analysis of our



economy, society and politics. My wish is that during your study abroad, you will be able to immerse yourselves completely in the Italian culture, to have a unique experience and to broaden your horizon. Buon lavoro!

Pier Alberto Merli, PhD

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