

SAIL Report

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Goals:

The seminar examined how the singular geological framework and distinctive ecology of the Mediterranean region, and in particular Italy, shaped Classical, Renaissance and modern cultures. Archeological and documentary evidence in these periods demonstrates how people managed, explained, and imagined nature. At the same time, the land contains its own precise geological and ecological record. We used these sources to inform visits and discussions. The seminar centered in Florence, with trips to Vesuvius, Pompeii, Rome, Orvieto, Pisa, and the Tuscan countryside to explore the interplay between people and nature over time.

We aimed for each day's itinerary and discussions to be interdisciplinary. The leadership team divided responsibilities for sessions according to their expertise, and each participant prepared a short presentation on some aspect of the seminar.

In addition, we set aside time for teams and individuals to work on their curricular projects and to talk together about these plans, about ways of incorporating seminar material into courses, and about strategies for interdisciplinary teaching.

Activities:

Day 1, June 25

Group arrived in the afternoon. Visited the Forum and the Capitoline Hill. Each leader presented those sites from the perspectives of their disciplines. Siddoway presented the geological context; Thakur commented on the organization and history of the ancient Roman city; Ashley described the Capitoline in its ancient, medieval, and modern dimensions. Team leaders stressed the convergence of geology, city planning, and monumental building.

Introductions and informal conversation over dinner.

Day 2, June 26

Morning visit to the Pantheon. Thakur and Ashley presented the structure from the outside; Ashley discussed with participants the logic of the decoration inside, emphasizing the ways the structure and the design reflects the organization of the cosmos, the city, and the human body.

Transfer to Pompeii.

Afternoon visit to Pompeii. Siddoway described the volcanic explosion; Thakur discussed the planning which shaped the city and the effects of the explosion. Simpson raised questions about how people explain natural crises, referring to Voltaire's poem on the Lisbon earthquake and Rousseau's response to it. How do catastrophic events relate to assumptions about a divinely-ordered cosmos? With the theater behind her, Hardy clarified the differences between Greek and Roman theater (the role of drama in society, the structure of the theaters).

Evening presentation of each team's curricular plans.

Day 3, June 27

Morning visit to Vesuvius. The group climbed to the top of the volcano. Siddoway explained volcanic processes and stratification inside the crater and reviewed the succession of previous flows (1890-present).

Afternoon at Herculaneum. Thakur introduced the city's history and the background to its excavation, and Siddoway pointed out evidence of the impact of the eruption of Vesuvius. Participants explored the site, with particular attention to differences in what the archaeological records reveal about Herculaneum and Pompeii.

Transfer from Naples to Florence. Teams worked on their curricular plans during the three-hour trip.

Day 4, June 28.

Morning walking tour of Florence. Ashley introduced the religious (Duomo, Baptistry), economic (Orsanmichele), and political (Palazzo Vecchio and Piazza della Signoria) centers of late medieval and Renaissance Florence. The group explored a well-preserved late medieval street to understand the nature of private lives in the period, and then focused on the role of the Arno river in the economy. In the Boboli Gardens (looking south) and the Bardini Gardens (looking north), Savinas presented material on the geology of the Arno River.

Afternoon workshop on designing interdisciplinary activities. Teams of four representing different disciplines and colleges developed an exercise, using materials covered in readings and site visits during the first three and a half days of the course. This activity proved very useful in focusing attention on the more practical aspects of interdisciplinary work.

Day 5, June 29

Morning visit to the Uffizi. Emphasis on how artists in the late medieval and Renaissance periods imagined and represented nature. Thompson and Ashley introduced the group to representative religious and secular paintings which illustrated these questions and responded to the readings for the day.

Afternoon visit to the Archaeological Museum. Brief introduction to the Etruscans and the distinctive features of their society. (Thakur). Carresco discussed the social, political, and cultural implications of mining in modern Chile. Specific references to how these issues related to Masters' work on da Vinci and Machiavelli's plans to divert the Arno River.

Mid to late afternoon discussion of the larger issues related to interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary teaching presented by Balaam and Casson. They moderated a lively exchange on the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary curricula and collaboration. Individual teams worked to complete a preliminary report, using a template supplied by the leadership team (in consultation with ACM representative Schodt)

Day 6, June 30.

Day visit to Orvieto. Orvieto is an outstanding example of a hill town, originally inhabited by the Etruscans, and then used by late Renaissance popes as a fortified refuge. Thompson offered a general introduction to the facade of the Duomo, and participants

collectively discussed the particulars of the sculptural program of the door of Genesis. Guided visit to "Orvieto underground," to a few of the 2,000 subterranean excavations under Orvieto. The group then visited the interior of the Duomo. Trull described the program of the Signorelli chapel. Participants then explored other sites and museums in the city.

Day 7, July 1.

Morning workshop on geospatial platforms for interdisciplinary teaching and research. Siddoway introduced the digital terrain map of Italy, GoogleEarth, and GeoMapApp. She also presented one unconventional application of these tools to the examination of a stained glass window. Thakur showed examples of geospatial databases related to the Ancient Mediterranean. Teams worked independently to use the resources for hands-on exercises.

Afternoon session presented by Kann on the uses of images in teaching. She provided several examples and emphasized some of the potential problems of relying on technology.

Time for teams to complete their preliminary project reports for review by Schodt and to explore other sites related to their curricula.

Day 8, July 2

Morning visit to the Padule di Fucecchio, the largest internal wetland in Italy. Focus on the development and use of the wetlands from the Middle Ages to the Present. St. Clair described the ecological significance of marshlands, with particular reference to the Fucecchio example.

Late morning visit to the Campo dei Miracoli of Pisa, with Ashley describing efforts to control the lean of the Tower of Pisa and Janet Smith, long time director of the ACM Florence program, providing information on the original Roman settlement and the construction of the cathedral and the baptistry.

Time for site visits related to individual and team projects and interests.

Day 9, July 3

Morning session to share team projects. Schodt began with general comments on his reading of the preliminary reports. Then teams summarized their projects and described how their projects changed over the course of the seminar. Participants responded to each other's projects, asking questions and offering suggestions. The morning concluded with a discussion of next steps.

In the second phase of a two-day investigation of the ecology of the Arno River basin, the group visited Volpaia, a medieval village which now hosts wine and olive oil making facilities for the labels Cestello Volpaia. Lynch spoke about human agricultural landscapes as part of the Mediterranean ecosystem and raised questions about the politics of preserving traditional landscapes. A visit to Montefili, a farm which combines the production of grapes and olives with agro-turismo. We learned more about the process and economics of these operations.

Day 10, July 4

Transfer to Rome. Visit to the Piazza Navona. Ziskowski presented information on the

the sources, transportation, distribution, and disposal of water in ancient Rome.
Visit to St. Peters, with Thakur, Kann, and Thompson providing a general introduction to churches on this site in the ancient, medieval, and late Renaissance periods. Guided visit to the excavations underneath St. Peters, followed by a climb to the top of the cupula to observe the sweep of the city and the surrounding hills.