Studying Abroad in Italy
By Josh Wilson '15

When I tell people I studied abroad in Italy, the first response I get is "you must have eaten so well!" or "that sounds so relaxing!" While those things may be true, I would hardly characterize my study abroad experience in Padua, Italy, as a getaway vacation. Those four months were truly an adventure that challenged me in ways that I hadn't been challenged before. In that short time, I climbed the Italian Alps, visited Venice, Verona, Milan, Cinque Terre, Rome, and Sicily, and took weekend trips to Berlin to witness the 25th anniversary of the Berlin Wall coming down and visit a concentration camp, and to Salzburg and Vienna, Austria, where I saw the sites of the Sound of Music and the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. All the while, I had the unbelievable opportunity to study at the fifth oldest university in the world (l'Università degli Studi di Padova, in conjunction with Boston University), which hosted none other than Galileo Galilei and witnessed the first female university graduate in the world.

One of my most valuable cultural integration experiences, aside from my homestay, was my tandem learning partnership. At the beginning of the semester, I was paired with a local student from the University of Padua. The goal was to simultaneously learn from each other's culture, which was achieved by speaking for one hour per week, half in English, and half in Italian. In traditional Italian style, we met over an aperitivo and we discussed everything from Italian politics to Hegelian philosophy to our favorite Disney movies. The topic wasn't necessarily important; the act of cultural and linguistic exchange was critical to both of us in becoming better people.

One of the most important moments during my semester was when I found out that I got an A in my Italian literature course. I need to preface this by saying that this course — and covered the "Scapigliatura" period of Italian literary history, which, unbeknownst to me, is the most difficult period, even for native Italians. It's also worth noting that Italians handle their grades differently; the whole semester rests on the grade (a total of thirty points) from a forty-five minute oral exam with the professor.

This course required me to read four novels in two months, which is a lot considering Italian students had until February to read their books before the exam, and I had to balance three courses — something Italian students don't do. It was so much reading, and I was mortified about speaking Italian non-stop for forty-five minutes that I was aiming for a passing grade of 18/30. I waltzed into the final exam with the professor, apologized for any mistakes in Italian that I might make, and proceeded to speak Italian for the better part of an hour. I was so nervous that she thought I was some ignorant American student who couldn't speak Italian and didn't understand any of the readings. When she presented me with a 29/30, I was in a state of utter disbelief. Although it seemed small, that moment was a monumental affirmation of my language skills and cultural competence. It was a culmination of taking six semesters of Italian from scratch and trying to survive in a foreign country for four months.

After everything that happened during the semester, both good and bad, I couldn’t think of a better way to finish off this period of my life.
Bucknell Brigade

By Taylor McCready ‘17

On the 3rd of January 2015, nineteen students and three faculty advisors met anxiously in Hunt Formal to gather luggage and medical supplies. They started their journey from Bucknell around 7pm and after about 15 hours of traveling they made it to Managua, Nicaragua. Despite being exhausted, they were thrilled to begin their weeklong journey.

Since 1998, Bucknell has partnered with the Jubilee House Community (JHC) in Nueva Vida, Nicaragua to work with the local rural community. Nueva Vida is located right outside of Managua, Nicaragua and has been the home for about 10,000 people since Hurricane Mitch hit on October 29, 1998. It is the second deadliest Atlantic hurricane in history, killing over 11,000 people. Nearly one-fifth of Nicaragua’s population was left homeless and economic damage totaled more than $1.5 billion.

The mission of the JHC community is to work with the poor and in partnership with communities and cooperatives to facilitate empowerment. They work to fulfill the goals the community identifies and enable them to become self-sufficient and sustainable. After the first Bucknell brigade traveled to Nicaragua in 1998, the brigadistas pledged to start a health clinic for the people of Neuva Vida. Today, Bucknell donates around $40,000 annually to the health clinic which pays for the salaries of the employees. The Bucknell Brigade fundraises through selling things such as Nicaraguan crafts, pottery, and coffee.

During our stay, we worked at the health clinic for three days. Tasks varied from sorting medical files, putting medical supplies away, working at the pharmacy, and helping to build a new third building for the health clinic.

Working with the native people was the most rewarding part of the experience for me. I can’t speak Spanish but I was amazed at how much we were able to accomplish through body language and hand motions. For example, we moved 300 pound cement columns from the JHC to the health clinic for the new building.

Another great experience we had during the trip was traveling to a coffee co-op called El Porvenir that sits at the top of La Pelona, a mountain about four hours from Nueva Vida. The community is so isolated that when we got about an hour away we all hopped off a bus and loaded onto an ox cart, pulled by a tractor. When we reached the top, we got to hike around the coffee plantation and learn how the organic farm produces its coffee, using 80 year old machinery. That night we slept in hammocks looking up at brilliantly shining stars and awaking to a beautiful sunrise.

The last service-learning part of our trip was working at a sesame seed plant co-op. One of the employees at the JHC who helped to get the co-op started, gave us a tour of the plant and the process with which the seeds are peeled and washed off before being bagged and shipped out. While there, our task was to dig two 7 feet deep holes where plastic water waste bins will be placed. It was challenging, but very rewarding!

Those are just some of the many highlights we had on the trip! If you are interested in learning more about the brigade or want to get involved stop by the Office of Civic Engagement or visit http://jhc-cdca.org/home/.
Little Gems from Cuba

By Quinn Blanco ‘15

Last January, a group of 20 students and staff from Bucknell spanning six different nationalities visited Cuba through Bucknell Hillel and the Jewish Cuba Connection. The main purpose of the trip was to learn about Cuba and its Jewish community as well as to provide community service to the Cuban people.

Cuba, in all its beauty, helped me pick up little gems of knowledge and broaden my perspective. I have never seen so vividly the beauty of a group of people that is truly of mixed races. Sitting at a local bus stop waiting for a bus, I saw people of various shades of color sitting next to each other. In my head, as I tried to decide who to ask for directions - someone who could possibly know a little bit of English, it hit me how much prejudice and bias I still had. From that day, I was able to reconcile what a mixed group of people really meant and realized how Cuba is far ahead in racial equality than most countries that I perceive as developed.

Cuba also made me realize that certain professions are valued differently in various settings. In Cuba, a profession is considered lucrative if it helps you earn foreign currency from tourists. Therefore bartenders, souvenir vendors, waiters, and taxi drivers can possibly earn more on average than engineers, doctors and professors - something that is unheard of in the US.

Another thing that I learned in Cuba is how people can amazingly stretch the amount of money that they earn per month. Simple gestures, such as putting back water color paint that has been squeezed out of its container, reminded me how scarce resources actually are and how creative people can be once they are faced with the reality of scarcity.

Furthermore, when I look at the history and the current situation of the Jewish community in Cuba, I feel upset how people need to travel beyond their home countries’ borders to achieve a life that is more desirable at home. This is also something that happens to my home country and many others in the developing world. This brings so much social issues, some of which I saw firsthand visiting the Sephardic Center in Havana. A lot of the elderly have no family left in Cuba, and I am glad that the Sephardic Center is there to provide them some form of assistance. I am hopeful that the situation in Cuba will change for the better in the years to come.

The most enjoyable part for me was hanging out with the seniors at the Sephardic Center. It really shows how laughter is universal, and how humans are able to connect at a certain level despite any cultural or language barriers. All it takes is the courage and willingness to do it.
"Ain’t I a Woman?"

By Anushikha Sharma ‘18

The Weis Centre auditorium was overflowing. Every person sitting in the room could taste the electric excitement in the atmosphere. Several of these folks, many of them Bucknell students with busy schedules, had been waiting in line for over an hour. All this preparation, all this enthusiasm was for the arrival of this celebrity: Laverne Cox.

Some knew her from the inspiring talks that she has given about transgender individuals in the society and some knew her from the wonderful documentaries that she has brought out for the world to see. However, most people in the auditorium were waiting for ‘Sophia’ from the Orange is the New Black.

And when she arrived, she didn’t disappoint.

Laverne Cox looked beautiful in a black dress; her body posture exuding confidence and pride. She introduced herself as a ‘proud African-American, transgender woman’ and the silence in the auditorium was palatable. In that one short sentence, she had stated every identity that had ever caused her to suffer discrimination and humiliation.

Laverne Cox took us through her journey of travelling from her home in Alabama to the city of New York. This journey proves to be very symbolic of her transition to womanhood. Her story gives us insight into the trans community of New York City. With the vivid descriptions of the people she met and the encounters she had, we could see this life-altering experience unfurl in front of our eyes.

During the talk, Laverne Cox mentioned several statistics about the transgender society. She said that the homicide rates were highest amongst transgender women and 41% of the community had attempted suicide. She made a distinction between ‘shame’ and ‘guilt’ where guilt is when ‘one does something wrong’ and shame is when ‘one IS wrong’. Her distinction resonated in the hearts of several members of the audience, especially because transgender people and other members of the LGBTQ community are often made to feel that there is something wrong with them because they are either gender-nonconforming or are not heterosexual.

Another quote from Laverne Cox that struck me was - “woman does not compare to female”. Often times, I have come across the belief that men cannot be feminists. She said that ‘feminist’ was an identity that had nothing to do with the binary gender distinction. Anyone can be a feminist, irrespective of social class, gender, race and sexuality.

The talk opened my eyes to a lot of the unknown violence and discrimination that takes place in the transgender community. Laverne Cox also seems to have become an idol for several people on campus. And why shouldn’t she? She has shown us that gender non-conforming individuals are as beautiful as the rest of us; she reminded us that "when lives are threatened, there should be accountability". An excellent representative for the trans-community, Laverne Cox is a symbol of strength and love and can prove to be the support system for many folks who have been shamed for their identities.
Bucknell is First Stop in Black in America Tour

On Tuesday, February 3, 2015, the Bucknell community welcomed Soledad O’Brien and the Black in America 2015 tour at the Weis Center for the Performing Arts. The Black in America series "presents a detailed examination of the facts behind community policing, racial profiling, controversial crime reduction tactics, and arrest quotas."

The event featured a presentation by Soledad on the subject of racial disparities in America, followed by a Panel discussion on the same topic. Panelists included: Alderman French, Julianne Malveaux, celebrity Chuck D (via Skype), and Carmen Gillespie. The evening concluded with a Q&A session with members of the audience. Those in attendance also got a chance to meet the panelists after the event. Some student perspectives are shared below.

Black in America was sponsored by the Bucknell Student Lectureship Committee, CAP Center, and Bucknell Student Government. Visit www.iamtheconversation.com for more information on the tour.

"Can a "genuine" conversation, as Ms. O’Brien put it, be achieved at Bucknell? I believe so and would love to be a part of it before I graduate. The lectureship committee held a wonderful, thought-provoking discussion that Bucknell needed to hear."

Jeremy van de Rijn ‘15

"I found it incredibly unfortunate that only a small portion of students and faculty arose to the occasion to listen and participate in this event. I say this because I believe that the dialogue regarding race, race relations, and recent conflicts must include everyone no matter his or her race to achieve a positive outcome."

Elizabeth Bacharach ‘15

"Although I wish the turnout from the Bucknell community had been better, I think this was a great initiative on the part of the university to bring this type of discussion to our campus."

Danielle Taylor ’17

Article by Caesar Vulley ’15
Photos by Melissa Rios ‘16
UPCOMING IEA EVENTS

Women on Wednesdays
Weekly discussions of the issues impacting women on our campus, in the United States, and around the world.
ELC 063

Film Screening *Front of the Class* a film based on the true story of Brad Cohen and his life with Tourette’s syndrome.
I.E.A. Multipurpose Room ELC 045 February 24th @ 5:30pm

Lecture/Workshop. Beat the Blame Game.
February 17
Trout Auditorium
7 p.m
Sponsored by Speak UP Bucknell

Global Women Film Series. *Apache 8*
A film about an all-female group of firefighters
February 19
ELC 045, 9 p.m
Sponsored by ISS & WRC

National Eating Disorder Week
February 23—27
Schedule of Events TBA

Professional Staff:
Bill McCoy (LGBTQ Resources)
Jennifer Figueroa (ISS)
Tracy Russell (WRC)
Vincent Stephens (MSS)
Padma Ravichandran (Interpersonal Violence Prevention Coordinator)
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