History Major spends summer working on Sicilian archeology dig

By Nicole Storm

If I had two words to describe my study abroad experience, they would be “life changing!” I had the privilege to travel to Ortigia, Sicily, and participate in an archeological dig. I thought I would be given menial tasks such as sifting through dirt or studying artifacts that were found. I ended up working in the Catacombs of Santa Lucia with a team that included two professional Sicilian archeologists, two Sicilian graduate students, a forensic anthropologist, and a technical artist. The six American students were paired up and given tombs to fully excavate.

It was breathtaking and humbling to be surrounded by so much rich history and culture. I was no longer reading about burials from the fourth century AD, frescos from the first century BC, or seventeen hundred year old coins. I was excavating the burials, touching the frescos and discovering the coins. Not only did I get the opportunity to excavate and find artifacts and find artifacts that are destined for museums, but I got the chance to help restore the different artifacts that were found. This included piecing shards of pottery back together to create a full vessel. Once a week, my professor would take us to a museum or tourist attraction. It was so awe-inspiring to think that the things I was finding in the Catacombs would someday be behind glass at a museum, helping to piece together the puzzle of history.

The most frustrating yet entertaining part about studying abroad was the language barrier. Only the professional archeologists on the dig spoke English. While trying to communicate with anyone else on the dig, I would use hand signals and try to piece together my elementary understanding of Italian. It was awesome being thrown into a different culture and learning how to shop, talk, cook, eat, and live like a local.
Did you know...?

- The Humanities are moving in tandem with the digital age, from creating digital databases to preserving historical cultural identities.

- Digital Humanities is a growing field. The discipline uses computational techniques to uncover unexpected connections and intriguing patterns in the visual arts, literature, music and historical works.

- Text Mining is quickly becoming a hot career path for Humanities majors; the academic research skills that this career requires are skills that Humanities majors develop as part of their research training.

Meet the Faculty:

Prof. Robert Reutter
College Writing Faculty/Founder of Lone Brick Theater

One of my favorite aspects about teaching at Widener is the sense of community engendered by the campus atmosphere. Among faculty, ideas and concerns can be given voice without fear of censure, and what has been especially noticeable since I began work with Lone Brick Theater is the remarkable amount of support there is for individual professors’ research and projects, both curricular and extracurricular. Much of my research focuses on contemporary horror narratives [and] I am exploring the underdeveloped potential of contemporary theater as a medium for the horror narrative.

One of the driving principles with Lone Brick Theater is finding innovative and unconventional approaches to storytelling. Staging Distracted presents so many opportunities to stray from unconventional approaches to theatrical storytelling and calls upon the innovative skills of cast and crew. I am in the process of finalizing two productions for the spring semester. Collaboration with the classroom is another one of the guiding principles of Lone Brick’s future work. In my spare time, I write fiction...and when I can make time for it, I love to cook.

Can music be the key to career success? Top professionals think so.

A recent NY Times opinion article by JoAnne Lipmann (October 13, 2013) states that music may be a contributing factor to academic and career achievement. According to the article, music study helped high achiever professionals succeed in their chosen careers. Condoleezza Rice, Alan Greenspan, Bruce Kovner, Paul Allen, Woody Allen, Roger McNamee, Larry Page, Steven Spielberg and Paula Zahn, among others, are all accomplished musicians in their own right.

Music study, according to those interviewed for the article, hones critical thinking skills and forges pathways to other proficiencies, like learning how to listen, to collaborate, and “to weave together disparate ideas.” Music study reinforces concentration, and trains the student to “focus on the present and the future simultaneously.” It engenders focus and self-discipline and allows the learner to project new ways of communication, of problem solving, of creative thought and material creativity.

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