

# Building A Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program: From Development to History Pedagogy in Istanbul

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IN 2008, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO (UCSD) joined the ranks of institutions offering Global Seminars, short-term study abroad programs designed and led by the institution's own faculty. In this model, an instructor teaches two courses in his or her area of expertise and guides students through a city or other location abroad for five weeks, integrating the course work with the site to enhance learning and to enrich the student experience. In the UCSD model, each Global Seminar (GS) required a minimum of fifteen students for financial viability and was capped at a maximum of thirty students for manageability. In Summer 2009, I led a program in Istanbul, teaching a lower-division world history course and an upper-division history course on Byzantium. The Istanbul program was offered again in 2010 and I will lead a fourth GS there in 2011. With the hope that this experience may be of interest or potential use to faculty or administrators at other institutions, I offer this general introduction and overview, from program development to implementation and assessment, and discuss the integration of the site itself in history pedagogy.

## **Program Development and Logistics**

The GS development process began when the UCSD International Center's Programs Abroad Office issued its GS Requests for Proposals

(RFPs). Faculty then submitted applications which detailed proposed locations and courses, a plan for integrating the two together, and a basic outreach strategy, identifying to whom the program might be of interest or use (such as students with particular major/minor or general education needs that could be fulfilled by the program), and how prospective students might be informed about this. The RFP release was followed by a series of information sessions to help interested faculty understand the application process, the GS model, and institutional expectations. An International Center selection committee (comprised of deans, administrators, and faculty) determined which programs met the criteria of fiscal and logistical viability, academic rigor, faculty suitability, potential student interest, site safety, and overall likelihood for success. It should be noted here that the university did not (and will not) subsidize any GS program. If a program failed to reach the necessary minimum enrollment of fifteen students (i.e., the financial “break even” point), the program was cancelled. In that case, students had the option to receive back their otherwise non-refundable deposit or to select another available GS program. The general timeline for this process was: RFP release in late January, information sessions in February and March, application deadline in April, and program selection and faculty notification in May for the GS programs running in July of the following year.

The year that elapsed between a program’s selection in May and delivery in July of the following year was filled with steps necessary to get the program off the ground. Since the UCSD GS model is to send only one faculty member with fifteen to thirty undergraduates, it relies on the support of a third-party provider, an on-location organization which makes arrangements and provides logistical needs for such essential matters as lodging, food, transportation, healthcare, etc. This model allows the faculty member to focus primarily on academic matters as he or she would on campus, largely relieved of the burden of these logistical responsibilities. This model provides support for general problems (such as matters of room lighting, water pressure in the bathroom, laundry issues, etc.) and for more serious concerns of student health and well-being. In the latter case, the provider would coordinate, for example, hospital arrangements or even relocation back home so that the professor and the remaining students could continue the program as planned (though likely emotionally affected by the situation).

Drawing from a pool of well-established organizations, UCSD selected its third-party provider through a bidding process which took place in the summer immediately following program selection in May. The provider, in turn, set up the program logistics, following the plan developed and proposed by the faculty member who had the opportunity to make adjust-

ments to this after the selection announcement in response to committee or even provider feedback. The provider also made all arrangements for the site visits (per the instructor's proposal) as well as for lodging, meals, transportation, classroom, introductory language instruction, healthcare, cell phone rentals, and any other special needs such as student dietary matters. The use of third-party providers was extremely helpful, but it obviously added an additional layer of cost.

The provider appointed a coordinator who met with the students and faculty regularly throughout the program. Students relied primarily on the coordinator, and not the faculty, for non-academic problems that inevitably arose, ranging from lodging complaints (lighting matters, access to study space, etc.) to lost ATM cards, laundry questions, and so forth. While the faculty member may be informed and may certainly care about such problems, it was the coordinator's priority and responsibility to resolve them. To facilitate communication, cell phone rental was built into the program cost. The phones ensured convenient communication between faculty and students, between students, and between the coordinator and the group. The students were instructed on the use of the cell phone and the local phone number system, and were given all relevant phone numbers.

### **Language Matters**

Lest students be hesitant or intimidated to study in a location where they do not speak the language, the UCSD promotion and information sessions stressed that there was no language requirement for participation in the program. English was the language of lecture, of discussion, and of all academic work, just as it would be for a course taken on campus in La Jolla. The university was, so to speak, simply moving the campus, the professor, and the students from San Diego County to Istanbul. The courses taught there were the same UCSD courses that were offered on campus, with the same course numbers and taught by the same faculty member, though these had a "GS" designation added after the course number to make the study abroad experience evident on transcripts. We did, however, want to introduce students to the basics of the language as part of the program.

In Istanbul, starting in the program's first week, introductory language classes were given by the provider's coordinator. In 2008, my GS program had an interactive ninety-minute crash course. In the 2009 GS program, this morphed into an ongoing ten-hour course with five two-hour sessions. After the first lively session in week one, this became too much additional work when added to an already intense and demanding academic workload (described below). When the students were faced with the challenge

of managing the course readings, assignments, site visits, and their own exploration of the city, the language instruction felt like the burden of a seemingly obligatory third course, without credit. This was a mistake which we corrected by reducing the language training from two hours to one hour and making all remaining sessions optional. Those students eager to learn more Turkish continued on in the new format, those content with their level did not.

### **Program Promotion and Student Recruitment**

The year between program selection and program delivery in the summer of the following year allowed ample time to prepare the GS instructors through faculty workshops on administrative matters, risk management, and pedagogy abroad, as well as GS program promotion. Given that students are regularly bombarded by e-mails, flyers, and announcements from the university, from departments, and from organizations, it required effort to make students cognizant of the GS program opportunities. Moreover, contrary to conventional wisdom, great sites like Paris and Rome simply did not sell themselves, particularly since the GS programs were also in competition with other study abroad options enticing students to the same locations.

To address these challenges, our Summer 2009 program promotion began with freshmen and transfer student orientations in Summer and early Fall 2008. This initial promotion was followed by general information sessions offered by faculty and the Programs Abroad Office in Fall 2008 and Winter 2009. These sessions were publicized on our websites (Eleanor Roosevelt College and the University International Center sites), through mass e-mails as well as e-mail messages directed specifically to majors and minors, through in-class announcements and on campus flyers, by undergraduate Residence Advisors (RAs) in the dormitories, and by Academic Advising and Student Affairs staff members in their student activities and programming. The sessions provided information about the program, location, courses, application process, financial matters (cost, financial aid, scholarships), and academic advising issues (i.e., how the course work could be used to fulfill departmental or general education requirements). This information was also presented on the GS page of the UCSD International Center's Programs Abroad Office website: <<http://pao.ucsd.edu/pao/gs/>>. To help in this process, I created a specific Istanbul Global Seminar website, using the free and user-friendly Google application found at <<http://google.sites.com>> to market the program and to provide a convenient referral site for staff, interested students, and concerned parents. This website can be found at: <<http://sites.google>.

com/site/ucsdistanbul/>. Student applications were accepted from Fall through Winter quarters (October 2008 through March 2009) for the GS programs running in Summer 2009.

Through all of these avenues, our outreach efforts reached several thousand students. Despite these numbers, we were only able to secure fifteen students for Istanbul, the minimum necessary for the GS program. In contrast, thirty students, the maximum allowable, ultimately signed up for our Modern World History in Berlin. (We had a similar experience in the 2010 Global Seminars promotion process when twenty-five students immediately signed up in Fall quarter 2009 for our Summer 2010 World History in Athens GS, whereas the Istanbul GS required months of extra effort to reach the enrollment threshold, though we ultimately enrolled twenty-one students.) Our 2009 promotion efforts were necessarily far more time-consuming and energy-intensive than they were in 2008, with the grave state of the economy and foreboding economic forecast substantially working against us. Due to these challenges, UCSD was forced to cancel a number of programs because of under-enrollment (that is, with fewer than fifteen students enrolled), including programs in Paris and Budapest.

A particular challenge to the Istanbul program was student and/or parent perception that the city was unsafe because of its connection to Islam and the Middle East, with fears and anxieties raised about terrorism and student safety. Seeing this as an opportunity to educate, while allaying such concerns, I made myself available by phone, by e-mail, and in person. I wrote to a number of students and to their parents and even had lunch with one family, which greatly reassured them. They, in fact, became very excited about Istanbul and were further relieved to learn that my own wife and children would be accompanying me to the city (though it should be pointed out that this was at my own, and not the university's, expense).

Interested students submitted an application to the Programs Abroad Office (PAO) along with a non-refundable deposit (which then went toward their program costs). The PAO managed student screening, selection, and all financial and administrative matters. The PAO then presented the final list of students to the GS faculty member to contact the class and to begin meeting with students.

### **Pre-Departure Meetings and Readings**

My first contact with the Istanbul GS students was a “welcome” e-mail message sent at the end of Winter quarter so that we could arrange meeting times in Spring quarter and begin group building and class preparation for the Summer program. Since the students had their own course work for

the quarter, the meetings were light, lasting sixty to ninety minutes, and at a time when they were all available (which turned out to be Thursday and Sunday nights). Food was provided at each meeting so that, if nothing else, students had a meal break between research and study sessions.

We met three times over the course of Spring quarter. The first meeting was a “get to know one another” opportunity and students filled out a brief questionnaire that asked:

1. What attracted you to the GS program in Istanbul?
2. What would you like to get out of the Istanbul Global Seminar and what are you most looking forward to?
3. As you think about Istanbul right now, what stands out the most?
4. What are your biggest concerns or worries about Istanbul and about the program?

Through their answers, I learned a bit about the students and tailored the remaining meetings to address their specific needs. The second meeting focused on student concerns and general preparation matters, and the final meeting was about academics. Overall, the sessions addressed: course work (readings, assignments, etc.), concerns (safety, lodging, money, etc.), etiquette (particularly attire), and the travelling process (what to bring, how to pack, passport/visa matters). Students also heard from Istanbul natives who introduced them to aspects of Turkish culture, provided guidance about etiquette and tips on the city, and addressed student questions and concerns.

To stay connected, we created a private Facebook group (unseen by and unavailable to anyone else) with membership limited to the students, professor, and key UCSD staff and faculty. This became the most convenient and useful means of keeping connected with students and sharing information, ranging from flight issues to course matters. Since the students were avid Facebook users, this social-networking tool became more useful than their official university e-mail accounts, which I began to use less frequently. Facebook more readily connected professor to students and, vice versa, students to professor. Throughout the program, from pre-departure to program conclusion, students posted questions and comments, kept me abreast of concerns and health matters, and even expressed their joys and frustrations. Additionally, this connection made for a most convenient way to share photos of the group experience at our many outings throughout the program. The students greatly appreciated seeing photos of themselves and of the group, and this also allowed administrators, faculty, and friends elsewhere to share in the experience of the study abroad program.

At the third and final meeting, at the end of Spring quarter, academic course matters shifted to center stage, and students received the list of

required texts and the reading plan for the entire GS program (though the actual course syllabi were not distributed until shortly before the start of the program). The required texts were:

Bentley, Jerry and Herbert F. Ziegler. *Traditions and Encounters*. Volume B (1000-1800). San Francisco, CA: McGraw Hill, 2008.

Herrin, Judith. *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*. New York: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Izkowitz, Norman. *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Reilly, Kevin. *Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader*. Custom Edition for Making of the Modern World 4. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.

The remaining reading was composed of scholarly articles provided digitally (see Appendix for these e-readings).

As faculty, we are generally concerned with the *cost* of textbooks, but on campus, we rarely if ever concern ourselves with the *weight* of textbooks. When teaching abroad, however, text size and weight become a pressing concern because of weight restrictions on luggage around which the students must navigate, incurring a cost penalty if they fail. The assigned texts may add significantly more weight to student luggage if care is not taken through advanced consideration by the faculty member. The digital option was the best solution, made easier by the fact that students would have access to computers in Istanbul, either with their own personal laptops or using other on-site computers.

I assigned a number of pre-departure readings that the students were required to complete before arriving in Istanbul. This reading served two purposes. First, it prompted students to begin reading the assigned texts, getting a jump-start on the material before the exhilarating shock of being in Istanbul distracted and lured them away from more mundane matters like reading for class. Second, it provided a general introduction to the city beyond the orientation that I had given in our pre-departure meetings. This reading complemented GS course themes and site visits, with articles addressing the city's geography, aspects of its history, and some specific monuments (such as Hagia Sophia) and topics (such as Istanbul and Islam). This assigned reading made student inquiry and discussion more vibrant from the first class and site visit and provided a base to build upon and to refer back to in the days ahead.

### **The Global Seminar Courses**

The Istanbul program was designed around two courses. The first course, Making of the Modern World 4 (covering world history from 1200 to 1750),



is a lower-division class that is part of a general education six-course sequence required of all Eleanor Roosevelt College undergraduates (ERC is one of six undergraduate colleges at UCSD). The Making of the Modern World Program (MMW) provides students with a global perspective on the past from early human societies to the present, while also teaching university-level research and writing. Students entering the university as freshmen in the Fall quarter enroll in MMW 1 (Human Origins and Early Societies) and progress through MMW 2 (1200 B.C.E.-100 B.C.E.) in Winter quarter and MMW 3 (100 B.C.E.-1200 C.E.) in Spring. Many students then take the remaining course sequence, MMW 4 (1200-1750), MMW 5 (1750-1917), and MMW 6 (20<sup>th</sup> Century and Beyond), in their sophomore year. Other students, however, opt to break up the sequence by taking advantage of Summer MMW options or delaying these courses until later in their academic career. Students entering as freshmen must complete the entire sequence, while transfer students, entering as upper-division students, choose any three courses in the sequence. The Istanbul program enrolled some students who had just completed MMW 3 in Spring quarter, others who had completed the entire sequence except MMW 4, one transfer student for whom this was the final GE requirement, and one non-UCSD student. Since this MMW sequence is a graduation requirement and since the college mission is, in part, to connect students with the world around, we strongly promoted the Istanbul program as well as an MMW 6 option in Berlin, to the Eleanor Roosevelt College student body.

The second GS course was an upper-division history survey of the Byzantine Empire. Only two students were history majors for whom this course could fulfill a departmental requirement. For the others, this course was able to fulfill another college general education requirement. Eleanor Roosevelt College requires students—in addition to completing the MMW sequence and their departmental major requirements (and the college has all academic majors, from anthropology and biology to psychology and zoology)—to select one region of the world as an area of specialization which requires additional lower- and upper-division course work. An incentive (besides the wonders of the site location) for recruiting students to the GS programs was that the course work directly fulfilled general education requirements that advanced them toward graduation (since they needed these classes whether they took them on campus or abroad), while also offering a remarkable academic and personal experience.

### **Class Schedule, Classroom, and Student Lodging**

Our classroom in Istanbul was a conference room in the hotel where the students resided. This room provided ample space and was furnished



with computers, projector, printer, and paper, all of which had been arranged and secured by the third-party provider as part of the GS contract. Class was scheduled from 9:00am to 1:00pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, with approximately two hours devoted to each course per day. This format ensured the same number of class hours per course, per week as a course in a ten-week quarter or five-week Summer session course back on campus (for a total of thirty hours of instruction per course). In reality, the total GS class time greatly exceeded the on-campus course equivalent since the university officially equates two hours of a site visit (excluding transportation time) to one hour of class time. Site visits were not scheduled during class time; rather they were arranged for the afternoon, with longer excursions (Bosphorus Cruise, Topkapı Palace, etc.) scheduled on Thursdays when there was no class. Students had three free days to explore the city further (or parts beyond) as well as to keep up with course readings and assignments. This model was only broken on the Saturday of week one when we gathered for a Sufi event that provided an opportunity to meet with students and ensure that all was well during their first weekend in the city.

Student lodging was arranged by the third-party provider at a small hotel in the Gülhane district of Istanbul, near the heart of the old city and its attractions, and only a short walk from the Gülhane tram station. There were two students per room and the hotel included an ample buffet breakfast each morning (included in the program). Students certainly enjoyed the convenience of having their classroom, lodging, and breakfast all in the same location.

### **Transportation and Orientation Matters**

Students were responsible for booking and purchasing their own airline tickets. They were given a specific arrival day, time, and meeting point in the airport (maps and information on the airport had been provided in advance). Allowing students to make their own arrangements to get to Istanbul was necessary since the students were arriving from a wide variety of international and domestic locations (Korea, India, and from the West Coast, the Midwest, and the East Coast of the U.S.); given this, a group flight from San Diego to Istanbul was just not possible. The provider's coordinator met the students at the airport and arranged for transportation to take them to their hotel. Any student unable to arrive at the designated time was given detailed instructions to make arrangements for their own transportation into the city and put in contact with the hotel directly.

Upon arrival, the students received a brief orientation to the neighborhood (local market, tram stop, restaurants, etc.) and were then given a

few hours to rest after their long and tiring journey. This rest break was a lesson learned from our 2008 program which had arranged far too much on the students' day of arrival, including activities prior to a group dinner in the evening. This resulted in almost every student falling asleep on the excursion rather than being engaged. This time around, the only formal activity planned on the students' first day in Istanbul was the group dinner in the evening where we ceremonially began the GS program.

The next morning, students received their orientation from the provider's coordinator. This covered rules and administrative matters as well as the distribution of rental cell phones and transportation passes which gave students access to the Istanbul public transit system for the duration of the program. This orientation took two hours and cut into the first day's scheduled class time. Subsequent meetings between the coordinator and class, for language training, feedback sessions, and so forth, were always scheduled outside of course time.

### **Site Visits and Integration**

The academic program linked course material with the city's geography, neighborhoods, monuments, museums, and other sites. Considering the different course trajectories, the site visits were designed, as much as possible, to touch on both. Students prepared for each excursion by considering the site's original purpose and patronage and then traced the site's transformation and, where relevant, contested legacy. What, for example, did this Byzantine site signify to the Ottomans and how did the latter make it their own?

Our first site visit (in the afternoon of the first day of instruction) was to Hagia Sophia, and this provides a good example. Hagia Sophia stands as the iconic Byzantine monument. Built by Emperor Justinian in the sixth century (replacing earlier constructions on this location), Hagia Sophia was the physical manifestation of Byzantine wealth, power, and prestige for nearly a millennium. Students encountered its structure, layout, and mosaics and explored its transformation from a Byzantine Christian imperial monument to an Ottoman mosque. The minarets, mihrab, minbar, Arabic calligraphy pendants, *inter alia*, testify to this transformation. The students had already read about Hagia Sophia in their pre-departure reading and we discussed this material before, during, and after our site visit. Students witnessed similar transitions at other sites, including the Kariye Muzesi (Chora Monastery) and Fetiye Camii (Pammakaristos Church).

Our second site visit (in the afternoon of the second day of instruction) was to the Byzantine walls of the city, specifically to the area around the Golden Gate that emperors had once used to enter the city in ceremonial

procession. We had discussed this subject in class that morning when students learned about the empire's fifth-century military challenges and the construction of the massive walls of Constantinople under Emperor Theodosius II. A few hours later, students found themselves climbing and exploring those very same walls. The group witnessed the transition from Byzantine to Ottoman by the attached Yedikule fortress built by Sultan Mehmet II who conquered the city in 1453. Yedikule transformed the imperial entryway into an Ottoman military stronghold, complete with pointed Ottoman towers and mosque for Muslim devotion (neither extant today). Afterwards, students travelled, by bus, the entire circuit of the medieval walls (both preserved and absent) heading north to the Golden Horn, east to the Bosphorus, and then westward along the Sea of Marmora, becoming oriented to the geography of the city and glimpsing sites that we would visit or learn about later in the program.

Other sites with a Byzantine emphasis were: Basilica Cistern, which tied into a discussion of the city's water supply and the building activity of Emperor Justinian; Pammakaristos (Fetiye Camii) and Chora Church (Kariye Muzesi) with their impressive Byzantine mosaics, conveying the cultural dynamism of Byzantium even in the late period; and finally, the Galata Tower, a fourteenth-century Genoese construction, and surrounding area which related to the role of the West in the political and economic history of the Byzantine Empire.

While the world history course presented a portrait of the global past in the medieval and early modern periods (1200 to 1750), the Ottoman Empire shifted to center stage as students explored its relationship to inter-regional and world-wide events, such as the spread of the Black Death, the Western European "discovery" of the Americas and exploitation of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean trade, the "crisis" of the seventeenth century, and scientific developments in the early modern period. The course was structured around themes which students traced in a variety of civilizations, including political structure, religious ideology, and one civilization's inter-relationship with others (economic links, cultural connections, military conflicts, etc.). Site visits which emphasized the world history course included Atik Valide Mosque in Üsküdar (Asian side of Istanbul) and the massive Süleymaniye Mosque complex, both built in the sixteenth century by the master Ottoman architect Sinan; the iconic seventeenth-century Sultanahmet, or Blue, Mosque; the Military Museum, with its presentation of Ottoman military power, its depictions of the city's conquest by Sultan Mehmet II, and a Mehter concert which is a vibrant, living reenactment of an Ottoman military band; the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, for a focus on the region's cultural and artistic legacy; Neve Shalom Synagogue in Galata and the Orthodox Patriarchate in the

Fener district, to explore the political and social relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman periods (which was part of a discussion of the relationship between religious and political authority in the early modern world); and site visits to Topkapı Palace, the Grand and Spice Bazaars, and a whirling dervish performance.

There were also optional site visits. Since these excursions were not required and cut into students' free time, they were attended by less than half of the students at any time. These trips either complemented the course material or touched on matters beyond the course chronology, but were simply "too good to miss." These optional visits included Dolmabahçe Palace (the nineteenth-century Ottoman palace), Eyüp Mosque and Pierre Loti Café, Surp Krior Lusarovich Armenian Orthodox Church, churches of Istiklal Caddesi, Ahrida Synagoge, the cast iron Bulgarian Church of St. Stephen, the Rahmi Koç and Istanbul Modern Museums, and a visit to Kadıköy (Asian side of Istanbul; formerly Chalcedon, site of the fifth ecumenical council in 451).

To encourage students to continue to explore and to make connections between course material and the city itself, students (working solo or in pairs) were required to give fifteen-minute presentations on a specific list of sites/topics (and to turn in a written copy of their presentation with a works cited page). To complete the assignment, students were able to draw from the reading material that I had provided as well as from electronic databases available remotely through the UCSD library. The sites and topics were: the city water supply, the city grain/bread supply, Hagia Eirene, Church of the Holy Apostles, Sts. Sergius and Bacchus Church, the (Byzantine) Great Palace, Blachernai Palace, Pantokrator Monastery, the Hippodrome, and Eyüp Mosque. These sites were not locations to which I had scheduled formal student trips. The design aimed at broadening student learning beyond the planned GS sites, prompting them to visit other sites on their own. This worked, generating a number of intra-city excursions as students ventured off to see the Faith Camii (the mosque built by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror on the site of the Byzantine Church of the Holy Apostles) and the fourth-century aqueduct built by Emperor Valens. I spaced the presentations over the course of weeks two, three, and four so that, as much as possible, the presentations coincided with matters under discussion and with other related site visits.

### **Course Assessment**

Since class size was extremely small, in contrast to the same courses taught on campus (over 200 students for MMW 4 and over 100 students for the Byzantine Empire), GS courses emphasized student participation

and interaction. Two discussion leaders were assigned in advance for each class day (in weeks two, three, and four). The discussion leaders were responsible for initiating the conversation, asking critical questions of the material, and facilitating the flow of debate and discussion. The students were prepped in advance on the expectations for this role in the pre-departure meetings and again during GS week one (with reminders via Facebook). During week one, when no student discussion leaders were appointed, I discussed and modeled what kind of questions worked and did not work for discussion. To help students in this challenging role, I provided questions for consideration for each week's readings in both courses. The use of daily discussion leaders as well as the earlier mentioned student presentations highly increased class engagement, but this consumed significantly more time than if I simply lectured on the material—that is, of course, the obvious pedagogical challenge and trade-off.

In addition to this work, course assessment was conducted through weekly in-class writing assignments (thirty minutes each). The Byzantine essays were topical and required students to formulate arguments by drawing on lectures, sites, and the variety of assigned material (this was the upper-division course). The world history writing assignments were limited to the critical examination of scholarly articles, asking students to deconstruct the scholar's position in an effort to understand the process of making arguments. This work served to provide more information about particular course issues, such as the rise of the early Ottomans, the crisis of the seventeenth century (and its impact on the Ottomans), the political significance of Ottoman architecture, etc., and to understand how scholars build arguments as well as how students can assess them. The assignments asked students to identify the scholarly question under review, the scholar's thesis and use of evidence, the alternative theses (and their treatment), and then to offer an explanation of their own assessment. The final exam required students to build their own argument using the lessons learned through this analytical process.

Each course had only one exam—a final essay worth approximately one-third of the final grade (the other components of the class grade being the in-class writing assignments, presentations, discussion-leader duties, and class discussion). The essay required students to make an argument by drawing from readings, lectures and discussions, student presentations, and site visits. For both courses, I provided questions in advance so that students had the opportunity to gather evidence and prepare their arguments. In the last week of the program (week five), class met on Monday and Tuesday as usual, but Wednesday was reserved for a gargantuan final exam day: Byzantine final was from 9:00am to 12:00pm, followed by a group lunch and break, and then World History final from 5:00pm to 8:00pm.

The students were exhausted by the end of the day, but at the same time overjoyed by having completed their exams. Thursday offered a day of rest, relaxation, and last-minute souvenir shopping. In the evening, we gathered at a restaurant in the Sirkeci Train Station for a moving, emotional “goodbye” dinner on the eve of the student departure homeward.

### Course and Program Evaluation

At the GS program conclusion, students submitted anonymous online course evaluations via the University’s Course and Professor Evaluation program (CAPE). Following UCSD protocol, these evaluations are not made available to faculty until after the term has ended and grades have been submitted. In the Istanbul evaluations, students expressed 100% approval rating for both GS courses. This was a higher approval rating than for the identical courses on campus at UCSD: 93% (Winter 2009) for Byzantium (an optional upper-division history class) and 66% (Summer 2009) for World History (a mandatory lower-division general education course).

An interesting observation on the evaluation data is that GS students reported that they studied, on average, at a similar or greater level than their fellow students taking the corresponding courses back on campus. GS students reported that they studied 6.28 hours per week for the World History course in Istanbul, while the students taking the identical course in La Jolla reported studying 6.67 hours (Summer 2009). The Byzantine Empire course was not offered in Summer 2009, so a comparison between the five-week Summer course and the ten-week quarter-long course is problematic. Nevertheless, the numbers are interesting. GS students reported studying 7.10 hours per week for the Byzantine course in Istanbul, while students in the same course on campus in Winter 2009 reported only 5.41 hours. The GS program, with its small class size, close faculty scrutiny, and high-level of student commitment, provided a rigorous and intensive academic experience as the student effort clearly demonstrated.

A second layer of evaluation was anecdotal, with students reporting their own reflections on the program. This lacked anonymity and required more student effort and time, resulting in only five responses by e-mail. These, however, were meaningful expressions of student reaction to the GS experience. Here are three student responses:

**Student #1:** Having no knowledge about Byzantine history and very little about the city of Istanbul, I arrived in the city with an open mind. By the end of the five weeks, I knew more about the history of this multifaceted city than Los Angeles, the city I grew up in! Studying Byzantine History and MMW 4 in Istanbul felt as if I were living history; I climbed the same fortresses that Ottoman soldiers have defended centuries ago and I walked

the same halls of the Hagia Sophia (in absolute awe) where Byzantine emperors were crowned. The interactive learning experience of visiting historical and cultural places about which I have studied helped me to immerse in an unfamiliar environment—one that requires adaptation, tolerance, and respect. Walking through the teeming streets, interacting with Turkish citizens, and conversing with them enhanced my own understanding of a society that can be so different from mine; yet, many times, we found more common ground in ways we would never imagine. College, I believe, is the best time in a person's life to immerse in genuine personal growth while enhancing one's intellectual career. One of the best ways to do that is to take advantage of a global seminar!

**Student #2:** I knew that there was a wealth of culture and history in the city before arriving, but after actually reaching the city I was blown away. I did not expect to learn so much or leave the city appreciating its development this much. My horizons were really widened by this Global Seminar. I made new friends, learned a lot more about the Turkish culture by being immersed in it, enjoyed trying new foods and learning basic Turkish, and loved being able to visit the sites my friends can only read about. The site visits in general were my favorite part of the program—they really allowed me to put into perspective the scale of different structures, understand the spread of religions, and visualize (or at least imagine) the magnificence and grandeur I was studying.

**Student #3:** Hagia Sophia has by far been my favorite site visit. It was the site that I had heard about most before visiting and I feel like that amplified the effect that it had on me. Knowing exactly how old it is and what it has been through was especially appealing. Coming from the U.S. where our history as an independent country only dates back to 1776, it was incredible to stand in a building that was the seat of Patriarchal power in Constantinople. It was a sign of the magnificence and power of the Byzantine Empire and continues to exude that history even now in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ... I can only imagine the religious experience that people must have received to worship in a structure of this immensity and to look up to the golden dome; feeling like you were a part of heaven itself.

My second favorite site was the Chora Monastery, which gave me a better feel of the profound effect created when surrounded by the beautiful mosaics and frescoes. It was exciting to see that many of the mosaics and frescoes had been recovered and restored to some of their former glory. The fact that the artisans of the time were able to create the amount of detail they did by being so precise with their tile placement was astounding. It was detailed to the point where one could see the lines and wrinkles on the figures face.

All in all, the sites that we have visited have made the Global Seminars trip very rewarding. Learning about the sites prior to our visit has had the



most impact on me. There is definitely something special about walking around a city such as Istanbul and at least having a small sense of what happened here. Knowing this area was the center of civilization for more than a millennium really puts into perspective how miniscule our lives are in the framework of time.

The final layer of evaluation was conducted by the University International Center itself, using a survey distributed and tabulated through Student Voice at <<http://www.studentvoice.com>>. Like the CAPE evaluation, this survey was conducted anonymously. Of the 130 students in the Summer GS programs (in Amsterdam, Berlin, Cadiz, Istanbul, and two in Rome), 53% responded to the survey. Students were asked a range of questions about their GS experience and, although this was aggregate data of all the GS programs, the findings were nonetheless encouraging. 86% of students reported being very satisfied by the GS program, 13% moderately satisfied, and 1% moderately dissatisfied. At the same time, when responding to the question about academic rigor, 33% reported that the academic work was extremely challenging, 39% very challenging, 26% moderately challenging, 2% slightly challenging, with no students responding that it was not challenging. This suggests that a rigorous and demanding academic program can, at the same time, result in student satisfaction and approval. In fact, student approval for the GS programs *and their perception of academic challenge* both significantly increased from 2008 to 2009.

The University International Center generated a report about the GS programs and submitted this to the University Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), comprised entirely of UCSD faculty, which has oversight on undergraduate education. From the outset, CEP has been concerned with ensuring and maintaining academic rigor in all GS courses. With the data collected through these evaluations and with information provided by faculty and the International Center, the committee's concerns were allayed and CEP approved the continuance of the GS program.

## Conclusion

From a faculty perspective, the GS offers a remarkably dynamic and fertile learning environment and teaching experience. In the Istanbul GS program, students missed not a single class (willingly, that is, since diarrhea did take its toll on members of the group), nor was any student late for a class or for a site visit. Moreover, unbound by their usual social networks and routines back home, students bonded as a tight-knit learning community in a way that is hardly possible on campus. Friendships blossomed

as they helped each other and met for meals, engaged in conversation and debate about course material, *inter alia*, into the early hours of the morning, and travelled day in and day out together. When the program ended, the students were genuinely saddened to separate from one another in contrast to the normal expression of joy and relief at the end of term back home.

Finally, for me personally, there has never been a teaching experience so intensely rewarding as the GS program. The GS format breaks down traditional barriers (and their comforting shelter) between student and professor. Despite the third-party provider, we, as faculty, become—or at least are perceived as—*de facto* instructor, academic advisor, student affairs specialist, psychologist and health worker, and general jack-of-all trades. Most beautifully, faculty become a trusted person in the lives of students who are reaching out to engage another culture and its history while navigating a foreign environment, language, and currency, and looking to us, not to hold their hand (they are not interested in that), but to give them tools of understanding to use confidently in their own exploration and adventure. The program is as rewarding as it is demanding, so in that respect, it needs to be approached carefully; for those who do, however, the experience will be well worth the effort, for the students as much as for the faculty.

## Appendix: Required E-Readings

*The list below contains only the required e-readings. There were optional e-readings which are not listed here. These were included to assist students with their class presentations on specific sites and to provide more information about sites and topics addressed in class.*

Bordewich, Fergus M. “Fading Glory: A Monumental Struggle to Preserve Hagia Sophia.” *Smithsonian* 39, no. 9 (December 2008), <<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/Fading-Glory.html>>.

Brown, Peter. “A Dark Age Crisis.” *The English Historical Review* 88, no. 346 (January 1973): 1-34.

D’Souza, Rohan. “Crisis Before the Fall: Some Speculations on the Decline of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals.” *Social Scientist* 30, nos. 9-10 (September-October 2002): 3-30.

Dennis, George T. “Defenders of the Christian People: Holy War in Byzantium.” In Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy P. Mottahedeh, eds. *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001. 31-39.

- Frazer, Charles. "1054 Revisited." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 263-279.
- Herrin, Judith. "The Fall of Constantinople." *History Today* 53, no. 6 (June 2003).
- Lindner, Rudi Paul. "Stimulus and Justification in Early Ottoman History." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27, nos. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1982): 207-224.
- Maas, Michael. "Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian." In Michael Maas. *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 3-27.
- Mansel, Philip. "Europe's Muslim Capital." *History Today* 53, no. 6 (June 2003).
- Necipođlu, Gulru. "The Life of an Imperial Monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium." In Robert Mark and Ahmet S. Çakmak, eds. *Hagia Sophia From the Age of Justinian to the Present*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. 197-224.
- Necipođlu-Kafadar, Gulru. "The Suleymaniye Complex in Istanbul: An Interpretation." *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 92-117.
- Parker, Geoffrey. "Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered." *American Historical Review* 113, no. 4 (October 2008): 1053-1079.
- Phillips, Jonathan. "The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople." *History Today* 54, no. 5 (May 2004).
- Talbot, Alice-Mary. "The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 243-261.
- Williams, Stephen and Gerard Friell. "The Survival of the Eastern Roman Empire." *History Today* 48, no. 11 (November 1998).