The dark side of Europe: grappling with difficult topics while studying abroad

Scott Carpenter, Carleton College
Deivida Vandzinskaite, DIS
Amy Muse, University of St. Thomas
Global Citizenship Requirement. Being an educated person and living a life that is purposeful and worthwhile for others as well as for oneself requires recognizing that the world is far more interconnected than ever before in human history. Carleton students will be effective citizens and leaders and make a difference in this world only if they are equipped to navigate foreign cultures, be conversant in foreign languages, and acquaint themselves with multiple cultures and societies that are different from their own.

— Carleton College Academic Catalog
Les clandestins
Youssouf Amine Elalamy
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Cultural diversity and Integration

• 1 semester
• 18 classes
• 2 guest lectures
• 2 field studies
• Core course week:
  • 3 days – academic visits in Copenhagen
  • 3 day short study tour to Sweden (Malmö, Gothenburg)
• Long study tour – a week in Italy (Rome), (Istanbul, Turkey)
Pedagogical choices and challenges

- Course content = Living body
- News in a student’s pocket
- Conflicting discourses
- Emotionally charged topics
Learning to unlearn

A wide range of voices

Different learning platforms

Students as co-creators of the course
Let’s write about this.
JOURNALING
Focused on SELF

ETHNOGRAPHY
SELF and OTHER: participant-observer

LITERATURE
Immersed in OTHER: entering another’s consciousness
On the Doorstep of Europe

Asylum and Citizenship in Greece

Heath Cabot
Dense with people, smog, and traffic, moped engines and car horns, Omonia is known among longtime Athenian residents for its heavy concentration of tourists, drug users, and migrants, but it is also a buzzing neighborhood full of contradictions. Exiting in the direction of Eleutherios Venezelou Street, I would walk down a pezodhromos (pedestrian walkway), past shoeshine men, kiosks, professionals in suits and sunglasses drinking coffee, bakeries, street vendors, a mid-class hotel, and a legal brothel. Rounding the corner, I would cross a broad boulevard, then head down cramped and pitted side streets into the neighborhood of Exarcheia, where dense buildings frame a sky often tinged with the tarry film of smog.

The [Athens Refugee Service] signals its presence before one reaches the street where it is located. People speaking Arabic, Dari, Urdu, Bangla, or other languages make their way toward the office carrying files and papers; the public phone on the block often has a line. As I made my way to the entrance, the crowd would part, people tapping each other on the back to give me space, and embarrassed by their politeness, I would push through bodies and the sharp tang of old sweat. (12)

“Beautiful… It will leave you breathless and speechless; it will send you smiling.” —San Francisco Chronicle

A Marker to Measure Drift

A Novel

Alexander Maksik

Author of You Deserve Nothing
She knew she could not stay in that town. Not with all the people streaming off the ferries. She sat upright on a bench. She watched them eat French fries stuffed into the tops of their gyros. They stood in line at a small shop advertising the best in the world. She watched the man turning meat from a giant turning pile, could see him painting the bread with oil and tossing it onto the grill, could see him squirt white sauce from a bottle onto the hot bread. [. . . .] She watched the tourists waiting in line. She watched bits of the meat falling to the ground, the sandwiches thrown away, half eaten.

What it took for her not to stand up and cross the square and dig for food.

But she was not beyond pride, so instead she ate the chocolate bar and tried to appear happy and bored. This was, she’d decided, the appropriate attitude. You must not be desperate.

She watched policemen walk past and tried to appear cheerful as she ate her candy bar. She ate as if she might throw it away at any moment, as if eating were an entertainment, as if it were something to do. (2)

Alexander Maksik, *A Marker to Measure Drift* (Knopf, 2013)
CASE STUDY

You are a faculty member preparing to teach a course on a program in Europe, or else you are a program director/study abroad director helping a faculty member to develop this course. Even though the syllabus does not focus on current events, you know that current events may force their way into the classroom.

In a climate where major disruptions are always possible (from political demonstrations to riots, from terrorist attacks to large-scale migrant tragedies), what principles or devices (if any) might you imagine to make this course agile and resilient enough to succeed despite these challenges?
News just broke that fire has ripped through an abandoned building where migrants were living—only a couple kilometers from your classroom. The fire is under control, but twenty-one people have died, including eleven children.

You teach (or you are advising someone who teaches) in twenty minutes. You know the students will be devastated by this news. How do you address this in class—if at all?
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