

BOLOGNA, ITALY

THOMAS GIEROK

Program: UW in Bologna, Academic Year

Thomas' Majors: International Studies; Political Science

Academic Life: BCSP courses, with other American students in the program, provided a more "normal" setting because Italian courses taught at the university are much different in structure and pace. For the University of Bologna courses you attend lecture 4-8 hours a week depending on your credit level, there is usually one final - oral examination at the end of the course - and the lectures are not interactive. You take those courses with Italians from the university and often other exchange students from around the world. Although courses at the university are often more stressful, they are your best chance to learn as much as you can about Italian culture. Plus, you can make friends!

Housing: I was lucky enough to land an apartment with one other American and two Italian freshmen from Puglia. We truly lived like students. Honestly, I think it was the best possible way to do study abroad because I had an American during the challenging times and Italians to learn from. We were a family.

Advice for Someone Considering Bologna: BCSP is not a program that will allow you to travel every weekend around Europe, but it's one of the few programs that will give you a true window into a new culture. You're forced to integrate and acknowledge the differences, to ask tough questions and to challenge yourself all while living in an amazing country caught between a vast history and the current age. You'll get the things you expect like traveling, eating amazing food, making new friends, etc, but you'll go through things you never imagined like challenging your own perspective on your entire life and thinking about the foundations of your priorities and goals in life.

Just Do It: It's okay to be nervous, but you can't let nerves stop you. In fact, I almost didn't do my program! I promise you that studying abroad will be the best decision you make in your college career. This experience is the best possible resume builder. I can prove that I am able to relocate to another country, learn a foreign language to fluency level, and even work with ease in a new culture and country.



Thomas (middle) with two of his roommates in Naples during their last two weeks abroad.

“I had my friends, homework to do, and was living a life there. It stopped feeling like traveling and started feeling like living.”

