Program: UW in Florence, Spring

Lauren's Majors: Journalism and Mass Communication

Academic Life: The students in my classes were from UW-Madison, Vanderbilt, and Cornell. Classes were taught by instructors who lived in Italy, while not all were Italian. Art History was possibly my favorite class because we took a lot of field trips to the many museums and churches in Florence, and our professor was incredibly brilliant. This class provided a lot of context to the places and sights we were seeing every day.

Housing: I lived in an apartment in the city center of Florence. In our building there was only one other apartment of Americans; the other residents were Italian, which provided an opportunity to meet new people and learn more about Florence and the culture. I lived with three other girls who all went to Vanderbilt together, so I was the only UW-student in my apartment. While this was intimidating at first, we all got along surprisingly well and had a great semester living together!

New Perspectives: Studying abroad in Italy will alter your perception of history and the world we live in. In America, everything is relatively new. But Italy is a country rooted in culture and changing slowly. Being immersed in a place so different than Madison for a season of life taught me a lot about myself, how I handle being alone and uncomfortable, navigating change, and the role I play in a much bigger story of the world. The language barrier will challenge you but also teach you the importance of experiencing cultural differences. The program itself is a good balance between being at a school in America and moving to a foreign country. Yes, you are living in Italy, but being surrounded by other Americans will keep feelings of being overwhelmed at bay for the most part.

Tips for Future Students: If you have any interest at all, do not hesitate. You will not regret this incredibly special semester.

“Italy did feel like home. I had established a daily routine. My street became my neighborhood. My roommates became friends.”

Lauren with the view of Florence from Fiesole in the background.