

# Study Abroad Connections

## Message from the Director

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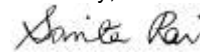
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Our Fall 2014 semester is well under way. This issue highlights a student's inter-cultural competence while learning a language and learning how to do undergraduate research. It also lets you know about collaborative work that can occur for faculty members while teaching in a Study Abroad program.

Fall is also the time when the Study Abroad Center accepts faculty Resident Director applications for the Summer 2015, Fall 2015, and Spring 2016 programs. The deadline to apply to be a faculty Resident Director in Summer 2015 is **October 3, 2014**; the deadline for Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 programs is **November 7, 2014**.

Please visit our website at [www.studyabroad.org](http://www.studyabroad.org) for faculty Resident Director application details.

Sincerely,



Sarita Rai

## Meet the Resident Directors

### Fall 2014

#### London, England

**Krisnawati Suryanata** [krisnawa@hawaii.edu](mailto:krisnawa@hawaii.edu)  
GEOG 322 (W): Globalization and the Environment  
GEOG 422 (W): Agriculture, Food and Society

#### Paris, France

**Judith Mills Wong** [jmills@hawaii.edu](mailto:jmills@hawaii.edu)  
BUS 313: The Economic and Financial Environment of Global Business: Europe in the World Economy  
FIN 305 (W): Problems of Business Finance, European Focus

#### Delhi, India

**Miriam Sharma** [sharma@hawaii.edu](mailto:sharma@hawaii.edu)  
ASAN 3201 (W): Contemporary India  
ASAN 493 (W): Globalization in Asia: India and the "New" Middle Class

#### Florence, Italy

**Kristin McAndrews** [mcandrew@hawaii.edu](mailto:mcandrew@hawaii.edu)  
ENG 311 (W): Life/Food Writing - *A Taste of Italy: An Exploration of Life and Food in Florence*  
ENG 380 (O): Folklore & Literature

#### Seville, Spain

**Reece Jones** [reecej@hawaii.edu](mailto:reecej@hawaii.edu)  
GEOG 335 (W): Politics, Nations, and States  
GEOG 435: The Political Geography of Oceans

### Spring 2015

#### Shanghai, China

**Alison Conner** [aconner@hawaii.edu](mailto:aconner@hawaii.edu)  
ASAN 491C (W): Law & Society in Chinese Film  
POLS 377(W): Introduction to the U.S. Legal System

#### London, England

**Cynthia Franklin** [cfrankli@hawaii.edu](mailto:cfrankli@hawaii.edu)  
ENG 352 (W,E): Twentieth Century Novel in English  
ENG 382/WS 381 (E): Gender, Sexuality and Literature

#### Paris, France

**Miriam Fuchs** [miriam@hawaii.edu](mailto:miriam@hawaii.edu)  
ENG 273 (W): Paris, je t'aime  
ENG 381: Art (and Lies) in Paris

#### Florence, Italy

**Marc Moody** [mmoody@hawaii.edu](mailto:mmoody@hawaii.edu)  
COM 433 (W): Screenwriting in Italy  
COM 489: Communicating Creativity - American Cinema in Italy/Italian Cinema in America

#### Seville, Spain

**Paul Mitri** [mitri@hawaii.edu](mailto:mitri@hawaii.edu)  
THEA 312 (W): World Theatre II  
THEA 323 (O): Acting for TV/Film

## Culture of Homestay: Florence, Italy

*Whenever possible, the Study Abroad Center arranges for students to live with host families. A major value of the homestay is that it provides students with the opportunity to closely interact with and learn from the host country nationals. In addition to taking students beyond the public face of the host citizens, the everyday speaking and hearing of the host language in a natural setting facilitates students' understanding of the culture and enhances language learning.*

*This feature article is extracted from **Fall 2013 in Florence, Italy** study abroad participant **Kiyana Higa's** final research paper, which she submitted to Resident Director Anne Freese for her "Portrait of Florence" course. In this study, she explored the homestay experience through the eyes of a participant, the host family, and the housing coordinator in Lorenzo de' Medici (LdM).*

Going through the different interviews and the rest of my data, I was able to pick through and narrow in on major themes in the culture of homestay for the study abroad program here in Florence. Most of the themes sync up with the themes of the Italian culture in general, which I found to be extremely interesting. The purpose of study abroad is to give the students a deeper connection to the culture that they will be living in so it makes sense that these themes relate and correlate to the themes of the host country.

### *Italian Cuisine*

The cuisine of Italy was one of the first themes that appeared early on in my data. Across the board in all of my data, cuisine and food of Italy was mentioned by all of my participants. Food is a great way to learn about a culture and it acts like a stepping stone to getting to know and understanding more about a culture. I think in a place that is so synonymous with great food it was no surprise that it was a very prevalent theme in my research. When we first got our homestay assignment from the Study Abroad Center, a little excerpt about our host families was included in the email. One of the things shared about my host mother was she is a great chef. This was such a great relief for me as one of my initial fears regarding homestay was that I would not like the cooking of the family. This was also a big factor when I interviewed my roommate and housemate. One of the biggest benefits they saw living with a host family is the "amazing food and home-cooked meals" and being able to "experience the Italian food".

My host mother told us that when she cooks it is how she says she cares. Eating as a family and bonding over a meal is one of the most important parts of the day in an Italian family and extends into the Italian culture itself. This was reiterated by LdM

housing coordinator Melanie Blumoehr during our interview, who expressed that dinners are a big part of the Italian social culture. Melanie explained how meticulous she is when choosing a new host family to add to the list for LdM. Currently this semester there are eleven host families for the homestay program. There are a lot of families in Florence that send in requests to be added to the list and Melanie goes and visits each and every one.

Prospective host families fill out forms and state how many people they have in their household, what they do for a living, how many students they can take in and what kind of amenities they can offer like a double room, single room, extra bathroom, etc. Melanie goes and checks out the homes and interviews the family as well as tries different meals the family would potentially cook for the students. If she does not feel like it is authentic or much effort was put in the dish when the family serves her, they definitely will not put in any more effort for the student. She wants to make sure the students get the full "authentic" experience of the Italian culture.

### *Italian Family*

The idea of the big Italian family is one of the big stereotypes that people often have of Italy and the people. Studying abroad and being able to observe as well as live with an actual Italian family, I've learned that it really is not the size of the family but the bond they have. I come from a very close-knit family so I understand the importance. Italians pride themselves on being close to their families, even when they may not be physically close.

Family is such a big deal for our host mother, and many events in her life prove this. She is originally from the North of Italy where her family still lives. She moved to Florence because of her husband's job, so she left what she knew and made a new life in Florence for her family. In all of our time living with her, the person she calls and receives calls from the most is her son. Because her son and grandsons are now living in Paris and learning French, she has made it a point to also learn French in order to stay connected in every aspect of their lives. She used to read books and sing with her grandsons on the telephone, and this semester we introduced her to Skype, which she loves.

However, she does not stop there; she has made us, her homestay students, part of her family and treats us like her children. We have essentially become a family, all of us sharing the sentiment that my housemate shared saying, "I feel like I have another family". We look forward to eating dinners together and sharing our day with each

*"Studying abroad definitely can be enhanced by the decision to stay and live with a host family. Being a part of a host family opens your experience even more and enhances your interaction with the culture on a higher level than what you would be able to get out of just staying in the apartments."*



## Culture of Homestay: Florence, Italy ... *cont'd*



### *Memories of Florence...*

*Clockwise from Left:  
Our host mother. House mates.  
Insalata. Me, Catie and Aimee. Our  
home.*

other and over the semester our house has really struck up a bond with our host mother. She knows what our favorite things are, and she cooks and combines them into a super dinner sometimes, pointing it out to us as she reveals it. When I interviewed Melanie and told her how close the girls in our house have become with each other and with our host mother, she said that is the best compliment and review she can ever get. The LdM housing office tries very hard to match students together and find the best house and host family for them to live with, and when things work out this way they know they are doing things right.

### *Italian Culture*

The homestay program is a great way for a student to really be “fully immersed” in the culture of the country they are studying in. Living with a host family is a great way to learn about the culture because you are living with someone and getting to see them in their day-to-day activities. Through homestay I was able to practice my Italian more than I would have ever been able to had I lived in an apartment. It is like having a personal tutor in your home! My host mother really helped us with the language, telling us how to say certain things and helping us translate what we wanted to say. An interesting and extremely helpful thing our host mother does is narrate what she is doing around us in Italian so we can hear the vocabulary as well as the structure of the sentence. In the interview, Melanie expressed that it is important that the families speak Italian to the students in order to help them be immersed in the cultural experience. Our host mother also finds local events and invites us to and suggests places that she thinks we might like. On our first night she took us on a little walking tour of our neighborhood and showed us places like restaurants, shops, gelaterias, and bars that she thought we’d enjoy visiting and exploring. She also brought us to an art gallery exhibition opening night, an event that we would not have been able to go to let alone know about had she not invited us. There really is no better way to learn about the culture than from a local who is proud and engaged in the culture with you.



Being a part of a host family opens your study abroad experience even more and enhances your interaction with the culture on a higher level than what you would be able to get out of just staying in the apartments. Many of the other students in the LdM program who chose to live in apartments told me they wished they had chosen to participate in the homestay program. However, the number of students in the homestay program is just around what the Housing Office at LdM would like. This semester there are about thirty students who are living in the homestay program. Melanie expressed that there is a wiggle room of ten to twenty more spots in the program but they would not exceed a maximum of fifty students. Homestay is a special opportunity which requires a lot of time, attention and organization. Keeping the number of students in homestays to around thirty to forty ensures that the office can monitor and accommodate the students in the best environment, and ensure that the experience they have with their host families is one that is beneficial.

There is so much more to participating in homestay than just having a place to live in. If you are lucky, you become a part of that family and become more in-tune with the culture. For my roommate, housemate, and me, we all agree that if we had not lived with our host family our entire study abroad experience would not have been the same. The three of us would recommend “in a heartbeat” to anyone in the study abroad programs of our schools to “absolutely” choose homestay, and we would do it all over again if we could. It is an experience we will all remember for the rest of our lives. Not only did we learn more about ourselves, we created a family here and a bond with the city of Florence, country of Italy, and the Italian culture.



**Study Abroad Center**  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
1890 East West Road  
Moore Hall, Room 115  
Honolulu, HI 96822

**Phone** 808 956 5143  
**Fax** 808 956 9319

**Web** [studyabroad.org](http://studyabroad.org)  
 [uhmstudyabroad](https://www.facebook.com/uhmstudyabroad)  
 [uhmstudyabroad](https://twitter.com/uhmstudyabroad)

Dare to Discover,  
Dare to Learn, and  
Dare to Understand



<http://chiaroscuro.ldminstitute.com/index.php/CHIAROSCURO/index>  
Rovina Cai, Pencil Drawing  
LdM 2011

## On Being a Resident Director

**Sarah Twomey**  
**Resident Director, Florence, Spring 2014**  
**Associate Professor, Curriculum Studies**

*Any minute you can crash into someone else's life, and if you're lucky, it's good, it's like walking on light. (Brand, 2005, p. 4).*

Being a Resident Director for the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Study Abroad Center is definitely full of surprises. Making a decision to live and teach in a foreign country provides endless opportunities to reframe your perspective on teaching and to look at your scholarship from a new lens. I was Resident Director in Annecy, France in Summer 2013 and in the Spring of 2011 and 2014 in Florence Italy. In 2011, I had the very lucky experience of 'crashing' into the life of one Italian professor in particular, Anna Baldini. My desire to learn Italian and appreciate all things Italian, and her energy and zeal for Italian language and learning grew into a collaborative writing project that has since flourished. We began an on-line writing project for study abroad students at Lorenzo de Medici. This project, *Chiaroscuro*, became a collective writing space to share experiences of travel and the challenges of negotiating cultural differences across languages, gender, and race. We successfully published our first edition, with the second release forthcoming; we presented our work at an International conference in Canada: and recently an article entitled, *Chiaroscuro: un esperimento di scrittura collettiva digitale con apprendenti angloamericani* (Baldini & Twomey 2014) was accepted for publication in a journal called *Insegno*.

The study abroad experience is also about having to adjust to new practices within your environment that are unfamiliar and at times, uncomfortable. As a Resident Director with two programs under my belt, I felt well equipped for many a battle. The homesick student, the unmotivated ready to party student, the student excitement of new love and then the break-up. Many coffees, Kleenexes, conversations, dinners cooking at my apartment, contribute to a study abroad experience for faculty that is not for the weak of spirit. It is an experience that fulfills the principle of being a teacher that is about caring for students who are outside of the classroom and how such life experiences can enrich our courses inside the classroom.



With UH Mānoa students in Annecy, France  
Summer 2013



Pisey, Lydie, and Amy straordinario chef! Cooking dinner in Florence at my apartment! It was spinach gnocchi, flourless chocolate cake, and pasta carbonara - all recipes from Amy's cooking course at LdM.



UH Mānoa Study Abroad students interviewing Italian youth about their opinions about music and culture for their multicultural education class that they took with me.

*Dr. Twomey will be serving on the Council on Study Abroad effective the Academic Year 2014-2015.*