

Un'estate a Napoli



With the generous scholarship provided to me by the American Friends of Herculaneum, I was able to pursue several archaeological courses in Naples this past summer with particular emphasis on Pompeii. I worked with the Apolline Project, a multi-disciplinary research project which currently excavates in the rural town of Mirabella Eclano at the late Roman site of Aeclanum. The Apolline Project also provides summer courses in fields such as Roman pottery, Latin epigraphy, and osteology. I participated in two of these courses during my time in Naples. The first was a four week course on Roman pottery. In this course we evaluated an assemblage of pottery, mosaic, bone, and glass collected from the Suburban baths at Pompeii. The second course was a one week Introduction to Latin epigraphy, drawn from in-person examples from the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

During the course on Roman pottery, we learned the ins and outs of how to work with pottery. We began with an extensive introduction to common types of Roman pottery, such as African red slip and Italian copies of this ware (my favorite!). Next, we cleaned and sorted the materials - an excellent opportunity for closer inspection under the Italian sun. We then bagged and properly labeled the materials while recording the information in corresponding paperwork. Our next lesson was in identifying the pottery sherds. With a mass of textbooks in English, Italian, German, French, and Spanish, our diverse group of students and instructors poured over image after image searching for a match to a handle or a part of a rim. After our identifications were confirmed by several sets of eyes, we began learning how to draw the sherds.

During the course on Latin epigraphy, we began with lectures on different types of inscriptions and learned tools for deciphering the notoriously tricky Latin abbreviations. Our

examples were pulled from a variety of sources in-lecture, but we also spent several full days at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, where we had special access to the entire Epigraphy collection to study. Each student selected an inscription to work with and spent the week evaluating all aspects of the piece, including a discussion on material and provenance in addition to language.

The opportunity to live and work in a communal setting with our lab on site was monumental to our success this past summer. We were centrally located in the small town of Pollena Trocchia, situated near the multitude of ancient sites in the Bay of Naples. With unlimited access to Pompeii and the Museo Nazionale via special permission, we were able to spend our spare time roaming ancient streets, getting lost in a sea of mosaics, and always learning more about these precious ancient sites and their associated materials. We were even granted special permission to enter the currently closed Suburban baths at Pompeii, which was a special treat enjoyed by all.

In addition to our ideal location in the Bay of Naples, the makeup of our students and instructors was extremely diverse across both fields and cultures. This engendered an exciting environment in which we continuously inquired and learned about language and customs from one another. We spent many nights enjoying margarita pizzas and peronis discussing such cultural and disciplinary differences. It was an unforgettable experience in which I created not only academic connections but also good friends with whom I remain in contact.