

*the*  
**CYA**  
*experience*



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## Experience the originals

A hallmark of the CYA program is its emphasis on experiential learning. Through faculty led field trips and on-site teaching the students come into immediate contact with the subjects.

### ABOUT CYA

CYA (College Year in Athens) is a not-for-profit study abroad institution offering semester, academic year, and summer study abroad programs taught in English.

Since its establishment in 1962 it has offered US university students an academically rigorous program of studies combined with the vibrant experience of day-to-day contact with the people, monuments, and landscape of Greece and the Mediterranean region.

The academic program is enhanced by highly qualified faculty who have a passionate commitment to their subject and their students. Courses are offered in a variety of disciplines covering both ancient & modern areas of studies.

The program is designed to help students achieve their academic goals while imparting a deeper understanding Greece and the region through the ages, and to gain a new perspective on the global

environment through a hands-on learning opportunities.

CYA students view their study abroad in Greece as a life-changing experience, one that has increased their awareness and perceptions making them better prepared to live in the global community.

CYA is a not-for-profit educational institution based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and governed by a Board of Trustees. It offers this program through the Athens-based International Center for Hellenic and Mediterranean Studies (DIKEMES). CYA is a member of the Forum on Education Abroad, the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA), the European Association of International Education (EAIE) and the Association of American Educational and Cultural Organizations in Greece (AAECG). The language of instruction is English, the faculty is European and American, and the majority of the students come from North America.

**ABOUT THE CYA EXPERIENCE**

**A CYA ALUMNUS RETURNS TO TEACH**

**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED**

**BE THAT PAINTER...**

**TUNING INTO STUDENTS' MINDS AND FEELINGS**

**TOO MUCH VOCABULARY!**

**AMERICAN STUDENTS LEARN GREEK!**

**UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY**

**A YOUNG ALEXANDER THE GREAT PASSING BY...**

**INTENSE EXPERIENCES FOR BOTH TUTORS AND STUDENTS**

**OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE**

**A WORLD FULL OF BEAUTY**

**ENGAGING WITH THE CITY OF ATHENS**

**IN GREECE, KNOWLEDGE COMES ALIVE...**

**LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES**

**LIVING LIFE AS A SOCRATES' FOOL**

**URGING STUDENTS TO GO BACK TO THE FUTURE**

## ABOUT THE CYA EXPERIENCE

### ALEXIS PHYLACTOPOULOS

President CYA /  
DIKEMES

CYA STUDENTS view their study abroad in Greece as a life-changing experience, one that has increased their awareness and perceptions making them better prepared to live in the global community.

In this edition you hear from some of the people that make things happen. Members of CYA Faculty talk about the way they deliver the messages originating from their academic disciplines in class or on site.

Greece is blessed with several comparative advantages. It has a rich history and culture – very attractive to students of all disciplines, a fascinating ancient language- an epigraphist’s treasure trove. Every dig for construction unearths Greece’s distant past- an archeologist’s delight. It is a country full of museums. What better place to study management of national heritage preservation or urban sustainability?

To most of us it is clear that education is no longer an activity confined to the walls of the campus or the frontiers of a country.

In our changing world, the traditional form of the university, as we know it is rapidly being transformed. The four walls of a campus within which study and research were done are giving their place to new ways of conducting study and research. The university is breaking out of its traditional borders and reaches to the world outside.

Americans, more than anybody else, have become aware of the need to internationalise themselves. CYA has been acting as a cultural and educational bridge between North America and Greece for over half a century, and has been helping students to develop new perspectives on the world, their own countries and themselves.

This is the cause to which CYA (College Year in Athens) is dedicated: making its students global citizens who understand and appreciate other cultures. Socrates put it so well two and a half thousand years ago when he said, “I am not an Athenian or a Greek, I am a Citizen of the World”.



## A CYA ALUMNUS RETURNS TO TEACH

### ALAN SHAPIRO

(CYA '69) is Professor of Classics and W. H. Collins Vickers Professor of Archaeology Emeritus at Johns Hopkins.



THIS FALL, I am teaching a course called “Greek Vase-Painting: Gods, Heroes and Monsters” with a team of enthusiastic students, most of them Classics majors from first-rate schools.

It is hard for me to believe that forty-eight years ago, as a student at CYA ('69), I took a similar course taught by Tessa Dinsmoor. One of the original faculty of CYA, Tessa was a young Greek archaeologist educated at UCLA, wife of the architect Bill Dinsmoor (who later taught for CYA), and daughter-in-law of the most distinguished scholar of Greek architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, William Bell Dinsmoor.

Tessa was a very tough and rigorous teacher who force-marched us through the history of Greek vases, chastised us for not being able to read German scholarship, and made us commit to memory hundreds of slides.

One student, who was a talented artist, made a large caricature of Tessa as a Gorgon who glowered from the wall of an apartment housing seven girls on Xenokratous Street. But it was this class that set me on the path that would define my scholarly career, including studies of the iconography of Greek vases that would fill several books, dozens of articles, and three exhibition catalogues.

Tessa is retired and doing well, living in the Washington D.C. area near her son Paul, who was born during the semester I was in her course (without her missing a class).

My career has taken me to many parts of the world for periods of teaching and research: Germany, New Zealand, China, South Africa, and various American universities, most recently Johns Hopkins, where I retired from the Classics Department in 2015.

This semester has allowed me to come back to CYA, where it all started, and share some of my love of Greek vases with a new generation of students who might one day follow a path like mine.

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

### ELENI KARVOUNI

Sorbonne (Paris I)  
with a Maitrise in  
Art History.

TEACHING becomes a passion, especially concerning the Modern Greek Language.

Why a passion though? Because learning Modern Greek at CYA contributes decisively to the identity of students,



regardless of their background or ethnicity. Students start to learn more about their own language realizing suddenly that they already know so many Greek words (such as; idea, music, theatre, geometry, theory, just to name a few). Greek Culture instantly becomes part of their culture and the world their classroom.

Starting by explaining the Greek Alphabet, I proceed with teaching students how to read, write, and speak simultaneously. Thus, from the very first lesson, students know how to greet people and this eventually develops into communicating, creating new friendships, and a better understanding of the customs and the habits of Greek Society.

Life in this foreign country is slowly unveiled, since it is through learning the language that students are able to effectively penetrate into the mentality of the people of Greece.

In my classes, the process of learning Modern Greek is always complimented by History, Art, Music, Architecture, Etymology, Religion, Customs and Habits via some important and meaningful details. In this way, students learn the language by traveling through time, jumping from Prehistory to Modern Society, having passed through Classical, Hellénistique, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman Occupation, Independence (the Greek Language has been continuously spoken without any interruption for 2500 years) landing in today's world.

Student experience is thrilling to the extent that last year a group of my students went hiking on Mount Parnassos. They arrived at a village, which was at the foot of the mountain and asked a lady sitting at her porch for directions, addressing her naturally in Greek. She helped them out eagerly. On their way back, a few hours later, there she was waiting for them. She invited them all inside her house, where, to their huge surprise, some friends and relatives of hers had prepared various delicious Greek dishes and they spent the rest of the evening eating, drinking, laughing and ...practicing their Greek.

We can easily see how immensely enriching it is to learn Modern Greek. It defines the study abroad experience in Greece. Mission accomplished: My passion became contagious.

## TUNING INTO STUDENTS' MINDS AND FEELINGS

**DESPINA IOSIF** is a historian of Theology. She holds a Ph.D. in Early Christianity from University College London.



TEACHING at an intellectually demanding program like CYA is exciting. My goal is to make students share my genuine enthusiasm for the history of religion. To this end I try to tune into the minds and feelings of my students, eagerly interact with them, actively involve them, encourage critical and creative thinking, intrigue them, 'reach and not just teach' every student under my care.

The course I have been teaching every fall semester since 2007 is 'The Religions of the Middle East: A Comparative Approach' which serves as an introduction to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and it is organized thematically as a means of trying to capture the key differences as well as similarities among the three 'Abrahamic' religions.

Every spring semester I teach the Orthodox Church course. I venture to explore along with my students Orthodoxy in its historical and modern contexts. I acquaint students with the landmarks of the history of the Orthodox Church, inspire them to appreciate critically the influence of Orthodox Christianity in shaping human experience, invite them to explore how Orthodoxy is lived and practised in Greece, call them to exhibit awareness of their own experience of religious tradition and commitment and differences in perspective and opinion.

Frequent on-site visits, providing opportunities for hands-on experience and volunteer work and challenging students to get out of their comfort zone is vital for both my classes. We visit Orthodox churches and observe how the congregation expresses its piety; we visit monasteries and interview monks and nuns of their unique religious experience, visit museums that house typical and rare religious artifacts.

Recently, a student inspired by a class he spent some days at a Mt. Athos monastery, (where Christianity is practiced with the strictest standards available, like nothing has changed since early Christian times, and where services can last up to 12 hours) and followed the daily schedule of the monks. When he returned he expressed his enthusiasm about the unique experience.

## BE THAT PAINTER...

**ANGELOS  
PAPADOPOULOS**  
is an archaeologist  
(MA, UCL, PhD  
University of  
Liverpool)

As an Athenian, who was educated in the U.K. and currently working in Greece and Cyprus, I strongly believe that the best teaching method is the one that includes experiential activities. My interaction with students from various educational and social



backgrounds and traditions has made me a strong supporter of hands-on actions, site visits, the exchange of views and ideas with skilled individuals and specialists. Having that as a central idea, the students experience a great variety of activities (depending on the course) from working on metal, such as copper and lead, following Mycenaean techniques, to making their own colours and applying them on the plaster in order to create a Minoan-style wall painting. The combination of a) reading about an object, let us say a small metal horse statuette made in the 7th century BCE with the 'lost wax' technique, b) examining the object from a close distance at the Museum and then c) recreating the actual technique itself within the CYA facilities, definitely gives the students the full picture as they become part of its manufacture process.

This approach can be applied to greater features as well, not just portable works of art. A recent class visit to the replica of the 5th century BCE 'Olympias' at the Floisvos Harbour, after discussing its construction in class, really boosted the students' enthusiasm and at the same time it helped them understand and remember easier when, how and why such a warship was made.

Finally, these personal experiences reveal the human element: the craftsman behind a black-figure vessel, the oarsman on board the trireme, the mason or the potter who left a mark on a building or a vase respectively.

As a student myself I was fascinated by the magnificent mural paintings found at the site of Akrotiri on Thera (a town of the 17th c. BCE that was covered by the volcanic material during a major eruption) to the extent that this is the reason why I became a prehistoric archaeologist.

Several years later, here at CYA, together with colleagues and collaborators, I am teaching the fresco technique to students who really feel like a Bronze Age painter, as they are truly find themselves in his shoes.

## TOO MUCH VOCABULARY!

**MARINETA  
PAPAHIMONA**  
(Dipl. University  
of Athens),  
Instructor of  
Modern Greek  
language.

THERE ARE sparkling moments in your life, which mark your career: teachers, books, friends, theater, family, college. I was lucky enough that I had around me great, ordinary



people (teachers, professors, friends, family) full of energy and imagination, full of knowledge, responsible, fighters of life, not afraid to expose themselves, laughing at their own mistakes. All this experience helped me in education, married life, friendship, work, writing together with my friend Dimitra (Mimika) the series of books Ellinika Tora, 1+1 and 2+2.

When I start my beginners Modern Greek class, I feel my students' panic for the language class and their inner dialogues. - My God! Too much vocabulary! And different pronunciation..! - Nouns don't have one article the, and genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. I'm Kostas (ο Κώστας) as a bakery (ο φούρνος) and my girl friend η (η φίλη) as a salad (η σαλάτα) and the child to (το παιδί) as a table (το τραπέζι)... - The verbs! You hear an ending and you must understand whom it is referring to in order to answer correctly... the moment all these sound to me as new vocabulary... She speaks too loudly and all her mouth muscle moves up down, up and down... I have to smile not to have thick sounds; smiling chocolate... Now she teaches the endings of the verbs and she is moving her hands like a rap... - And when she says "Glad to meet you she shakes my hand very strongly! - Oh and ...she says that the Greeks don't say Oh, but A! Because they open their hearts. Why do most of them call them Ela (Έλα)? And now... she says it means come..! And when I said, "I understand nothing" she said that I spoke like the Philosopher Socrates who knew a lot and he was wise... Are they logical? She says this is a Greek word (λογική) and when I speak English I use many Greek words... Language is culture and culture is language ...is life.

Yiannis Ritsos said in a poem (translation by Edmund Keeley):

*The Meaning of Simplicity*

*Every word is a doorway  
to a meeting, one often cancelled  
and that's when a word is true: When it insists*

*Το Νόημα της Απλότητας*

*Η κάθε λέξη είναι μια έξοδος  
για μια συνάντηση, πολλές φορές ματαιωμένη  
και τότε είναι μια λέξη αληθινή, σαν επιμένει στη  
συνάντηση*

## AMERICAN STUDENTS LEARN GREEK!

### STELLA PAPAYIANNI

B.A. in French  
Language &  
Philology,  
Aristoteleion  
University of  
Thessaloniki,  
D.E.A. in  
Experimental  
Phonetics,  
Strasbourg  
University.



AMERICAN students learn Greek! It is an adventure in itself this decision-obligation.

All these verbs, articles, nouns, singular, plural. But is it possible? "It's all Greek to me," English speakers say. And yet!

The thrill is incredible when timidly they start uttering words and sentences in Greek when they go to taverns and cafes and place their orders by speaking Greek! When catching the conversations of people on the street, in the bakery, and in small shops.

One year, during the final oral examination, students decided to create an improvisational comedy show in the classroom. Two students placed two desks side by side and pretended they were in a taxi. One student played the taxi driver and the other, a passenger and the passenger started giving directions to the driver. It was such a hilarious scene because the "Greek taxi driver" was singing, "smoking" and not paying attention to his client's directions. Of course, they made everyone burst into laughter, but the important issue here was that all the dialogue was in Greek and without errors!

Other students made a scene at a cafe and later at a tavern. They brought props, plastic cups, dishes and improvised imaginary food. Others made up a scene in a clothing shop. They had brought blouses, pants, shoes, etc.

It was such a beautiful and pleasant moment. Although it was an exam day, the students, with cheerfulness and liveliness managed to overcome their hesitation with the language and prove that they can succeed!

## UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY

**AIMEE PLACAS,**  
Ph.D. in  
Anthropology,  
Rice University

“ANTHROPOLOGY makes the familiar strange, and the strange familiar.” Anthropologists love to put this quote in their textbooks, preparing students for the double effect of the discipline: when you study cultures that are different



from your own, you necessarily end up seeing your own worldview in a new light. This new perspective is not just a side effect, but a purposeful endeavor, as one’s sense of what’s “natural,” “logical,” and “common-sense” in the world has to be challenged on the way to realizing that there are many different ways to be a human being.

This is exactly what study abroad is about too, the idea behind the “broadened horizons” and “new perspectives” that a semester away is meant to create. And thus teaching anthropology to study abroad students is a joy—they’re all proto-anthropologists, even if they don’t know it yet. Understanding this society they’ve chosen to make their temporary home is their fieldwork, their focus from the moment they arrive. Through my class I get to direct that fieldwork, to send them places they wouldn’t otherwise go, and to give them analytical tools to explore the why and how behind what they participate in and observe.

Every moment of frustration or surprise is an opportunity to explore their own unexcavated preconceptions, expectations, and prejudices. Their own cultural patterns of thought are laid bare as they make Greece familiar to them—exploring the meanings of friendship through interviewing Greek college students; breaking down the riot of noise, song, and ritual at a football game; engaging with the full-sensory experience of a Greek Orthodox liturgy; turning the strangeness of their neighborhood into a network of acquaintances and friends.

Learning and living these other world views, other logics, makes clear that the life they live back home is only one possible way to be in the world, one of many. Watching that understanding develop in the classroom is amazing, but even better are the emails I receive from former students, about how the ideas and practices they took home with them continue to be a major part of their lives.

## A YOUNG ALEXANDER THE GREAT PASSING BY...

**JOHN KARAVAS,**  
Ph.D., University  
of Durham

I HAVE BEEN a member of the CYA faculty for almost 14 years now and, for my part, this has repeatedly proven to be a life altering experience for me. Much of what makes this experience so worthwhile has to do with the reaction and the feedback I get from my students, be it in class or more often, on site.



I can vividly recall the look and the awe on my student's faces when we enter the interior of ancient buildings such as the Parthenon, the Propylaia or the Temple of Hephaestus. Or their joy and astonishment when they get to run on the ancient tracks of Olympia or Nemea. There happen however, to be certain incidents or memorable moments that I would still single out as perhaps the most memorable ones.

For my Ancient Greek athletics course, I tell my students from the very beginning about the enviable, prestigious, almost divine like position that Ancient Greek athletes enjoyed within their contemporary perspective. Being an athlete is a title they should carry with pride. One of my students took this a little too literally... When in the Panathenaic Stadium and as we were preparing to “re-enact” the Stadion race (ancient sprint) within its track, a group of tourists approached us and asked said student what we were doing and, most importantly, if they could participate; She turned around and replied, rather nonchalantly, “No, sorry, you can't; this track is only reserved for Ancient athletes – only we deserve to run on it”!

Another incident I fondly recall happened during a visit to Pella, the capital of Ancient Macedonia and the birthplace of Alexander the Great. After guiding the students around the site, I gave them the customary 15-20 minutes to roam around by themselves. After a while I noticed one of my students, sitting near the Villa of Dionysus, head between legs and almost in tears. I asked him if he was OK and he replied:

“Professor, the first book I ever remember reading was on Alexander the Great. Ever since then, I have read all there is on Alexander, both ancient and modern; I know all there is about him and one day I hope to become an Alexandrine scholar. Yet, nothing could have prepared me for this: being on the very spot where Alexander grew up, where a young Alexander lived and dreamed of future greatness. I think that if I close my eyes, a young Alexander will pass by... If you don't mind just let me sit here a little while longer...

## INTENSE EXPERIENCES FOR BOTH TUTORS AND STUDENTS

### **DIMITRA KOTOULA**

Masters & PhD in  
the History of Art  
(Byzantine).  
University of  
Ioannina &  
Courtauld  
Institute of Art,  
London



I JOINED THE CYA community in Spring 2009. Having just returned from London and the Courtauld Institute of Art, I was

struggling with little success, I confess, to adjust, build a new life and career in Athens: it was evident that a massive crisis was on the horizon.

Teaching at CYA as an Art History Professor specializing in Byzantine History, Archaeology and Art, had a profound impact in enhancing my professional skills, as well as -I believe- the curriculum and educational experience of my students.

Together we revisited, in a series of class meetings and on-site/museum visits, aspects of the cult and culture of the millennium-long empire of the Roman/Byzantines that remains largely alive, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean.

During one of the iconoclastic debates that we had in class, the iconoclastic group used as argument for the prohibition of the cult of the icons extremities in veneration practices such as eating or drinking parts of icons. Later in the semester, during our walk in the Byzantine churches of the Plaka region, below the Acropolis, we happened to witness an old lady inside a church venerating an icon, and, then, quietly, withdrawing in the narthex, scrubbing the lower part of the frescoed image of a saint and tasting it. The 'iconoclasts' were astonished: 'Professor, she is actually eating the icon!', exclaimed. They could not believe that what they had fervently argued about in class!

Experiencing learning and on-site teaching with immediate contact with the subject and the artifacts under discussion can be a particularly intense experience for both tutors and students.

## OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE

### ANGELIKI ANAGNOSTOPOULOU

B.A., National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, M.A. University of Birmingham

AS A PROFESSOR of Modern Greek at College Year in Athens, I draw on my past academic and professional experiences every day when I enter the classroom. I spent a semester abroad in Belgium while pursuing my undergraduate degree in Greek and French Language and Literature, I completed my Master's degree in Greek Archaeology in England, I was a teaching assistant with Socrates in a Spanish university teaching foreign languages for an academic year; my studies brought me outside my comfort zone and into unfamiliar circumstances, not dissimilar to the CYA student experience.



I understand how crucial the academic component is the study abroad experience and can use my own background to better my classroom. Additionally, I have over twenty years of active work experience exclusively with foreign language instruction. I have produced language-learning materials and co-authored a Modern Greek companion textbook, all based solely on the speaking needs of my students. I have taught students from all over the world and from all different educational backgrounds--my exposure to such a variety of language learners enables me to be able to effectively teach my CYA classes, full of students from all walks of life and from the four corners of America. It brings me joy to see the work inside the classroom enrich and better the time our students spend in Greece--to see them appreciate this country through their experience with the language. My students spend one to two semesters learning how to communicate with their neighbors around them, from ordering a coffee to learning the celebratory phrase used for all name days, birthdays, and other holidays.

It is a joy to see the work in the classroom extending into the real world. One of my favorite memories is when students got together to create a personalized "Thank You" card in Greek at the end of the semester--they were able to show their appreciation in the best way possible. It is through moments like these that one can see their language learning enables the students to become a living, breathing part of the Greek society around them, and that is what study abroad is all about.

## A WORLD FULL OF BEAUTY

### PANAGIOTA MARAGOU

Biologist  
(National &  
Kapodistrian  
University of  
Athens), PhD,  
University of  
Patras.



A BASIC THEME in our course is the observation and description of the natural world, with the study of organisms' linkages to the environment -

what they are, how and where they live, and the biotic and abiotic interactions that link them to communities and ecosystems- being central. It is multiscaled, from organisms to ecosystems and landscapes and cross-disciplinary as we illustrate the vital importance of natural history knowledge to many disciplines, basically conservation and management.

One of the basic targets is to actually teach a different way of seeing and perceiving our surroundings. If we succeed, the natural environment stops being just a background to our everyday activities or scenery for our moments of relaxation. Instead a complete world emerges, lively, changing, intriguing, and in an age of cynicism and gloom, full of beauty. The richness and complexity of the Mediterranean environment, foreign and unknown to most students, allow the combination of different aspects such as climate, geology, species, ecosystems, resources and policy into a full picture so that we illustrate to the students what natural processes are and should be. I think that this is why it could be important to students. They learn to perceive their natural environment in a different way that hopefully will eventually help them to better identify causes and effects and address current environmental challenges.

Natural history helps people, students included, to appreciate and hopefully love nature. I will never forget the shock of a student tasting a wild almond she had just picked from the tree ... she was expecting just an almond but the richness of flavors of the wild food took her completely by surprise!

From my part, I realized that teaching greatly helps me to really learn, engage with and benefit from my experiences. It is a challenge to tell the story, make the connection with conservation needs and then bridge over to policies and things that need to be done.

## ENGAGING WITH THE CITY OF ATHENS

### HYPATIA VOURLOUMIS

Ph.D. in  
Performance  
Studies, New York  
University

AS A PERFORMANCE theorist I have found that teaching a class at CYA on the history and urban cultures of modern Athens has enriched my thinking and research practices in profound ways.

Through a cultural studies lens the students critically engage with the material and cultural artifacts of the city as well as different social spaces and histories.



Beginning from its founding in 1834 to the present the emphasis of the class is to approach the city as a process and the ways in which it performs its different identities. Thus students are particularly enthusiastic when we walk through the city and find that they are equipped with the tools provided by our readings and in-class discussions to analyze the ways in which, for example, nationalism and modernity can be discerned in neo-classical architectural forms and choreographies such as the changing of the national guard, to how a history of migration and persistent connections to the east can be heard in everyday music or tasted in their taverna meals.

The importance here lies not only in encouraging a more fluent academic capacity for producing knowledge about their objects of study but also, vitally, in a deepening of their experience living in the city as it is felt in the present amongst the inhabitants of Athens.

Furthermore, what is particularly exciting is the manner in which students make their own connections between what we learn about the beginnings of the modern Greek state and its capital city, its 20th century history, and the current national economic and social crises.

This was exemplified in a particularly creative way by a student Ariadne Skoufos, who last year presented to her fellow students on the final day of classes a bust she had made out of papier-mâché of a marble head of Athena covered in newspaper headlines regarding the economic and refugee crisis.

I have found that the visiting students' imaginative, committed and energetic engagement with the city and our shared time studying together have opened my own eyes and deepened my theoretical readings in new and refreshing ways.

## IN GREECE, KNOWLEDGE COMES ALIVE...

### ROBERT K. PITT

MA London,  
Greek historian  
and epigraphist of  
the Classical and  
Hellenistic period.

ARRIVING in Athens with a single suitcase as a student on the hunt for Greek inscriptions, I was little prepared for the hold that Greece would take of me, and could not have imagined the intellectual stimulus that being in day to day contact with my material would bring to my career.



Ten years later, apparently having forgotten to pack the case and leave, I try to get across to students the immediacy and tangibility of the ancient world here through contact with the archaeological and epigraphical remains they too encounter each day. It must be the easiest job in the world, and one of the most rewarding. Students with a background in Classics or Ancient History already feel a close bond with the ancient Greeks, having sweated for years over dictionaries and grammars in order to read their great literature.

In Greece that knowledge comes alive in the places they visit, whether following in the footsteps of Thucydides over a battle field, or standing on the same speaker's platform on the Pnyx where Demosthenes stood long ago to persuade the Athenian democracy of his policies, or reading the ancient names carved into the seats of the Theatre of Dionysos and wondering about those ancient spectators and the plays they had watched.

In our teaching at CYA we endeavour to introduce our students to the latest research, and to engage them with recent excavations perhaps decades before that information ever reaches the standard textbooks.

In meeting an architect inside the Parthenon to discuss new discoveries made while restoring that great symbol of Athens, or in having pointed out to them some previously unidentified graffiti on a wall block, our students are faced with the physical remains of those ancient people whose writings they know, but who until then seemed somehow distant and unreal.

I hope that such direct contact will bring to life the ancient Greeks to our students as it did for me when I first started sitting down in front of inscriptions and realising that I was reading words carved millennia ago but still speaking to me just as clearly as when some anonymous letter cutter sat in the same spot and set to work.

## LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES

### RITSA

### PANAGIOTOU

B.A., Political Science & Russian, Wellesley College, M.Phil & D.Phil, International Relations, Oxford University (St. Antony's College).



MY STUDENTS often tell me they feel like they are experiencing history in the making during their stay in Athens.

My classes – on

European integration and the crisis in Greece and Europe – certainly have a 'breaking news' quality, inevitably. Every day there is something new, some latest development concerning the issues we are studying, leading to lively class discussions and debates: new austerity measures being discussed in the Greek Parliament, visits from representatives of the Troika in Athens, the very visible economic and social impact of the Eurozone crisis, the influx of refugees into the country, the impact of Brexit, the rise of terrorism and extremism in Europe... all interlinked and interdependent. We frequently joke with the students about how often I have to change and update the readings in order to keep up with current events and that our class has turned into an academic cliffhanger with so much suspense - Athens being the epicenter of History in the making in Europe and the Middle East.

Living and studying in Greece during these most difficult and challenging times seems to have brought out the best in many of my students. They have shown an interest in seeing and experiencing first hand the social repercussions of the ongoing crises: they have witnessed anti-austerity demonstrations, engaged in lively conversations with Athenians hit by the crisis, volunteered at various non profit organizations such as Doctors Without Frontiers, visited refugee shelters, spent their weekends interacting with and entertaining refugee children. My classes are inevitably combining both theory and action in a hands-on, unique way.

When my students write to me after they leave Athens, their most common expression is "I can't even begin to tell you what a life changing experience this was". Without exception they tell me that they have been so moved and so deeply affected by what they have experienced and seen during their stay in Athens, that they long to come back, to work (teaching English) to volunteer, or just to visit. Their love affair and knowledge of our contemporary world started in Greece, at CYA!

## LIVING LIFE AS A SOCRATES' FOOL

**EVGENIA  
MYLONAKI**

PhD, University  
of Pittsburgh

THE PHILOSOPHY classes I teach at CYA are designed so that students can move between the Scylla of a museum tour in the stuffed wonders of ancient thought and the Charybdis of the fantasy of a lived experience of ancient Greece itself.



To communicate the thought of the ancient thinkers as a living albeit old and foundational philosophical reality, I follow a double route: I teach students how to treat the texts as at once the object of interpretation, and an answer to questions we should still be asking ourselves.

To teach interpretation I do the following: I assign free and uncensored reflections on the readings before each class; I often focus class discussion on belaboring an interpretation of a specific bit of text; I invite scholars to give guest lectures on their latest research; we attend philosophical events together, etc.

To teach philosophical activity, I build each class as a dialogue (in the first part I guide students to raise the questions of the texts themselves, then to see what the texts' answer is and, finally, what their own answers might be); I encourage students to co-shape the class by presenting material *they* think is relevant to our questions after prior consultation with me; In the syllabus I include modern and contemporary works of philosophy and art, which relate to the questions of the class. In this way students see ancient philosophy at work not only in its historical but also in its synchronic dimension, thus relating both to the field of philosophy itself and the contemporary realities that make philosophy urgent.

This is a small part of what a student wrote in one of his reflections on the class as a whole:

"You have asked us to provide "one final reflection, but this time on the class itself. Your free, unreserved, genuine feelings/thoughts about whatever is on your mind in connection to our class." I have one glaring problem with this request, and that is the implication that the class has ended. Regardless of whether or not twenty-something students of philosophy will be meeting in an Athenian classroom twice a week, or whether or not we each fly away with some kind of letter grade to add to a growing list of classes we call "college," I don't think any of us can truly call this course finished. You have done irreparable damage to my attempt to live life as Socrates' fool, and I don't think I can thank you enough...

## URGING STUDENTS TO GO BACK TO THE FUTURE

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Capturing the attention span of millennials is quite a task. Especially when you embark on a structured attempt to provoke their thinking as regards social networks, i.e. students' way of life.

Therefore, the various ways messages are mediated via traditional and digital media in Greece is a field that matches their turf, their everyday living, amidst a huge amount of information, numerous teasers originating from official and friendlier sources, about things they really care, or are ready to ridicule.

At the same time, the world of social networks (or personal media) is a matter of scientific exploration, digging in the theoretical structure of communications that is now put under complete revision. The revisiting and constant deconstruction of old theories through the digital prism is one of the students' favorites. They are ready to jump from their friends' funny comments on Facebook to the latest incidence in mainstream politics.

Millennials are like this. They have a short attention span but they are ready to meaningfully question traditional stereotypes and theoretical perspectives that do not 'fit well'. Besides, they are the indigenous of the digital revolution, viewing the previous generation as the digital migrants who are trying to adapt. And they are right!

In the academic version of social networks and their effects on journalism, newsmaking and content management at large, the feedback from youngsters is equally useful as the lecture material. The synthesis of multidisciplinary research (designed to compete with the short attention span and the insight of the new generation) with generic action and reaction is what forms the educational experience.

Besides, we are just here to offer them the tools to explore themselves and acquaint them with the industry to explore the practices, the campaigns and the spinning of messages. Naturally, in their encounters with communication executives in politics and communication agencies, the professionals appear equally eager to draw some first hand experience from our students too. At that particular moment, brainstorming is at its best!



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