

# CLASSROOMS WITHOUT WALLS

PLNU'S GROWING INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS



Literature professor emeritus Art Seamans, lecturing to Point Loma students on the Lido in Venice.

**A**t the Marmottan Museum in Paris, Aubrey Coon fell in love with Monet's water lilies.

"I wasn't really a fan of his until I saw a lot of his later works. The big water lilies and the gardens were so beautiful and colorful and intense," said Coon, a junior art major from San Diego. "[But] you look at a painting of Monet's from far away, and then you go up closer and see that it is so many layers of paint and texture and color. You can't see that unless you're there."

Coon was one of 21 students participating in last semester's Euroterm Paris, a recent example of how Point Loma's *Teach, Shape and Send* model of education teaches by developing the whole person. The Euroterm program is just one example of PLNU's growing commitment to add dimension to the educational experience of students through international studies opportunities. Through the university's office of International Studies, students have the option of spending a semester or more studying virtually anywhere in the world and still be enrolled at PLNU.

The advantages of learning in context are inestimable.

"I told the students we were going to have a classroom without walls," said Eugene Harris, PLNU assistant

professor of art who was on site program director and faculty of Euroterm Paris. "The program adds a completely different dimension to their learning—more than a textbook," he continued. "The purpose of other international programs is similar: put students in a different cultural situation so they can understand their own culture. It changes them."

## EUROTERM PARIS

The Euroterm Paris semester began with a week in London where students split their time between lectures and visits to galleries. After a week each in Florence and Venice, experiencing firsthand the great works of Michelangelo and other legendary artists, the group was based in Paris until the term ended in December.

"We had passes to go to museums as often as we wanted, and some group dinners and all our transportation, including metro passes, was taken care of," said Coon. "We had the best accommodations—beautiful flats in London, in a great location. In Florence and Venice, we had our own apartments. In Paris, we had a dorm, where we could easily meet."

In Paris, professors from France taught classes in their native language. Harris lectured on art history, led discussions at the Louvre, and directed students to complete assignments in the galleries. Literature professor emeritus, Art Seamans participated for part of the semester and taught literature classes, often in the location where significant pieces of literature were written. The students were required to create a visual journal of the experience, integrating their perspectives on the art history they were seeing with own photographs, watercolors and drawings.

Bronson Pate, a senior art major from San Diego focusing on photography and graphic design, recalls a scene in Italy.

"We had a lecture on the Lido in Venice, sitting on the beach with Dr. Seamans...[He] read poems by Byron and Shelley; one about horseback riding on the Lido.

"We were educated by seeing the real thing instead of just in a textbook," Pate said. "Seeing the art in real life, you can see hues and the texture and the richness of the colors, and it is a much more inspiring experience. The piece of art just speaks to you in a new way."

His mother, Charlene Pate, assistant professor of writing and director of PLNU's writing program, said that she saw her son's growth in various ways.

"He had an opportunity to explore completely on his own and that has caused him to learn to travel efficiently to negotiate in a city, so he could function in a different language and another culture. It created in him a stronger sense of independence and strengthened his character and his resolve. His organizational skills improved."

Bronson's family has noticed other growth. Euroterm Paris gave him an opportunity to exercise discipline, to read Scripture, explore the area and see God's creation in a new way, in a different country, hearing a different language. It deepened his spiritual walk, said Charlene.

Coon wouldn't trade the semester.

"The biggest difference over there was the experience of it. We would sit in class and learn about something—then we would go and see the actual works and sites... It was amazing to see everything in person," she recalled.

### SEMESTER AT SEA

Meanwhile, in a far different international studies program, Professors Ronda and Carl Winderl and five PLNU students were aboard the S.S. Universe Explore with Semester at Sea, a program of the University of Pittsburgh, in which Point Loma students and faculty may participate. The floating 600-student university left Vancouver, Canada, in August and docked in Japan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Tanzania, South Africa, Brazil and Cuba before stopping in Florida in December.

"It was the ultimate field trip," said Ronda Winderl, who taught communication studies and theatre. "Every day we were at sea, we were in class, and when we were in port we

were with students experiencing the culture."

Days in port were for traveling and field-directed practicums. Students could choose from 75 to 100 kinds of trips in each port.

"This is an incredibly polished program," Winderl said. "We were working on the practicums a year ago. These are 20 percent of each course, and each student is required to attend these and do integration of them in their courses."

While in port, students could travel on their own, making their own independent arrangements. Or they could take Semester at Sea day trips and overnight visits, from two- to five-day durations.

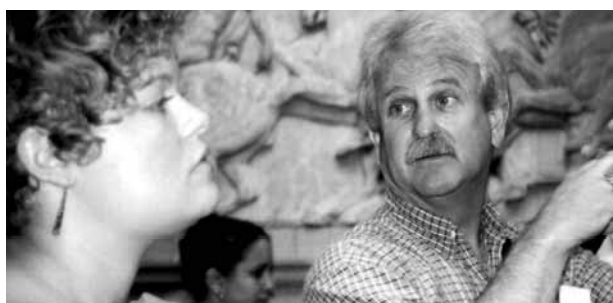
"For example, from Hong Kong, students flew to Beijing to visit the Great Wall of China, while in Saigon, we flew with 19 students to Hanoi for four days," said Carl, who taught writing classes.

Whitney Ball, a junior media communications major, said of the integration of classes and field trips, "It makes what I read valid and intriguing. When visiting the countries and learning about them, it makes me want to learn more."

Rebecca Price, a junior math major, said she was deeply touched by what she learned.

"I was able to see what I was being taught about in the classroom, and I had the opportunity to put to very practical use what I was learning. If that didn't enhance my education, I don't know what would. Most people either became aware or grew more aware about the situation—political, economical, social, etc.—in the numerous countries we visited."

Carl Winderl said his students were required to keep a daily journal. After each port of call, they had to turn in a one or two-page reflection on some aspect of their experiences on land.



(Clockwise from left) The colorful store fronts of Paris; Euroterm Paris participants, Jillian Richesin and Kelli Noftle; the "golden light" of Venice; Assistant professor of art Eugene Harris with Euroterm Paris student Crystal Clem; Palladio's San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice; and Grünewald's Eisenheim Altarpiece in Colmar, France.

(Right:) Sacre Coeur in Paris;  
 (Far right) the Metro stop at the Saint Michel station in Paris;  
 (Below) Semester at Sea participants, Guy Marino, Holly Olsen,  
 Whitney Ball, Carl Winderl, Ronda Winderl, Rebecca Price, Dean Koci,  
 photographed on the deck of the S.S. Universe Explore wearing  
 overland gear, clothing from the various ports they visited.



“I, of course, saw much evidence of what students were going through—internally and externally. Students’ views on politics, religion, government, health, poverty, disease and personal responsibility, of course, were all re-evaluated. And then re-evaluated again and some more,” he said.

He recalls a student in his creative writing class who wrote of what a privileged life he had led, and decided to apply for medical school so he could work somewhere in the world that didn’t have good medical care. “All the students had life or career changing experiences.”

Another student announced at the beginning of the term that she was an atheist. Then things began to change.

“About halfway through the voyage, she wrote that she is now convinced that there is a God despite seeing such poverty and despair, and she really wants to find out how to know him,” said Winderl. “I think she began to realize that people need hope, something intangible, to hold on to.”

Ronda agreed that everyone was changed.

“Throughout the trip we constantly were told, and told each other, that this experience would change us—especially India—that we were going to explore the world with new eyes, that we were going to be sight-thinking rather than sight-seeing. Only now, coming back from this whirlwind of experiences do I understand what they meant. Even though Carl and I have traveled all over the world, we have not done it this intensely, with the same group of people, with continuity of thought and discussion that carried over from one country to another.”

Both Ronda and Carl described the fellowship they experienced aboard ship.

“The most wonderful and surprising part of the experience was the Christian community—we feared we would be the missionaries and our kids would be adrift in the sea of liberal secular folks. On the contrary, a core of about 50 kids developed and met weekly together. In the end, about 100 came,” said Ronda.

Carl recalls, “The very first day, two kids from Westmont started a Bible study. They, one student from Ohio State and one from Wheaton, and Rebecca Price from Point Loma lead a group of about 50 students who met regularly.”



Currently, 15 PLNU students are enrolled for the spring semester in Euroterm Vienna, the first of PLNU’s off campus semester programs which has now enrolled 41 students over three semesters. Faculty from the University of Vienna offer a full compliment of courses including German, history, art, music, political science, and literature. Aimee Shawcroft, PLNU’s director of Euroterm Vienna, is living there with the students.

These are just three of the many study abroad opportunities available to PLNU students every semester through the office of International Studies.

“We have contacts all over the world. Students have access to study in around 100 countries, or can set up individual programs,” said Kevin Archer, PLNU’s director of International Studies and assistant professor of political science. “If a student walked in and said he wanted to study in Ethiopia next year, we can pull it off.”

David Strawn, associate provost for International Studies and dean of arts and sciences, started PLNU’s international studies program five years ago, with an initial enrollment of 18 students. In the 2003-04 academic year, more than 175 students will participate in international studies programs. Archer said the national average for students in such programs during any given year is about 3 percent. Nearly 10 percent of PLNU students regularly participate.

“The goal is, that within the next couple of years, in excess of 10 percent [of students] will have engaged in significant off-campus study. We hope that more than half of the graduating class of 2007 will have done a study abroad,” said Archer.

He said that the university has been very supportive, which helps keeps costs down. In fact, most of the international programs cost nearly the same as an on-campus semester.

Students “really do show tremendous personal growth and maturity—developing global awareness, and a more empathetic understanding of the rest of world,” he said.

Coming up are two programs centered in London. This summer, the department of Communication and Theatre, led by Alan Hueth, will take students for four weeks, beginning in July. In the fall of 2004, students will have an opportunity to enroll in a Euroterm London semester. Professors Ronda and Carl Winderl and Communication Studies professor, Randall King, and a British professor, will offer classes in writing, theatre and media literacy.

For more stories about international studies experiences from the students and faculty mentioned in this article, visit the web at [www.ploma.edu/Viewpoint](http://www.ploma.edu/Viewpoint).

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“I personally grew to be in awe of God’s creation,” said Price, “and I think it is easier to see the world the way God does after you see the world. God stretched my heart and showed me how to love numerous kinds of people.”

**OTHER INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS**