

My College Year in Athens

This past year, with the help of the Frank M. Snowden Jr. Scholarship, I have had the honor and privilege of spending my last semester as an undergraduate studying with the College Year in Athens program. As an aspiring Mediterranean Archaeologist interested in urban spaces and multi-culturalism in the Hellenistic-early Roman world, I knew this would be the perfect opportunity to not only visit as many sites as possible, but also to understand and appreciate the modern world around them. I also took advantage of the opportunity to network with other archaeologists, professors, and volunteering at the American School of Classical Studies' (as a librarian assistant at the Blegen, and as a photogrammetrist and 3D mesh editor at the Malcolm Weiner Lab for Archaeological Science). During the fall 2021 semester, I was also applying to graduate programs, and was fortunate to meet with two potential advisors who were also in Athens at the time (Mantha Zarmakoupi and John Papadopoulos). Although USC (my home institution) had only offered to cover the fall semester, I worked closely with CYA to identify other funding sources for staying an extra spring semester. This was only made possible in conjunction with SCS's Frank M. Snowden Jr. Scholarship and CYA's William C. Kontes Scholarship.

Although I had already graduated by the fall of 2021, the idea for an extra semester was to hone extra skills to strengthen my prospects as a graduate student, and to continue my volunteering and networking opportunities. During the fall I took courses in 3D Archaeological Methods, Ancient Greek, Modern Greek, Topography of Athens, and Byzantine History. During the spring I took courses in Archaeological Drawing, Ancient Greek, Latin, Greek Epigraphy, and Modern Greek. Since CYA integrates field research into their semester studies, I was actually able to see my modern and ancient Greek improving, the more we traveled, and soon enough I was able to start reading epigraphic inscriptions on my own, it became a very special measure of my skills over this time. Evidently, these skills were starting to pay off because during our trip to the Peloponnese I was sitting at a café in Nafplion when I received an offer of admission to UCLA's Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, where I have recently started my studies working with John Papadopoulos, Chris Johanson, and Sarah Beckmann. It was a magical and special moment to be sitting around so much history (a Mycenaean AND historic site) and receive the news that I would be funded to continue my studies as a Ph.D. candidate.

I can't recommend the College Year in Athens enough for students from all the humanities and social sciences, and especially for students of cultural history. For classicists it offers a unique opportunity to place myths into physical locations, to contextualize them within the material culture that produced the myths and texts which create the basis for the discipline, and most importantly, to engage with the modern culture to whom these myths and these spaces belong to. CYA is a program is exceptionally staffed and well-structured, I am thankful for many of the professors who were not only passionate about speaking about their areas of expertise, but also functioned as mentors to me when I needed advice about academia, graduate school, or navigating the employment landscape of classical archaeology. I am grateful not only that I was able to spend one very useful and wonderful semester in Athens, but that through the generosity of CYA and SCS I was able to turn it into a whole year. This whole experience has been a core memory which will stay with me throughout my career. In the modern Greek language, a person's goal or trajectory in life can be referred to as their "Ithaca," Athens is has undoubtedly become η Ιθάκη μου.