January 13th

Today was my first day of class for The Roman Experience. We talked about the creation of the city of Rome and Florence. The area that Rome is sitting on was formed by volcanic eruptions, causing much of the land to be very fertile. The city of Rome was founded in 753 BC and quickly grew into a big city because of its strategic location on the peninsula. It also helps that the Tiber River runs through the Rome allowing for quick access to drinking water. Rome eventually became a republic in 510 BC and then an empire in 27 BC.

We then learned about Florence and how it was established in 59 BC. The city rose behind the bankers that lived there and minted coins in Florence. It was even the capitol of Italy from 1865-1870. We also learned that the Anro River.

January 20th

Today in class we got into the engineering and architecture in and around Rome. The first thing we went over was arches. In arches you have two different stacks of stones that are placed on top of each until they meet at the top, forming a semi-circle. The piece at the top connecting the two stacks is called a keystone. Arches were one of the most famous things Romans are remembered for and can be seen throughout Rome. Buttress were used to help support arches by connecting them to a wall. A dome is similar to an arch as it is multiple arches connected going around in a circle. Another form of architecture that we talked about was post and beam. Post and beam is where multiple columns hold up beams that lie perpendicular to them. The columns experience compression and columns that are not too stocky and not too slender are best used for posts.

We also went over some vocab from this week’s readings in which we learned that travertine was the rock most used by the Romans as it was common in the region and it worked well under compression. Another big thing in vocab was Repristinization. Repristinization was a period in Rome’s history in which the Fascist government stripped a ton of the architecture of its history to make things back to when they were built. This destroyed a lot of the history that these structures had accumulated throughout the years.

January 27th

Today in class we went over the engineering and the art in Rome. For the engineering aspect, we talked about center of balance. Center of balance is where on an object that it can be held up using just one support. This means that the object is pushing down at one point and the support is the only force pushing up on the object. We also went over some buttress behaviors. The heavier and wider the buttress is, the more compression it can resist while the height of it does not affect its compression capacity.

We also talked about the art in Rome. One of the biggest things was that Rome didn’t have a consistent style of art. A lot of what they used, they picked up on from the Greeks. Some of the true innovations of the Romans are the arch, vault, dome, and concrete. We also talked about how there were three main types of columns that the Romans used. One of them was Doric which is the oldest type and the most bland. Another type is Ionic which is more artsy than Doric and is best known by the scrolls along the capital. The last type is Corinthian which is the most ornate and newest of the columns. It is best known for its canvas leaves along the capital.

We also went over some vocab from the reading this week such as Julius Caesar being the first emperor of Rome and that the Forum was the starting place of Rome and a famous marketplace.

February 3rd

Today in class we went over some of the famous monuments around Rome. One of the things we talked about was the Coliseum. The Coliseum is a full oval structure that is three tiered and was built to house tens of thousands of spectators. Columns were put around the outside the walls to give the structure a 3-D feel but the columns were actually engaged or built into the wall. We also talked about the Pantheon which actually means all of the gods. The building is made of two different shapes, a rectangle and a cylinder. On top of the cylinder sits a dome that is known for the hole in the top that is open to the elements so it actually rains and snows in the Pantheon. Raphael is also buried here. Another thing that we talked about in class was the Arch of Titus. It is located in the Forum and was built to commemorate the siege of Jerusalem. The arch is supported by two piers and the arch on top. The coolest thing about The Arch of Titus is that it has original murals on the inside of the arch that have not been touched for thousands of years.

We also went over some vocab from this week’s reading. One of the vocab words was Republic which is similar to a Democracy but in the Roman Republic, it was more like an oligarchy as it was run by some of the wealthy patricians. Another one of the things we went over was the Circus Maximus which was a chariot racing stadium used for entertainment. An obelisk stood in the middle of the stadium imported from Egypt.

February 10th

Today in class we talked about the churches and walls in and around Rome. For churches we went over some of the parts of a church. One part of the church is the nave which is the main body of the church and the aisles which ran parallel to the nave and went all of the way from the front of the building to the back. Another piece that we talked about was the narthex which was a place of entry to the church. Another thing that we talked about today was the walls and roof of the church. In the church they used multiple column walls to make the roof because the wood that they used was not long enough to span the entire length of the church. Walls were built inside the church to subdivide the space.

Today we also went over some Italian words that were good for shopping. One of the things I learned included that whenever you entered a store, it was appropriate to ask them if you could browse or posso guardare.

February 17th

Today in class we went over the engineering and some art throughout Rome. For engineering, we talked about how the Romans used Hook’s 2nd law on how to make an arch. By having a string and letting it sag down with gravity, the reflection of the sag is the dimensions for the arch. The higher the sag, the lower the horizontal force and the higher the vertical force on the arch. Roman arches were usually built twice as why as they are high. On an arch the load is uniformly spread out throughout the arch. An arches weakness though is trying to hold a point load which is when only a certain spot gets a force in which the arch usually crumbles. For art we talked about mosaics which are made up of many pieces of tesserae that produced a picture. Some mosaics can be seen at Saint Maria Maggiora and Santa Costanza. Another art topic was Fresco which pretty much a painting that was done on wet plaster. As the plaster dried, the picture was set into the walls. Both of these styles were used in many churches and were a way to depict a story to the illiterate.

We also went some vocab words that are common words in Italian such as Liberia which is a book store, and Accettate carte di credito which means do you take credit cards?

February 24th

Today in class we only had one professor so we went over a lot of engineering. One of the things we went over was arches. We talked about in an arcade, a string of multiple arches that the horizontal forces of each were balancing out on the structure, keeping it stable. But if one arch crumbled it would be a chain reaction as the resulting arches would become unstable. We also went over certain other types of arches besides the Roman arch. The parabolic arch is what is used in the making of the St. Louis Arch. Also another arch is the pointed arch which is pointed at the top and is actually more stable than the Roman arch. If there was not another arch to support on, a buttress would be used. Sometimes buttresses did not way enough to cancel out the arch’s horizontal forces so heavy sculptures on top the buttresses to counteract the arch’s force. We also went over a barrel vault which is just multiple arches combined to make a tunnel and a groin vault which is two intersecting barrel vaults. At the end of class we went over some Italian words such as con gas which is fizzy water and liscia which is regular water. We also went over pizza toppings such as il formaggio which is cheese.

March 2nd

Today in class we talked about the architecture in Florence. Florence is known as the starting place of the renaissance. Some things that Florence are famous for are the Duamo, which the biggest church in the city. It contains a church, a baptistery, and a bell tower. Florence also contains the Orsanmichele which is a church that used to be a grain elevator. The church was decorated by the guilds in and around Florence to make it beautiful. One of the biggest things in Florence though is Brunelleschi’s Dome. Brunelleschi’s Dome was a great engineering design as for the longest time the building where the dome sits did not have a top as no one could figure out to make one. Across the way is Ghiberti’s baptistery doors which two of them were done by Brunelleschi also. We also talked about the sculptor Donatello who is famous for his sculptures of David and the Feast of Herod.

At the end of class we went over vocab with the theme being restaurant. Some words we learned are camerlere which means waiter and la forchetta which means fork.

March 9th

Today in class we dove into the design behind the dome. A dome is just an arch that is rotated on an axis. Domes have a whole in the top because the dome creates a compression ring along the hole keeping the dome upright. The hole is called the oculus. One of the most popular domes in Italy is the Pantheon. Another term dealing with DM’s is the spring which is the base of the dome which are naturally is in tension outward. This means to keep the dome from crumbling inward, buttresses must be placed around the base of the dome to cancel out the initial forces.

Another thing we talked about in class was the Vatican which was apart of our reading for this week. We talked about many of the rooms throughout the Vatican. Bramante was the first designer of the Vatican but when he died a ton of architects finished it including Raphael, Michelangelo, and Maderno, each with their own different plans for the Vatican. We also talked about the Vila Farnesina which is a villa of a wealthy man for his mistress. Every wall and ceiling has different pieces of art and looks amazing from the inside.

March 16th

Today in class we talked about the comparisons between Roman masonry and Cincinnatian masonry and have they are very similar. For instance the old Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce was built using structures found in Roman architecture like arches and makeshift buttresses in the forms of the heavy masonry walls. They also used a lintel for the main entrance to the building, an old form of architecture. We then talked about the VanWormer building on the University of Cincinnati’s campus which houses the provosts on campus. The building is built with a dome on top, recalling the architecture from Rome. The VanWormer building looks like it is built from straight stone, which is very expensive but underneath the outer wall, it is actually masonry. The building on the outside is supported by ionic columns, which were very common in Rome. The last building we talked about was the Union Terminal in the Cincinnati area. The Terminal is one big dome but is changed in a modern way as it is made with a steel frame which lets it resist tension and compression, unlike stone in the Roman era.

Day 1 in Italy

My first day in Italy started off a little rough but turned into a pretty awesome day! We took two planes to get to Rome where the jet lag was very brutal. Luckily we took a bus ride to Florence where I was able to sleep. Halfway between Rome and Florence we stopped at an auto-grill. I had a collo and formaggio sandwich and a coke which tastes different than American coke. Once we got to Florence we checked into our hotel and then went on a walk around Florence to situate ourselves with Florence. We walked around with a tour guide going through different town squares and finished up with touring the Plazza Vecchio and climbing the tower. We were free to do what we wanted after that so a few friends and I went to a pizzeria and had Italian pizza which was really good! We then went to a gelato place and had amazing gelato on the walk back to the hotel. The first day in Rome was definitely a good day!

Day 2 in Italy

Today we went to the academia and we saw cool statues that were made by Michelangelo and saw the statue of David which was really tall. After that we went to the Bargello which had a lot of cool pieces of art including a set of pieces from Michelangelo. We then split off for lunch at a café by the river where I got a chicken sandwich and a coke. We then went over the Ponte vecchio to get to the Pitti palace which housed a wealthy family in Florence and the gardens surrounding the complex. The palace was full of art and had lots of cool paintings from the renaissance and the walls were extravagant colors. The one thing that sucked was that it rained hard while we in the garden and got us very wet. We then finished at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna and then a group of people went to eat at a market where I got two sandwiches and a bottle of wine to share. After that we went back to the hotel and hung out.

Day 3 in Italy

Today I got up and went with 4 other people to mass in the Duomo. It was a really cool experience as everything was in Italian. Afterwards we went to a museum where we saw the original Ghiberti doors and other things that was once in the Duomo. They also had models of Bruneschelli's dome and how it was constructed. After the museum we waited in line to climb the Duomo and took turns getting lunch. I got a ham sandwich and a coke from the café Duomo. The climb was a trial but the sight at the top was the best thing we have done on this trip so far. I got lots of pictures. After we climbed back down, I grabbed another coke and a donut from a shop and two people in our group gave their presentations today. After that we toured the Duomo which was super cool because it was so massive. We were done for the day but I went with Eric to get a soccer jersey at the marketplace and we got pizza and beer and at a local place for 10€! We then wandered around and found a gelato place and got gelato. I then cleaned up the hotel room as we are leaving for Rome tomorrow.

Day 4 in Italy

Today was our last day in Florence we visited the San Lorenzo and the Santa Croce church along with the library that holds the Medici families books. All of the places were fine despite that it was raining heavily. After that I ate lunch with four others at a local restaurant and got ravioli with cheese inside that was pretty good. We then met back up at the hotel to catch a bus to Rome. 10 minutes into the ride, grace forgot her wallet so we had to stop so a taxi could come with the wallet. While this was going on I presented on my topic that I researched prior to the trip. It went very well and then when the purse came, we were back on our way. We arrived in Rome and we met out tour guide and then we split off for dinner. We went to a pizza place where I got pizza and water and then we got gelato afterwards. After that I went to bed.

Day 5 in Italy

We were up and moving at 8:40 and headed for the coliseum. It was really cool to see and I got a lot of great pictures. We then went to forum which was very big and a lot of green space. We then headed up to the palatine Hill which had lots of cool building and statues. We then split up with the guide and saw two temples to Roman gods that were being restored. We then went to Tiber Island and got lunch at a pizza place and gelato. We then a few churches including the Santa Maria Maggiore which was very cool and the Santa Maria degali Angeli which was converted from roman baths. That was the last thing we did for the night and then we went to eat which was really good.

Day 6 in Italy

Today we took the metro to the Vatican which was very cramped but was super quick. There we saw the pope’s garage full off his old carriages, paintings, the Sistine chapel, tapestries, and the big square where the pope gives speeches. In the Sistine chapel they had professional shushers that made sure everyone was quiet and weren't taking pictures. We also saw St. Peter's Basilica which was massive as it is over six football fields wide and super tall with gold all over. They said we can climb the dome so our group decided we were going to do that Friday morning for the sunrise. After this, we split off for lunch where I went with five other guys and had pizza and a coke. After that we visited a castle called castle Sant'Angelo which once was a castle used to protect the pope when. Rome was sacked. It is now a museum and has a great view of the city which I got really good pictures at. After that we went back to the hotel via the bus system which was fun and then went to dinner later which was good but we had a late lunch so I wasn’t super hungry.

Day 7 in Italy

Today we had a busy day starting off with the different fountains. The most famous one, the Trevi Fountain, was very packed and I was told that by throwing 3 coins into the Trevi Fountain, one for love, one for luck, and one to return to Italy and decided to throw in some coins. Unfortunately all I had was 1 euro coins so it was a very expensive wish! We then walked around Rome for a bit until we got to the Pantheon which was very cool. I thought the building was going to be longer on the inside but it just consisted of the domed part which was really high up. After we went in, our professors told us about a really good gelato place a few streets down and a bunch of us went to. It was more expensive than at other places but was definitely the best gelato we had in Rome. I got chocolate and chocolate chip flavor. We then visited the Piazza Navona which has a big square with a church and an obelisk that we sat under and heard a presentation from Eric. We then went in the church briefly but it was closing for lunch soon so we popped in quickly there and then left for lunch. We visited a few churches such as the Santa Maria Sopra Minerva and finished up with our tour guide showing us a roman modern library where we saw lots of people studying from the local university which was really cool because it’s not a regular place for tourists to visit. We ended the official tour so a few of the guys went around to a Ferrari store we saw and I wanted a hat but hats were 47 euros! So I decided against a hat and a ton of us walked back to the hotel. That night for dinner we went to Hard Rock Café and celebrated Cinco de Mayo which was funny because we in Italy at an American restaurant and celebrating a Mexican holiday!

Day 8 in Italy

Today we started of the day by visiting a plethora of churches in the morning including the Sant'Andrea al Quirinale designed by Bernini. We didn’t have the tour guide in the morning so the professors were the ones giving us the tours throughout the morning in the churches. We passed the Quirinale Palace as we went to the churches and it was massive. It spanned over four blocks in length and it’s crazy because unlike our White House, the palace is right up against the street without any walls protecting it. We stopped at the piazza del Popolo for lunch where they were setting up a tennis court for an exhibition game for the Roman Open. After lunch we met back up with our tour guide and visited the Borghese up the hill from the piazza. The Borghese was very cool as all you could see were trees around it made it seem as if we weren't in a huge city. It reminded me a lot of Central Park in New York. There was a museum we visited inside the Borghese which was very cool with sculptures and paintings. We then took a tour bus to the Roman baths where Jessie and Zach gave their presentations on the roman baths and aqueducts respectively. The roman baths were massive, a lot bigger than I thought they would be. After that we went back to the hotel a group of us went to an outdoor restaurant and had a delicious pizza.

Day 9 in Italy

Today was our last true day in Rome as we would be leaving tomorrow for Cincinnati. The professors pretty much gave us a free day up until 1:15 so a group of us got up to climb the Vatican dome. Our tour guide told us that there would be long lines so we got up at 6:30 and got there and no one was in line. We climb the 600 stairs without seeing anyone and get to the top and only 10 people were up there. It was a great view but we overestimated the wait so much that were done watching by 8:30 in the morning. I had to get my brother a present for his birthday so I stopped by two places near the Vatican that sell tennis gear. I went by and neither store was open so I just went to the hotel. For lunch, Eric and I found a place on the way to our first event today at a pub that had burgers. We then walked around until we had to meet up at the Quirinale Palace which was super cool. It is the equivalent of the White House in the USA but there aren't any big fences around it so you can go up and touch it. We even got to go inside and get a tour of it. They had a room that was supposed to replicate the Sistine Chapel and all kinds of painting were inside. Once we were done with the tour, the official tour ended and I went by myself back to go back to the tennis stores. After checking two stores, I found a Sergio Tacchini shirt which I bought. After that I went back to the hotel and a ton of us went out to a roof top restaurant which was really cool and I had lasagna and wine. The next morning we traveled back to Cincinnati by way of Atlanta.