

**Mary Claire LaVelle**

Mellon Foundation Area and International Studies Fellowships for Incoming Graduate Students  
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During the summer, I attended an intensive Italian language immersion course in the heart of Rome. As a graduate student in Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, fluency in Italian and cultural competence in Italy are useful tools both for my research and future career involving the study of Latin and ancient Rome. I spent four weeks immersed in Italian culture and language study. I attended classes taught by native Italian speakers at Italiaidea Institute and lived in a homestay situation with a native Roman woman, who does not speak any English. The overall experience was an invaluable addition to my previous studies of Italian by increasing my fluency in Italian and understanding of Italian culture. The program additionally allowed me the opportunity to visit famous Roman archaeological sites, buildings, and art.

During the weekends, I explored other areas of Italy—including Naples, where many archaeological remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum reside, as well as Siena, where I experienced firsthand the first Palio race, the origins of which extend back to medieval times—while during the week I attended classes and explored the rich remains of the ancient city of Rome. Travel both within and outside of Rome provided ample opportunity to explore ancient cities that were once part of the Roman Empire and to speak Italian with many native speakers including those from different regions who spoke in different accents or dialects from the Romans.

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