



Alexis Phylactopoulos, President College Year in Athens (CYA)



CYA “helped me find my passion”

College Year in Athens (CYA) is a not-for-profit educational institution that offers semester, academic year, and summer study abroad programs in Greece. Established in 1962, CYA was the first study-abroad program in Greece for English-speaking undergraduates. Alexis Phylactopoulos, President of CYA, spoke with The National Herald about the school and its unique program.

What makes your school the best choice for students interested in studying abroad?

In the words of one of our fall '16 semester students, Maddi: “CYA helped me to find my passion, to make connections, and to bring Ancient Greek History to life. This semester truly changed my life. I met so many incredible, inspirational people who encouraged and pushed me along the way. I know that I will never be the same...” We deeply value these words; we are touched and feel proud of our country, its history, its people and the unique educational experience our faculty and staff offer to our students.

The CYA program offers an extensive range of academically outstanding courses and unique learning opportunities spanning a wide range of disciplines from Ancient to Contemporary studies, enriched by hands-on learning opportunities and on-site classes. Our strong commitment to international education, our dedicated staff, faculty and our robust programs and state-of-

the-art facilities have earned us a place amongst the top study abroad programs in Greece.

We value experiential learning and build our courses based on this philosophy. We encourage students to study the wonders of Greece, its glorious past and the country's resilience to the hardships of today.

The CYA experience is holistic. Our Academic Center overlooks the Acropolis and the Kallimarmaro Stadium, a view that is thrilling for students as they sit with their laptops and work in front of one of the most celebrated masterpieces of Greek architecture. Students gain inspiration from this environment and immerse themselves into a multi-dimensional learning experience in Greece.

CYA has over 50 years of experience with study abroad, what are some of the changes over the years in terms of what programs and courses are available and most popular with students?

CYA is a U.S.-based not-for-profit educational institution; it was the first study abroad program of its kind in Greece for English-speaking undergraduates. Established in 1962, and in the very same year, it attracted a pioneering class of five students, all female.

Since then, for over five decades we have offered semester/year and short-term academic programs combined with the vibrant experience of study trips, and day-to-day contact with the people, monuments, and landscape of Greece

and the Mediterranean. The programs are all taught in English and academic credit is earned in the students' home schools following their semester in Greece.

We offer more than 30 courses in a range of fields including Anthropology, Art History & Archaeology, Business, Classical Languages, Communications, Economics, Environ-

ment, and the Mediterranean. The programs are all taught in English and academic credit is earned in the students' home schools following their semester in Greece.



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Our students come from all parts of the U.S. and from schools that vary in size, liberal arts colleges, as well as State schools. We have had students from 550 institutions. We have about 9,000 alumni, of whom about 200 are university professors in Greece-related subjects. We are now in the fortunate position of welcoming students recommended by CYA alumni, now professors.

mental Studies, History, Literature, Modern Greek Language, Philosophy, Political Science & International Relations, Religion, Urbanism & Sustainability.

We look towards the future, constantly following developments, expanding our curriculum to incorporate more courses that are popular with students. There are courses that analyze the Greek crisis, the role of social media, the evolving business environment, as well as the various aspects of sustainability, migration and gender relations in modern Greece, among others.

What is the best or most surprising lesson students learn from studying abroad in Greece?

Once again, I am going to borrow the words of another of our students, Kyra (spring '16) who wrote: “I have fallen in love with beautiful Greece. But most importantly, I have grown as an individual. I can truly say that this semester has helped me to begin to know myself. Being in such a different environment has a way of emphasizing one's strengths and weaknesses.”

Many of our students are surprised by the sense of belonging and strong personal connection they develop with Greece after a short period, living 'behind-the-scenes' learning to interact, adapt and adopt this rich culture as their own. They learn to let go of their preconceived notions of the world around them and even themselves. Students discover their abilities and use this as a tool to further carve their future path towards academic and personal fulfillment.

Our primary goal at CYA is to lay the foundations for students to become citizens of the

world with a purpose - to travel, taste other places, and learn about different ways and habits, while, at the same time, to remain focused on their personal and academic goals. Our emphasis on learning beyond the classroom through on-site classes and field trips builds a hands-on experience for students. They develop a rich connection to Greece, whether it be walking the ancient fields of Olympia, tasting a spinach pie made by a Greek yiayia in a Cretan village, or recreating ancient sports at the Kallimarmaro Stadium, the venue of the first modern Olympics, which is right next door to our facilities.

What is the application procedure? When is the deadline to apply?

The first step in students' application process is to follow any procedures set by their home college or university. Once they have taken steps necessary to become approved to study abroad, they submit a complete application to CYA's North American Office (cyathens.org), including an application form, official transcript, and for semester programs two letters of reference and a personal statement.

Applications are processed in under two weeks, and students receive an official notification of acceptance by email. There is no concrete deadline; we accept applications on a rolling basis year-round until the program start date, but students should be mindful of the time it takes to obtain a visa and any deadlines set by their home institutions.

Once CYA accepts students, they work closely with CYA's North American Office to prepare for departure.

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