

Mt. Menoikeion Seminar 2019



From left to right: Nikitas, Xenaphone, Sophie, Daniel, Shanon, Nickolas, Natalie, Elliot, Alyssa, Abby, Nardeen, Bora, Nazenin, Kutay

June 12th-

Events Summary: arrived to Athens and took the metro to the Megaro Mousikis stations where I ran into Shanon and we walked to the hotel together. Went for an hour walk around the city and sadly noticed the increasing rates of homelessness around Athens. 9 pm meeting with the crew to discuss logistics for the next day.

June 13th-

Events Summary: Acropolis- discussion with Daniel and Bora about Greek mythology and museums being places that host muses of art and Daniel shared his insights about the lack of color from Ancient Greek depictions of art that may reflect westernized definition of purity and whiteness. Acropolis museum- discussing the missing color of archeological statues as well as the high number of white plaster replacements of pieces now located in foreign lands, aka British Museum. [lunch at taverna- delicious...] Ancient Agora visit with the Church of the Holy Apostles which is small in no longer used for practice but has

beautiful acoustics. . Princeton Center of Athens Colloquium with Nikos presentation and discussion of the 15 years of Mt. Menoikeion's program history. Afterward we got the chance to have some quality conversations with donors, faculty, and students in other seminars while enjoying good food.

Reflections: I think a lot of people were quite exhausted due to the sun and jet lag. Looking forward to some awakening moments and time for reflection.

June 14th-

Events Summary: Church of Panagia Kapnikarea - Elliot gave his presentation about the church and we started going around to see the unique pillars and stone structures. We then spent more time around the very carefully crafted Little Metropolis with its recycled and reused stones that were carefully put together to yield a thought-provoking design.. Before our coffee break we stopped briefly by the Big Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens. We then headed to the Benaki Museum where Daniel gave his presentation about the different layers of arts collected from different eras representing different styles. Ultimately we headed to the Byzantine Museum mainly to witness artifacts, icons, and liturgical objects that belong to the Prodomos and were looted or lost over the centuries before their return to the museum. After lunch we had a seminar discussion with Nikolas at the Athens center about the Prodomos' history and its transformation from a Monastery to a nunnery and marking features of the place and the sisterhood that resides there. We ended the night with a phenomenal experience of Eleni Karaindrou's Concert at Odeon of Herodes Atticus.

Reflections: Holy objects and their environments- it is intriguing how the same holy (specifically liturgical) object could initiate very different feelings and perceptions in different locations. When you see an incense burner being used in liturgy inside the monastery where believers gather around it with a sense of unity and peace, versus seeing it in pristine glass and white walls inside a photogenic museum where it hangs separated from its origin and meaning.

June 15th-

Events Summary: Left hotel at 8:15 am to take the bus to Thessaloniki (grabbed Bougatsa at midway break), then a short drive to Serres, check into the hotel, Serres walk and some history, passed by Serres Museum (past Agora), big delicious meal on Dimitri.

June 16th-

Events Summary: first day in the Monastery, I met my one and only, Macrina (hard to describe the reunion and the comfort that she overjoyed me with, but I am so thankful that I was able to have one of her big fat hugs again) Nikos took us for the main Church's tour before lunch and I had a chance to examine the inner Narthex's icons closer and witness how the people would kiss them or light candles in front of them throughout the day and after liturgy. Elliot and I Presented on our research topics. I was called for my special annual 1-1 with Macrina during which we discussed my personal life, her health and the sisterhood. It is amazing to witness the trustworthy relationship that we have nourished since last year. Since that the core of monasticism is somewhat isolated from the people it is hard to integrate oneself in the sisterhood during a short period of time, but my talk with Macrina have showed me how blessed I am to have their trust. We discussed the health of the sisters and even some financial and practical hardships that the monastery is undergoing. We wrap up the day, and I am feeling super blessed.

Reflections: "Patience and humility, my microli" Macrina told me.

June 17th-

Events Summary: breakfast, monastery (Nick, Thanasis, Alyssa, and Abby presented), got to talk to some of the nuns and had a chance to have a short group discussion with Macrina over coffee. At the end of the day we drove by Dimitri and Nikos Serres favorite spots and got to see the open air cinema which was about to air Rocketman! (on my future bucket list)

June 18th-

Events Summary: Monastery: we spent most of the day covering the last 5 presentations until Dimitri, Nikos and Thanasis left :/ It was a long day in term of academic coverage but I am glad that we will spend the next two days with the nuns helping with their chores.

June 19th-

Events Summary: We went to see the Serres planes and acropolis, and later went by teh Serres museum and was surprised by the mixture of Chinese and Greek artifacts and calligraphy art combination. We then spent half the day in the monastery, and the other half in Kavala and went for a swim (delicious snacks on the beach...thanks to the wonderful Bora!). We finally went for a walk around Kavala and visited Muhammad Ali's hotel and

statue, and wrapped the day with a delicious dinner. On the way back, most people were very exhausted but I enjoyed a convo with Natalie and Nikitas at the front of the van while resisting my deep sleep.

June 20th-

Events Summary: Final day at the monastery- help in the kitchen and around —prepared for a song and dance for the Thenaxis. We watched the Monastery's 30th anniversary of reboost video made by the nun sand learned more about eh challenges and rebuilt of the place. Very sad to be leaving but have a sense of comfort that our paths will cross again and our relationships will develop further, this place feels like a dear home of spiritual, historical and intellectual value.

June 21st-

Events Summary: heading back to Thessaloniki- Sophie left :(Church visits, Hagia Sophia, Arch of Galerius (Bora gave an awesome presentation about the Arch's different layers and its connection to the tetrarchy), rotunda (Fonda ran in to an archeological photographer friend of his who was recording the rotanda's remaining frescos). We finally met Nicoletta and Uanna over dinner (Kutay's bday celebration)

June 22nd-

Events Summary: Final day of seminar events! We started with a visit to the city walls, white tower and Nicoletta's tour of the Museum of Contemporary Art. We had our final Bazar dinner with some music and chats.

June 23rd-

Events Summary: Most people left very early, but I am staying for an extra day so I had coffee with Nikitas, Elliot and Katarina to talk about the Rutgers program in Thessaloniki. I checked out into my second hotel...I am feeling quite tired but I spent the day walking around the city, grabbing ice cream at *Paradosiako* and went for a sunset walk to the *Umbrellas* installation by the sea front! (creating small annual traditions at thessaloniki <3) I should leave the hotel at 5 am to make sure that I have enough time for my 8 am flight to Athens!

Greece, efkharisto para poli for your welcoming hospitality. Till next time.

Yamas,
Nardeen