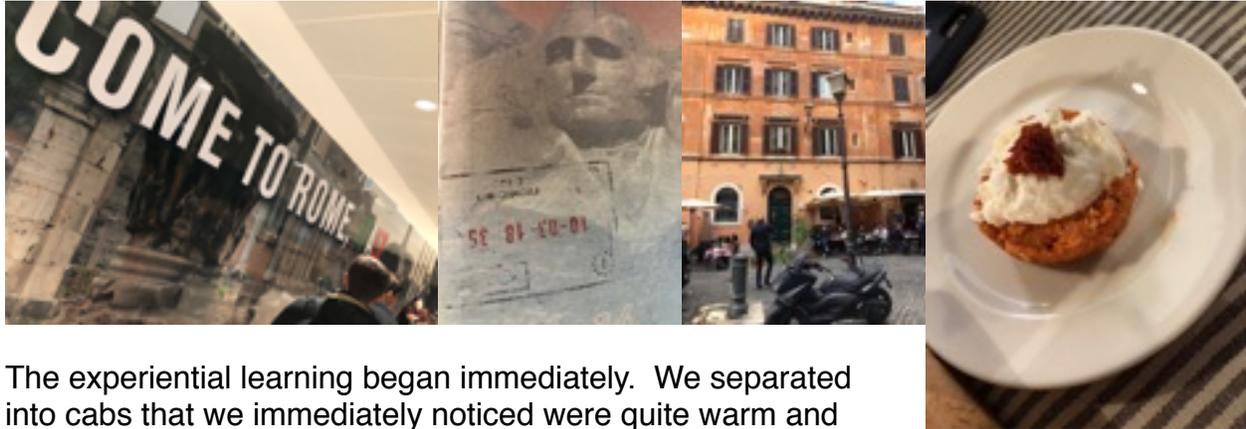


We Are Finally Here: Day 1 in Italy!

After an extended delay in JFK and nine hours in the air, the Italian Judaism seminar finally arrived in Rome! Our bodies may have been jet-lagged, but the excitement of Italy kept our energy high.



The experiential learning began immediately. We separated into cabs that we immediately noticed were quite warm and Tiffany promptly reminded us that Italians are afraid of the cold. We left our stuff at our hotel Casa de' Fiori and quickly headed to our first Italian meal at Ditirambo.

Our dining experience at Ditirambo was a great way to start off our trip. Our appetizers were authentic Italian dishes unlike anything I'd ever had before. We had panzanella, lots of burrata, eggplant meatballs, and so many incredible pasta dishes. We finished the meal with our first shots of Italian espresso! And then, we were off on our first afternoon of touring.



Our first stop was Michelangelo's Moses statue in San Pietro in Vincoli. The statue marks Pope Julius II's tomb and the horns on Moses' head represent the statue's connection to the words of Exodus (of the Catholic bible, though the horns are a result of a mistranslation). We discussed the irony that exists within the history of this piece: Jews worshipped the statue (even though idols are outlawed in the Torah) AND the statue rose Michelangelo to divine status (rather than Moses or Pope Julius) because it such an incredible structure.

Next, we went to San Clemente and explored the history of Rome through the lens of this layered architecture. The first layer represents fourth century Roman society, the second layer represents fourth to eleventh century society, and the top layer is the most recent portion of the Basilica. Notably, on the first floor is the first written Italian words in history. I found the written words and layered structure to be a really interesting and informative introduction to Rome. The layers are a staple of Roman architecture and the vernacular illustrates the important historical role that Rome has in the development of Italy. Overall, this visit helped me understand just how fast Roman history really is.

Finally, we ended our day with a beautiful sighting of the Coliseum during sunset. This was the perfect way to finish off an amazing first day! It truly was a surreal moment. After arriving in Italy only a couple hours before, I got to see one of the most historical sites in the world!

Overall, I loved the city of Rome. It's unique in that, despite having the "hustle and bustle" of a large city, it has arguably more history, personality, and ultimately beauty than anywhere else.

Personally, the most important thing I learned on our first day was simply the meaning of being an international traveler. This was my first time traveling to Europe and the experience of finally seeing that side of the world was surreal. I recognized the importance of fully immersing in the culture and challenging myself to learn as much as I can wherever we went. Because at the end of the day, this trip was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

My first day of experiences made me feel more connected to Elsa Morante's *La Storia*. I felt more connected to the scenes and experiences she described; her words took on a new meaning for me.

