

## **Universities in Italy**

Topic: Universities in Italy

General purpose: to inform

Specific purpose: to inform my audience about the difficult daily routine of students at the universities in Italy

Central idea: the difficult daily routine of students at the universities in Italy develops around three activities; going to the university, attending lectures, and studying after the lectures.

Main points: I) Students wake up very early in the morning and go to the university.  
II) Students attend overcrowded lectures.  
III) Students study on their own, completely unassisted.

Introduction:

Imagine having to wake up at 4:30 am 5 days a week, spending hours in the traffic trying to find a parking spot, and standing up, pushed in the middle of a huge crowd for more than half of your day. Sounds terrible, doesn't it? Well, what I have just described to you is the daily routine for most Italian students at the universities in Italy. According to Judith Shannon, Advisor for Study Abroad and International Studies, 25% of Wake Forest students spend a semester abroad, during the course of their four years of college, for an average of 300 students a year. Among those 300, approximately 40 students join the Venice program, in Italy, every year. However, even if there are some of you who might be thinking about going to study abroad, or who have already been, you should be aware that your academic and social experience, being organized through an American college, is going to be, or was, a very "Americanized" one. For instance, I am pretty sure that even those students who join the Venice program do not know really well how university life works in Italy, It is really different, from what you might expect, and it is really hard, I am an Italian who has just escaped all that very hard life, coming here, and I would like to tell you a little about university life in Italy, Maybe you will even end up appreciating more what you have here. The

daily routine for university students in Italy develops around three main activities: going to the university (physically speaking,) attending lectures, and studying after the lectures.

### ***Let's examine each activity in turn***

#### Body:

I) Students wake up very early in the morning and go to the university.

A - They first have to drive downtown, to the university (no dorms are provided) and they have to find a parking spot before they are all taken.

According to an Italian book called "Università in tasca," the equivalent of "Barron's top American Colleges and Universities," the students at the University of Milan, with an enrolment of more than 60000 students (approximately ten times what we have here,) wake up at 4:30 am every day, and spend at least one hour trying to find a place to park.

B - Then, they have to find a place in the overcrowded classroom.

My friend Gianfilippo Cameli, an Italian freshman here at Wake Forest who spent one year at the University of Rome, made me laugh when he told me that he used to bring a chair from his house when he went to his lectures, so that he did not have to worry about taking a seat in the classroom, and could sleep "late," until 6:30.

And now that they have made it to the university, what comes next?

II) Students attend overcrowded lectures.

A - It is hard to follow the lesson in a crowded, and chaotic environment.

1) Last semester, at the University of Rome, for the Calculus 1 class, 800 students enrolled. Those 800 students had to follow their class in a classroom designed for (less than a half of them. The atmosphere was not

ideal for a lesson in mathematics (information from "Corriere Università", a special edition of the most popular Italian newspaper.)

- Here at Wake Forest a 40 students-class is considered crowded!

2) Nobody asks questions to help understand the lesson.

- Would you feel comfortable asking questions in front of hundreds of people??

3) It is hard to take notes while standing up.

- all that the students can do is take notes, and they study from these notes, after they get home from classes.

III) Students study on their own, completely unassisted.

A - While here in America professors have office hours, many classes have labs, here at Wake Forest there is a Writing Center, and all of you have both a Student Advisor and an Academic Advisor, none of that exists in Italy.

B - Italian students review their notes, if they managed to take any..

C - They study on their textbooks preparing for their exams.

(...and many students fall asleep at night with these huge books in their hands).

Conclusion:

Now you have, at least, a general idea of what the daily routine for university students in Italy looks like: you try to get to the university, you try to survive there, and you try to study on your own. As you can see, it is a little more stressful than it is here! So, if you ever get to know Gianfilippo Cameli, the Italian freshman here at Wake Forest, who spent one year at the University of Rome, don't tell him that you had a bad day because you had to wake up at 7 am for your 40 students-crowded 8 o' clock class. He has been through much worse than that!