

SE02EP04

Nomadic Noles- Jack Clifford and Susan Hellstrom

H: Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs! I'm Hannah

Z: And I'm Zoe! And we're your hosts. On this podcast we'll talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We'll also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

Z: Today we caught up with Jack Clifford and Susan Hellstrom, the program leaders for Editing, Writing and Media in Valencia, Spain. You'll learn more about their program, the student-produced Nomadic Noles magazine, and what it is like to experience Valencia as a more than a tourist. Let's jump into our conversation with Jack and Susan now!

Z: Welcome to our podcast, we're so excited to have you both on today! Can you both introduce yourselves just telling us your name what you teach at FSU and where you teach abroad? Susan will start with you.

Susan (S): Hi! Thanks for being here my name is Susan Hellstrom and on the main campus I teach mostly during the academic year Scientific and Technical Writing and Presentations so currently I have an upper division writing technical writing course and I also have two graduate courses one in scientific writing and we mostly work on journal articles and proposals and I also teach a course on scientific presentations and posters. But before that at FSU I taught journalistic style writing courses so an article and essay workshop and then also a course that grew into the study abroad, the EWM study abroad program in Valencia. So Jack and I always call it ,it's like an editing workshop name, but Jack and I always called it the newsletter course and that course years ago started, probably about a decade ago, as something to produce an alumni newsletter or magazine for the Department of English. And so Jack and I started teaching that together and then it grew into the idea for the EWM program in Valencia and we'll talk more about that later.

Jack (J): Good morning, thank you for having us this morning. My name is Jack Clifford I work in the Department of English at FSU and for many years I taught with Susan and solo I taught the ENC 4352 editing workshop which is one of the courses offered in Valencia under the EWM program. As Media Specialist for the English Department I am currently working with a group of student interns and they write articles for the Department of English, they cover really the goal of the articles for the English Department aren't that much different from the goals of the EWM program in Valencia. We're looking to highlight feature profiles, what's going on in the department, very similar story ideas and story angles that we take in Valencia and I've been doing that for about a year now.

H: So you both lead the EWM program in Valencia, Spain. Susan could you tell us a little bit more about that program?

S: First of all is in the summer two session so that's from the, sort of the end of June through July to the very beginning of August so it's a five week program. And I like to describe it for students as a program within a program. So the students are there in Valencia with about 200 other students in FSU programs, most of them are in the broad curriculum program, and so the students who are part of the Editing, Writing and Media program in Valencia, we typically have a group ranging from about 13 to 16 students

I think we have a capacity of 17, and those students have two Editing, Writing and Media courses with Jack and me Co teaching those but then they live, eat, travel with all of those other 200 students in the in the Valencia program. So I like to think of it as the best of both worlds you know, you have small size classes in your specialty or your major but then you also have opportunities to socialize with a lot of other students. And you know I first wrote the proposal to create this program after teaching Editing, Writing and Media students with Jack when it was a young program and talking to one of our students and saying "Well are you going to study abroad?" and she said "well I would like to but there aren't any Editing, Writing and Media programs." So this was several years ago and I thought oh wow that is a shame but I also thought well that's an opportunity to write a proposal to you know create something. And fortunately international Programs liked the idea and so now we've been there for six summers!

Z: That's so wonderful. I think it's great that you saw the need for that and then you are able to bring that to fruition and make that happen for students and really make those dreams come true. So next question will direct to Jack. Can you just tell us a little bit about what makes Valencia great location for the EWM program?

J: Sure first of all I know you want to keep this short which is unfortunate because I could talk about an hour or two about what makes Valencia great location. First and foremost, and I know Susan agrees with me on this, is the staff at Valencia. It's an amazing staff. Ignacio likes to call his team, his staff his team. And Ignacio Messana and Alicia, Maria, the entire staff at Valencia is just amazing so that in first, first of all makes Valencia so great. For the students, what makes Valencia a great location for them and for the faculty members, is that it's an old city and so you have amazing architecture you have just incredible history surrounding you. And where the actual study abroad program, where the center is located is in the middle of the old city and so it's a walking tour every single day. You can find somewhere beautiful somewhere cool every single day that you are in Valencia. In addition to just the city center itself you have right outside the front door of the program center you have what's called the River Turia, River park and it is a park of about I believe, Susan is it about 13-14 miles? Something like that long. And from end to end you will find biking, you'll find soccer fields, you'll find exercise equipment, you will find just little cafes. So you have right in front of you this amazing greenway that students use, faculty members use and then just beyond Valencia. When I'm in Valencia for the five weeks I rent a bike while I'm there and each year I've been able to extend my explorations in Valencia and it's surrounded by incredibly cool neighborhoods, Ruzafa is one, you can just take your bike and ride 10 miles and find you know, kind of out of the way places. Every time I'm on my bike, every time I explore I find something new. And beyond that just the location itself, you're right there at the coast, you're you know 10 minutes away from the Mediterranean, you have access to easy transportation to Barcelona, Madrid all the big cities and of course an international airport to get wherever else you want to go. And of course I can't leave out the food, the food is amazing. Paella was actually, is where I mean, Valencia is where paella was actually invented and you can find amazing paella. You can find all sorts of seafood and great coffee of course. I mean like I said earlier when I first started this I could talk for hours about Valencia. The great thing about our program as well is that we meet from almost the entire month of July and during the entire month of July they have a month-long arts and cultural and music fair. And so every night of the week, every weekend students have an opportunity to experience something that is genuine Valencia, genuinely Spanish, everything from bands to plays to arts and cultures, crafts so it's just really in my opinion it's the perfect place to teach.

H: You make a great case for studying abroad in Valencia but especially for your program. So we know that editing, writing and media and publishing is highly collaborative so we're curious, what is it like collaborating as co-program leaders on this program? And Susan will hear your thoughts first.

S: Okay so actually as I think I mentioned before, Jack and I have taught together probably for almost a decade now so you know we know a bit about each other. And also one thing that we share is we both have strong journalism backgrounds. So you know we both come from sort of the same mindset on those things. And one thing that's really nice too, the previous years we we've had classes for two days out of the week but those are long days like 7 1/2 hours in the classroom alone. So there will be a long morning session and then a big break for lunch and then a long afternoon session. So you know those students have a long time in the classroom with this with us and that's where I think having both of us together adds a little bit of built in variety. So we're both present in both class, both sessions the whole time and it's nice when we have discussions because you know both of us can chime in, prime the pump to get the students going. It's also very helpful to have both of us in there when we want to work with individual students on their stories or their page designs, well not that I help on page designs that's more Jack's area, but so it you know, it adds a little bit of interest there. And you know he and I we don't totally agree on absolutely everything that we would have a discussion about but that's kind of fun too, students see you know one person's viewpoint and another person's viewpoint as well so it's really nice. I think 7 1/2 hours in the classroom is long but you can accomplish a lot in that time and so having two people just really I think adds more energy and helps with the variety a little bit.

J: Yeah just a little bit add about that about that. Susans right that we both have extensive backgrounds in journalism and so that said we still have different ways of looking at certain issues and certain ways of carrying out our job as teachers for the magazine, from the journalism, I think we you know both agree almost completely on how to interact with students and how to actually teach the students but when it comes to the principal,s sure a little bit different here and there. A little secret, so yes Susan I do sometimes disagree but we decide before each class who's going to win the arguments for that day.

Z: That's awesome.

J: So it's so it's all fair by the end of the semester she's won some, I've won some and the students learn along the way.

Z: That's great. Alright our next question is can you each tell us about the Nomadic Noles magazine that's published on your program and each of your roles with it? Susan, will start with you.

S: Okay sure so again we collaborate you know on this magazine, Jack and I, with the students and the wonderful thing is, I mean it's a real magazine. There's a print version and then there's you know the online version of it as well. And gosh I can't remember how many pages our last issue was but in the fifties, I believe, yeah. So you know we start working on that magazine even before we head over to Valencia because the program is 5 weeks and so you know it's hard enough to do a magazine in 15 weeks because students don't have to come in there with any previous knowledge or experience, although we love it if they do. And so you know to take them from zero to 60 mph and get this whole thing done we have to we have to look pretty fast. So before we even go to Valencia Jack and I start generating story ideas and we talk to our contacts at International Programs and and think of some possibilities and then when we get to Valencia we talk with Ignacio Messana, the director and dean of the Valencia program over there, who's a native Valencian so he has a lot of insight into the culture and

ideas there. And so then when we actually meet with the students then we get some ideas from them as well and so the students get to see the magazine go from ideas stage to near completion by the time they're done. And I say near completion because there's some work that Jack and I and student editors do back when we get to Tallahassee to finish up the magazine. But it's very cool because students learn how to do reporting, they learn how to write a journalistic article and even though their editing, writing and media students and they've written a lot probably a lot of them have never written in journalistic style article, so it's it's a different genre. But it's but it's really, it's very fulfilling to see them pick these things up, write an article, take pictures and then start pulling it all together. Jack will show them how to use InDesign and have them design their articles on a two page spread, it's really fulfilling. And then the magazine also has an accompanying Instagram profile so that's a nice way to drive some traffic to the magazine and post more photos that the students will have taken and get some practice in writing and editing for social media in a professional way. But it's really fun to see students take their articles from the idea stage to something that is a professional looking deliverable that they can use in their electronic portfolio and use as a talking point when they go to a job interview. And the parents like it too because the parents can see oh okay my child, my young adult really did accomplish something professional while they were studying abroad. So anyway I'll turn it over to you Jack on that one.

J: Okay so I'm the assigned instructor for ENG 4932 which is Studies in English and Susan and I had decided when we first started this that that would be the editing side of the publication. The editing side, we also decided that we would include the InDesign aspect of the publication in that class. So I lead the students through InDesign sessions in class and as Susan said most of them come with little to no experience with InDesign so it is, open up the program ,they've never seen it before. We have to now in five weeks, somehow have them create a design for the magazine. it is intense, it is rewarding, it's fun. As Susan said, we spend a lot of time walking around the classroom, speaking with the students, helping them you know produce an article that they are going to use in the future for employment, grad school, and it's all part of this collaborative effort that somehow, in the newspaper industry any sort of publication is called "the daily miracle" because it's incredible how it comes together and even though we have five weeks I still consider this to be the five week miracle that it's put together. Also because it's editing, Susan allows me to allow me but you know we work on the editing exercises and so I come up with really goofy editing exercises for the students. I try to incorporate a lot of Valencia, I try to incorporate a lot of the EWM program, their time in Europe and not just not just your standard editing questions but try to make it engaging with them something that they're interacting with on a daily basis. So it is really, just as Susan said, it's pulling all of these elements together and working with Susan and meeting with Susan weekly to decide how we're going to carry out that next week and then somehow somehow, making it happen

H: That's awesome. We hear from students all the time that they get so many benefits from studying abroad, like lifelong friends and cross cultural communication, increasing that cultural engagement. But for the students on your programs they also get like a tangible benefit that they can then take into like you said job interviews, grad school interviews. That's amazing that they are able to accomplish that and have something to show for their time in Valencia. But now we also know that studying abroad and teaching abroad has a lot of benefits for faculty members so we want to know what made each of you want to teach abroad. And this time Jack will start with you.

J: So when Susan came to me and talked to me about the program and the proposal I was on board. Honestly I had never traveled abroad. I had traveled to North America, I've done international travel in

North America ,but I had never traveled abroad. Susan knows that I am terrified of flying and so one of the first considerations I had to take was am I willing to get on a plane and made power for 8 hours. And of course I it was an easy, easy answer. What made me want to teach abroad was just the experience. Just the five weeks of being in a city and actually sort of living as a semi-resident of that city. It wasn't just a one week trip, it wasn't on a two week vacation. It was being able to go to an international location teach what I love to teach and experience a different culture that very few people get to experience on that level. Yes, when you're traveling and when you're on vacation you get to see sites, you get to interact with some locals, this was actually living in the city which was amazing.

H: And what about you Susan? What made you want to teach abroad?

S: As an undergraduate, I never had the opportunity to study abroad and I don't think as many people did back then but I always really wanted to. And so in my early 20s, after my first year of grad school, I knew a student in my program who had had a summer job in Germany. And so I asked him if he could help us, my roommate and I, get jobs there and he did and long story short ,it didn't work out as well as planned because he had ,the hotel owner in Germany, had given our jobs away before we even got there. And then he got us jobs with the hotel owner across the street whonever even knew our last names. So not the ideal abroad experience. We had some, shall I say, mishaps and my roommate ended up calling the US consulate so, who helped us out a little bit. But after then and I had some trips to Europe, and so after that I actually taught in Toulouse, France in 2007 with the university that I used to teach at before FSU. And that was a great experience teaching abroad and I really wanted to do that again and I really wanted to create that opportunity for EWM students at a time when it seemed like you know there as I said before there was an opportunity to create that program. And it's really fun to see those students, some of them have been abroad before and some of them haven't, and it's really fun you know now that Jack and I have been to Valencia for six summers you know good bit about Valencia. But it's really fun to see it new every year through those students eyes. You know whether it's the food or the market and the way they sell fresh food there, and food that we don't even eat that much of in the United States, to hear their stories about traveling on the weekends. Its really fun and its really fun to see students who had a bit of fear about traveling on their own maybe to Paris or to Amsterdam and then come back and say hey we found our way around and you know we found a place to stay and we met new people and had all sorts of great adventures. It's really fun to share in their excitement. And they gain confidence too, when they when they succeeded those experiences and they learn if they have some travel mishaps. And they also start looking at the United States and there you know Florida or whatever their home state is, in a different way too. So it's really a broadening experience and I myself love traveling and it's fun to experience it through the students eyes too. And we also, I know Jack feels this way too, we get to bond with students in our study abroad program really much more and much deeper than we usually get to bond with students back in Tallahassee on the main campus. Even though we're with them in Tallahassee for a longer time because, you know we'll see them and you see them in the city, we'll go on field trips with them. It's such a pivotal time in their undergraduate career that you really make some very important memories and attachments. And I think, you know, we get asked from a lot of students "oh can we get a letter for commendation" from Jack or for me or whatever, we get to know them in up in a more personal way usually than we do in a normal semester in Tallahassee and that that's really fun too.

Z: That's wonderful. So our final question is directed for both of you, Just it's kind of a two part question, but what advice would you give to students considering abroad and then what advice would you give to other faculty members considering teaching abroad and Susan, we'll start with you.

S: Okay well first of all I would say for students, if you are thinking about it, do it. Just you know, at some point you have to take a leap and you know have faith in FSU International Programs Valencia staff and your instructors and yourself that you can do it and that it will work out. I have to say that the FSU International Programs, and as Jack said the Valencia staff, they will have your back as a student. As a faculty member, they have our backs and you know if you ever need them for anything they they they have been there for us, they will be there for us. I mean I actually had a knee injury one summer when I was over there and oh my gosh they were incredibly helpful in getting me some medical help when I needed it. So and another thing too you know, some students think they can't do anything like this without one friend or a couple of friends along and you know I would say that even if you're a junior or or a senior, don't be afraid to go by yourself because you will meet new friends. Believe it or not, even if you think as a senior you won't meet new friends, you will. We hear that time and time again from students in our program and it's really fun to travel around with these new friends you've made, or old friends too if you if you go with them, it's a great bonding experience for students. So I would say for students just take that leap and do it, I've never heard a student say they regretted it.

J: Yeah I'll just add about the students like Susan said former students, students who took the program come to us later and ask for advice, ask the letters and every single student I've ever interacted with has said to me "I think about Valencia every single day, It is always something that I will cherish, the memories that I made are just life lasting." So the advice as Susan simply put it beginning is just do it. Don't be afraid to push yourself, don't be afraid to get out of your comfort zone and take that big leap across the Atlantic and do this, it's an amazing experience.

Z: Wonderful, and do you have any advice for people considering teaching abroad as well or maybe the benefits that you've seen personally from teaching abroad? I know you've kind of touched on some already.

J: I would I would for the faculty members it's the idea of being flexible within the program, within the study abroad experience, especially if you've never done it before. I know the first year I did it I had this expectation that it would be similar, more similar, to the teaching experience at FSU Tallahassee than it actually turned out to be. So you just need to be flexible with the schedule, you need to be flexible with the you know you have a plan on one day teaching and something comes up and a museum opens up, a museum visit or some visit in the city comes up and so you take advantage of that. So being flexible with your schedule, incorporating the city in your teaching. I know there are several professors who teach in Valencia, BJ Berenger, for instance, he uses the city as his classroom he takes the student out every single day. That is such a crucial aspect of teaching abroad and teaching in Valencia especially is making sure that you have some of your lessons where you get the students out into the city so that they can experience the city from an educational standpoint. You know most of them experience the city at night when it's really cool and its fun, a blast to go out with your friends but when you're studying it from study it from an educational standpoint you get a different look from it, from the location. So yeah flexibility and just being able to be creative with your teaching lessons and incorporating the city in what you teach the student.

Z: Wonderful, well thank you each both so much for talking with us today and we love just hearing about your experience teaching in Valencia.

J: Thank you for having us.

S: Yeah thank you very much for having us.

Z: Before we disembark, we want to talk more about Nomadic Notes.

This magazine that Jack and Susan referenced is produced each summer by the students participating in the EWM program in Valencia, Spain. Students become a magazine staff responsible for writing articles, taking photos, designing spreads and more!

H: Article topics range from local arts and culture, Q&A with current students and alumni to social issues and more! If you have an interest in a career in publishing or journalism this program is an incredible opportunity to learn new skills, improve your craft and create something tangible to add to your portfolio. You can find links to the magazine dating back to 2014 on our website, we will post a link in the show notes for this episode!

Z: IP has a team of student ambassadors who studied abroad and love sharing their experiences with others! You can hear from our ambassadors each week this semester on our Instagram stories as they host question and answer sessions. There is also an opportunity to ask them live questions once a month at our virtual tabling Zooms. Follow us @fsuip on Instagram for details on these sessions!

Thanks to all our listeners for tuning in and special thanks to Jack Clifford and Susan Hellstrom for talking with us about their experiences teaching abroad in Valencia!

H: This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey. Sound engineering is done by Chris Bret-Harte. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Hannah Meister and Zoë Crook.