During the summer of 1999, Indiana University initiated its first summer program in Greece with two courses: the first on ancient Greece, taught by IUPUI professor Robert Sutton (Classical Studies), and the second on modern Greece, taught by IUPUI professor Susan Sutton (Anthropology). These courses provided in-depth experience of the stunning remains of Greece's classical past woven into the rich complexity of life in a fascinating modern state, a bridge between East and West.

These classes were offered in collaboration with College Year at Athens (CYA) whose regular academic year program has long been accredited as an IU program. Scheduling these as consecutive three-week courses allowed students to take either one or both, accommodating the needs of working students or those with family obligations who could not participate in a longer program. Since one course focused on classical Greece in Athens and the second on contemporary Greece on the island of Paros, students who took both acquired a more comprehensive view of the nation—past and present, town and countryside.

The students from the IUPUI and IUB campuses and CYA program created diverse groups—25 students in Athens, 16 on Paros—in both courses.

The first course, "Discovering Ancient Athens on Site," provided an overview of the classical city from a firsthand study of its physical remains. It was quickly dubbed "Discovering Ancient Athens on Foot" by the students trying to keep pace with "Dr. Bob" as classes were held almost exclusively on archaeological sites and in museums, with only rare excursions to a traditional classroom setting. Students saw the major monuments of the classical city firsthand, including the Acropolis and Agora, several major museums, the port of Piraeus, and Eleusis. Excursions to nearby rural sites like Marathon and Sounion provided glimpses of the landscape planted with olive trees and grapevines. Students were assigned research topics and reported their findings to the class.

Despite a packed study schedule, students had free time to discover a cosmopolitan and vibrant modern European capital, to take off on weekend excursions to visit the oracle at Delphi, or to explore one of the colorful islands nearby. Judi Souder, a senior in finance at IUPUI's Business School who needed to fulfill her international requirement, had never been abroad and wasn't quite sure what to expect. She took both courses and came away feeling completely fulfilled. "It made me realize what cultural differences were all about; it made me learn a lot about religious practices (as one of the students was from a Greek Orthodox background); and I even learned some Greek." When she returned, she built her own Web site at http://php.iupui.edu/~jasouder/Greece.html with photos from her trip.

Standing in front of a temple ruin are (from left to right back) Catherine Coad, Debbie Jacobs, Kathryn Flanagan, and Sara Richey, with Nicholas Stamoulakos in front.

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The core number of the Athens group who stayed on for the second course, "Modern Greece: Images and Realities," were joined by a fresh batch of students. Their destination was the island of Paros in the middle of the Aegean Sea where they could glimpse the complexity of life in a contemporary rural setting. Popular images often reduce modern Greece to a mere reflection of its ancient past or else paint its countryside as a land beyond the forces of modern life. The students quickly discarded such notions as they explored the "quaint fishing village," which was revealed as a town recently built to serve the tourist trade. By combining classroom discussions with daily observation and journal-keeping, students developed ways to critically examine what so many tourists simply skim over on their brief stops to the island.

The success of the Paros course was made possible by wonderful accommodations: a small, friendly, family-run hotel dedicated just to the program, where every room had a balcony facing the sea. The English-speaking staff and the local arrangements coordinator provided an invaluable entree into Parian life, even for those who knew no Greek. Beaches and restaurants abounded, but farming villages and bustling port towns were within easy reach as well. From this base, the group was able to explore the environmental and historical forces that have shaped modern Greek life, as well as the contemporary dynamics of family, gender, religion, community, politics, and economics.

Formal classroom sessions were supplemented with frequent field trips, including donkey rides and hikes across the countryside, underwater diving to explore the marine ecology of the island, lessons in Greek dancing, participation in local festivals, a trek deep into the shafts of an ancient marble quarry, and visits to historic sites, museums, and Byzantine churches of all periods. Many students also made friendships and contacts on their own, including one who befriended the monks in the small monastery perched on a mountain high above the hotel. Many also took advantage of Paros's location to make trips to nearby Mykonos, Antiparos, and Naxos.

Careful monitoring and an on-site inspection by Richard E. Stryker, director of IU's Office of Overseas Study, assured the well-being of this new program. It was a great success from all points of view, providing the seven IU students in each session with excellent academic experiences and abundant opportunities for personal growth and international understanding. They all rose to the challenge of studying in such a distracting and exotic locale, performing superbly in their examination of the ancient past, while experiencing the pleasures and challenges of living abroad.

—Robert Sutton Jr.
Classical Studies, IUPUI

—Susan Sutton
Anthropology, IUPUI