

## STEP Reflection Prompts

As you may recall from your STEP signature project proposal, your STEP signature project was designed to foster transformational learning—that is, learning that challenged you personally and helped you gain broader and deeper understandings of yourself, others, and the world around you. Please address the following prompts to help you reflect on your experiences completing your STEP signature project; please give careful and critical thought to your responses.

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Type of Project: **Travel Abroad**

1. **Please provide a brief description of your STEP Signature Project.** Write two or three sentences describing the main activities your STEP Signature Project entailed.

During the summer of 2016, specifically the May Session, I was enrolled in CLAS 2798.02 - ByzConstpleInstbul (16564). During this class I traveled abroad to Greece and explored the country with Professor Anthony Kaldellis who taught me to look at things on a deeper level in an exploration of the truth. This exploration of the truth through history and fact finding yielded to be an insightful journey.

2. **What about your understanding of yourself, your assumptions, or your view of the world changed/transformed while completing your STEP Signature Project?** Write one or two paragraphs to describe the change or transformation that took place.

During my Step Signature Project, I found myself immersed in a different culture and effectively a different mindset. I was no longer confined to my roots in Ohio or in the United States for that matter. I was a part of a completely different tree. So naturally I wanted to explore how this culture and effectively this nation came to be. That is where my classwork provided me means to try and answer my curiosity. Each text contained a different key to understanding my world around me, showing the origins of the countries mindset. Much in the same sense as Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin shaped the national identity of the United States through literature. The past works, artistic, literature, or otherwise shaped the national identity of Greece.

This understanding of how past determines future is immensely interesting, however combining this knowledge with a pursuit of the truth yielded an even more interesting worldview. When you focus on finding the truth you begin to notice how nations emphasize certain aspects of their past to gain footing in the presence, even at the expense of hiding much of their past as well. This can be seen by the toppling of

churches and mosques, as well as their minarets, from the top of the Acropolis. This was done to purify the site in the name of the national identity which would be tarnished by the continued standing of any other religion other than paganism atop the Acropolis. This is just one example of how the bleaching of the past affects the present, many more exist.

- 3. What events, interactions, relationships, or activities during your STEP Signature Project led to the change/transformation that you discussed in #2, and how did those affect you?** Write three or four paragraphs describing the key aspects of your experiences completing your STEP Signature Project that led to this change/transformation.

There are numerous experiences I can pull from that solidified my transformation during my STEP Signature Project. One chief experience I pull from is that of the Acropolis. This is possibly the greatest monument in all of Greece and it is deserving of the title as the national monument. It serves as a homage to paganism and the trialed past that the country has been through: the Acropolis exploded during the Venetian war, had multiple churches erected, and mosque built on the site who adopted the structure for their own purposes. The meaning this site had on my transformation was that it showed what happens when a site has been imbued with multiple different meanings: it creates a black hole of meaning. The present can then alter the site to have whatever meaning it deems important.

In addition to the Acropolis there is the Mycenae site: The Tomb of Agamemnon. This burial site was the richest grave site in all of Greece. The real ebbing of the truth can be found in the fact of who discovered the site. Schliemann was the self-proclaimed archeologist who used Homer's Iliad to find the site. Many question if the site is actually real because Schliemann was untrustworthy and could have planted the gold. Interestingly enough, Nestor's Cup (King of Pylos) was found at the site. This brings into question the truthfulness of those books ancient such as that of the Odyssey and the Iliad alike.

A site that I found particularly interesting is the Agora in Athens. This site has meaning in the sense it was the location of Pericles Funeral Oration, the site of multiple wars, and the market and temples on the site surround the Acropolis and would have been used in times of ancient. The Columns of the site have been mined of their lead to make bullets during times of war. Pericles gave one of the greatest orations at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War. This site holds three unique truths that gives unique meaning to the location.

4. **Why is this change/transformation significant or valuable for your life?** Write one or two paragraphs discussing why this change or development matters and/or relates to your academic, personal, and/or professional goals and future plans.

This change is extremely valuable because it fuels my search for the truth. In part of this trip I have decided to go to Law School. I get to practice in the ancient art of rhetoric and oration as many of the great philosophers of Greece did. I get to construct the truth of an issue much like the truths are constructed around sites. I also am presented with an opportunity in this field to use logic and reason to look beyond the surface level of issues and search of their intrinsic motivations.