I. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

A. Structure

Educational philosophy:
- Role of higher education in host country (percent of population able to attend university)
- Role of professor (researcher, teacher, relationship to students)
- Role of student (more independent, need to take more initiative, class participation or non participation)

The laidback atmosphere of UCSB where professors work for the students is nowhere to be seen in Italy. Professors aren’t mean necessarily, but they auger a lot of respect (it is actually very difficult to become a university professor). Remember to always address your professors in the formal (Lei) and be on your best behavior. That said, professors aren’t scary, and most that I met were not only very understanding of language barriers but also excited and interested that we were exchange students from California. Nobody will hold your hand, tell you when things are due, and what you are supposed to do five times in a week. There is no reading schedule, no homework, and there are no papers. You, as a student, need to study on your own, at your own pace and be ready for the oral exam at the end of the semester.

Course organization:
- Year system vs. semester system
- Registration process (choosing, adding, dropping courses, grading options)
- Classes in which English is the language of instruction
- How host courses differ from UC courses
- Setting: Urban university vs. U.S.-style “campus”
- Amount of language acquisition (if applicable)
- EAP Code of Conduct: unexcused absences

The study center will guide you through signing up for classes on your myeap, so that everything is official for the UC. But in terms of the university of padova, you don’t get anything official until you finish your exam. Course descriptions, locations and times are all online on the website and the study center has a workshop where they show you where to go. Classes at the study center resemble UC classes- only in Italian. But university classes are a little different. A professor won’t often let you know what you should concentrate on for an exam- so you either guess, or study for everything. I found that if you get to lecture, take notes, do most of the reading and practice talking into a mirror before the exam that you are prepared enough for a solid A. The classes are all over the city, so depending on which department- you might be in the center, or even a little bit outside. Give yourself a little time on the first day to find the class, and don’t be surprised if the professor is late. It’s also not a bad idea to introduce yourself to the professor, and let them know you are an exchange student from California.
Don’t be discouraged if you can’t manage to listen and take notes in lecture. It will get easier. I recommend not taking notes at all the first couple of lectures- and just listening and focusing on the Italian. Try to meet other Italians, and don’t hang out only with Americans; school gets a lot easier when your grasp of Italian gets better.

B. Method of instruction

Instructors, length of class periods
Requirements: exams (oral vs. written), frequency, papers and projects
Syllabi, bibliography sheet given as “suggested” reading, deadlines
Grading system: transferability of credit, etc.

Class if usually 1hr 15 min. twice a week. There are no papers, or projects just an oral exam one on one with the professor at the end of the semester. They can ask you whatever they want, and keep you for as long or as little as they see fit. You receive the grade immediately. Grades are given out of 30- but getting a 30 is rare for Italians. A good grade is a 26 (which is a B here). There are no syllabi.
C. Libraries - general and departmental
   Accessibility, is there a cost?
   Availability of books and resources
   Photocopying & other services (reserve, tracking, etc.)
   Fines and penalties (grace period?)

Libraries are by department. You can check out books with your student ID (given to you by the study center). Photocopying and faxing can be done at any Tabacchaio.

D. Bookstores: on/off campus
   Availability of materials, cost of books?
   Discounts, used books: sold/bought?

There are bookstores all over the city. There is a university bookstore in Piazza del Bo’ (near the study center) but I didn’t notice that it was particularly more expensive than others. You can always order stuff online off amazon.uk. But be aware that the Italian post takes forever- definitely don’t ever send anything regular mail.

II. SURVIVAL LIVING

A. Before you go
   Packing: What to take, send, leave behind; choosing only what you need
   Backpacks vs. suitcases/duffel bags
   Clothing: weather, availability of sizes, cost & quality (what you would rather buy there)
   Musical instruments, sports equipment, bicycles, etc.
   Computer
   Save room in luggage for purchases abroad

Pack as light as possible. Lugging your stuff through the airport, and trains and through the city is not fun. Remember to bring clothing for all types of weather, hot, cold, rainy etc. Clothing is expensive in Italy- and sometimes it is hard to find sales. The open markets have lots of stuff, but it’s bad quality so don’t be surprised if your 10 euro shirt breaks the first time you wear it. Laptops are definitely very useful, and internet is available at the study center if your living situation doesn’t have it. The new airline rules for luggage really constrain you- so pack smart.

B. Housing
   Options: dorms, apartment sharing, host families, boarding houses, etc. (desirable vs. undesirable neighborhoods)
   Contracts and leases, cost of housing, insurance
   Search for housing/roommates
   Security, locks, bedding, cooking, shower/bath, phone, electrical appliances (220/110V current), laundry...
   Paying bills

If you live in the dorms, they basically work like the UCSB ones. If you live in a host family, the study center sets you up with them and I’m pretty sure you get breakfast and dinner five times a week- the rest of the time you provide your own meals. If you try to find your own apartment, which I would recommend over the other options, look for fliers around the departments, and study rooms around the city. People post looking for roommates all the time. There are also a bunch of websites for housing in Padova. The process works just like it would here in IV. Rooms usually cost anywhere from 210-450 euro. Here is some helpful vocabulary for looking for apartments:
   Deposit: Caparra
   To Rent: Affitare
   The rent: l’affitto
   Utilities: Bolleto
C. Correspondence/communication
Postal system: time, cost, services, postal hours
Best way to mail/ship letters, packages, books (UPS/DHL/Fed Express)
FAX, e-mail (cost, if available?), telephone, university computers
Cell Phones: pre-pay vs. contract
Unless you already have an international cellphone, the best thing is to buy a cheap italian cellphone once you arrive. There are four or five different companies and you should try to find one with the best deal. It costs money to call someone, but doesn’t cost any money if someone calls you. You can put money on your phone with pre-paid cards or at any Tabacchaio, and even at the supermarket. Contracts basically don’t exist.

D. Banking
Local currency: exchange rates, black market
Opening an account, types
Credit cards, debit cards, overpaying credit balance to have funds available,
advantages/disadvantages of VISA vs. AM EX, wiring funds, time it takes to send/receive $
Banking hours, automated tellers (must have a 4-digit PIN to use ATM!!), safety
Using an American account abroad
Setting up online bank account—pay off credit cards via online bank account
Knowing when the exchange rate for local currency is low; be aware of fair exchange rates
Avoid exchange booths at all costs! Use ATMs to get local currency.
Credit and debit cards work everywhere. Beware though that some restaurants or bars don’t accept cards sometimes (especially mastercard for some reason isn’t widely accepted). If you don’t already, make sure you can do your banking online. Make sure to call your bank and tell them you will be abroad and using your card—otherwise they will block it. A lot of banks charge for international transactions (up to 5 euro) so I would recommend taking out a few hundred euro at a time to offset the cost. There are banks EVERYWHERE in Italy. So I wouldn’t worry about getting stuck with no ATMs around. Also, having a joint account with one of your parents, or your financial provider (if its not you) is always a good idea so they can transfer quickly and easily if you have an emergency.

E. Study Center
Contact with home campus, department advisor, EAP, etc.
Send complete course descriptions to home advisor (use e-mail if available) and ask if course can fulfill specific UCSB requirements
UC Study Center Staff: role of director
UC Study Center office hours (limited?)
Confidentiality & gossip
The study center is your support and information station. They are extremely helpful and resourceful, don’t be shy to ask for advice, or suggestions. Bring the following with you from home: the UCSB course catalog, a list of your requirements (a junior progress check? ) to graduate, your academic advisors email.

F. Other
Your responsibility as a representative of UC and the U.S.
Bureaucracy in university offices (efficient vs. slow)
Official holidays and vacations, academic calendar
Be respectful, and try to assimilate as much as possible. I wouldn’t recommend going anywhere in california grunge and/or casual (i.e. pajamas).

E. Other
Medical (insurance, prescriptions, pharmacies, hospitals, etc.)
Eye drops, contact lens solution
Pollution & air quality, cigarette smoke
Sex, contraceptives, STDs, hygiene
Controlled substances, alcohol consumption
Return transportation (round-trip vs. one-way)
Local transportation (bus, cab, subway, bike, walk, commute time)
Customs regulations: taxes, restricted items, etc.
Be aware of and abide by local laws that differ from or are stricter than US laws

Always have some sort of ID on you. A California driver's license and a photocopy of your passport is the best (preferably with your permesso di soggiorno). You'll probably never get stopped, but if anything happens it is good to have that on you. Any toiletry or pharmaceutical needs can be found at Aqua e Sapone, or any pharmacy (a green cross shows where they are). If you have a medical need, you can always go to the pharmacy and ask the pharmacists if they recommend anything. Some things that aren't over the counter here, are there. You can also get any prescription filled at any pharmacy.

The bus is great, so are the trains. You always need to validate your ticket (i.e. stick it into the yellow box, it will give it a stamp). They never check on the bus, but if you do get caught without a ticket, or with an unvalidated ticket it's 50 euro on the spot (more if you don't have 50 euro). NEVER get on a train without a ticket. They do check, especially during the summer and spring months. The fines are unbelievable if you get caught. It is not worth it.

Never expect things to be on time or efficient in Italy. Especially when it is government run.

III. CULTURAL LIVING

A. Fitting In
Culture shock, ways to cope with adjusting to host culture
Appropriate dress (more formal vs. "California casual", different rules for women?), manners, etiquette
Time and punctuality
Eye contact, staring
Acceptable and unacceptable behavior, taboos
Anti-American sentiment
Behavior and alcohol consumption (you represent UC and the U.S., what image do you want to convey?)

Best way to get over culture shock? Take up customs that you like and incorporate them into your daily life. Italy is full of good stuff - cappuccino and croissants in the morning, spritzes before dinner, going out for walks on Sundays in Prato della Valle to see the markets etc. Then, teach your Italian friends some American customs. For instance, I introduced my Italian friends to pancakes and French toast. Being loud obnoxious drunks is not particularly acceptable. Before you enter a house always ask permission, “Permesso?”. Italians are polite, use the manners your mother taught you - especially if you are meeting adults. For example, when you enter into a store, always say ‘buongiorno’ or ‘buona sera’. Italians give two “kisses” on each cheek for greetings and goodbyes. Sometimes, if you are among friends you will even exchange kisses when you meet someone for the first time. Otherwise it is totally acceptable to shake hands. Italians will always go to your left first when they do the kisses. (i.e. you do left cheek and then right cheek, so you would turn your head to your right).

Don’t walk around alone really late at night, Italy is not that safe (especially if you are a woman). Italians drink and drive often, and a lot of young Italians get into car accidents every year. Be aware that if a friend offers to drive, they often will drink just as much as you do. Trying to convince them not to is hard, but if you can that’s great.

Don’t argue with Italians about how to cook, what’s the best thing to eat, and what order you should eat it in. You will lose the argument.

B. Relationships, friendship and dating customs
Male-female, male-male, female-female
Discrimination, harassment, personal safety
Age differences, ethnocentrism, etc.
Hanging out with Americans vs. making international friendships
Try as hard as possible to meet Italians and make friends. You will learn the language, discover more, and have more fun. Italians become independent, and finish school much later than Americans- so be open to making friends with people who are maybe older than you( late 20s and early 30s even). The dating thing is just as blurry here as it is there. But Italians tend to be more extreme about their relationships. Either it’s serious, or it’s not much. I didn’t notice that there was much of an inbetween.

Men are more affection with one another in Italy. But this is very normal. Be aware that Italians also feel strongly about immigration and often discriminate against Moroccans, north Africans, Albanians and Romanians. Italians also are very proud of where they come from, and there is a lot of tension and prejudice between northern and southern Italy.

C. Other
Local geography & weather
Current events, new sources, etc.
Food, groceries, snacks, drinks
Gratuities (tips) customs in host country
You don’t need to leave tip ever(unless you are feeling particularly generous). This year it has snowed a fair amount….it might snow again. Be prepared.

IV. LEISURE TIME

A. Recreation
Athletics, student teams, gymnasiums, jogging (may get stared at)
Cultural: theater, dance, concerts (student discounts?)
Student government / clubs/ societies
There are student teams, and gyms often have intramural leagues for lots of different sports. Italians are very exercise conscious and although they seem invisible there are gyms all over the city. (Also a couple big ones outside the center). So just ask around or look it up and you can get a membership. There are also gyms associated with the school that are free with your student ID. If you want to just jog or bike outside, there is a path that runs along the river which is really nice.(Right next to a tram stop, one after Santa Croce). People go to walk their dogs, work out and bike.

B. Travel
Passes (Eurail vs. Interrail), ISIC, hostel cards, discounts, train types, buses
Excursions organized by Study Center or campus groups, ads for good deals may be posted at university by local travel agencies
Travel tips (seasons, discounts, packing for trips)
You can always find lots of cheap flights all over Europe, hostels and couch surfing are also good options. You really don’t need to buy the Eurail or Interrail passes. Try not to travel in big groups, it makes for very shady logistics.

Restaurants/Bars you should go to:
Bar Piave(trattoria)- Riviera San Benedetto ( on the corner as you finish crossing the bridge). Small, family owned, great pizza, homemade pasta. Old lady that runs it seems like she’s always in a bad mood- but try her homemade tiramisu. It’s pretty bomb.

Shanghai- Via Marsala (right off of Via Roma). Actually good chinese food. Not particularly expensive, always really crowded though.

Highlander- Via Vescovado(one block after Piazza Duomo). Big Pub with good beer, good food and good atmosphere.

Bar Fly- Between Via Roma and Riviera Tito Livio. Really cheap pizza and beer. Happy hour 1-2 euro spritz.
Orsucci- Corso Vittorio Emanuelle II (Far corner of Prato where there is a tram stop). The Padovani swear it’s the best pizza in town. It’s a total whole in the wall that makes little baby thin crust northern style pizzas. It’s always overflowing but definitely worth it.