Term: Spring 2016 (March - July)
Faculty: Communication, Art & Technology
Major: School of Interactive Arts & Technology
PACKING

I know it’s extremely difficult, but pack light! Here are my suggestions on what to pack:

Mandatory
• Winter jacket*
• Spring jacket
• 3-4 pairs of jeans / pants
• 3-4 pairs of shorts
• Cardigans, sweaters, shirts (dress in layers)
• Towels
• Underwear
• Socks
• Pajamas
• 1 pair of boots (for the rain)
• 1 pair of comfortable, walking shoes

Optional
• Swimming suit
• Hat
• 1-2 exercise outfits
• 1 formal outfit**

*As I arrived in Italy when winter was beginning to transition into spring, I didn’t bring a thick winter jacket. However, there were some days I felt that it would have been nice to have my winter jacket with me, so it’s up to you whether you think you need to bring yours or not.

**I didn’t bring a formal outfit because I didn’t think I would attend any formal occasions; however I forgot that I would need to wear formal attire to Teatro alla Scala!

Remember that you can always buy anything you didn’t bring – I’m sure you’d find it difficult not to when you’re in the city of fashion!
TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

There are 3 airports you can arrive in Milan:

**Malpensa International Airport**: The most common airport for international flights. However, the cost for the bus (8€) to get to the center of Milan (Milano Centrale station) is the most expensive out of all the 3 airports.

**Bergamo (Orio al Serio) Airport**: This airport is not in the city of Milan, but you can easily take the bus for 5€ to get to the center of Milan (Milano Centrale station).

**Milan Linate Airport**: The closest airport to the center of Milan, you can take the bus for 5€ to get to the center of Milan (Milano Centrale station) or take the local public bus #73 and make a transfer somewhere to get to where you need to go (1.50€).

FINANCIAL DETAILS

I mainly used cash as there was an extra cost to using my credit card internationally. However, most places accept credit card. The only thing to be aware of is that when you’re travelling in smaller towns, sometimes cash is the only method of payment accepted. Note that our ATM machines are called “Bancomats” in Italy.

I would say that the cost of living is relatively the same compared to Vancouver. Here is an approximate breakdown of my monthly costs:

- Groceries – 100-150€
- Eating Out / Outings – 100-150€
- Phone plan – 15€
- ATM card (Public Transportation) – 22€

I also travelled a lot outside of Milan and these costs are not included here. I would say that the costs for a 2-3 day trip outside of Italy (including transportation, food, and accommodation) could be anywhere from 280€ - 400€. Of course, it would be more expensive if you joined a tour group or if you buy a lot of souvenirs.

All in all, I would budget $17,000 - $18,000 for the entire exchange term (including tuition, flight, accommodation, etc.) if you will be travelling a lot as well. If you will not be travelling very much, I would budget for around $10,000 - 11,000.
ARRIVAL & ORIENTATION

Unfortunately I arrived late and was not able to attend their Welcome Day orientation and happy hour event. However I believe it would have been a better to attend those events if I was able to, as it is a great way to know other students and get used to the campus.

ACCOMMODATION & LIVING

I lived in one of the apartment residences provided by Politecnico di Milano – the Gauss residence. I shared the apartment with 3 other girls. There are two bedrooms (so I shared a bedroom with one girl), kitchen, washroom, and a small room for storage (we had a drying rack in this room to hang our clothes). My bedroom also had a small balcony. It’s definitely a small place but it was adequate for me.

I originally wanted to stay in the Leonardo or Galileo residence as they have private washrooms and better facilities (e.g. study rooms, a gym, etc.). However I am glad I didn’t end up staying at either of those places because you have to share a kitchen with all the students on your floor (I believe it’s roughly 20 or more students on each floor). As I am a person who likes to cook a lot of my meals, I would have found it extremely uncomfortable and difficult to cook in a kitchen shared with so many people.

ACADEMIC DETAILS

Lectures at Politecnico di Milano are much longer than the ones at SFU – each lesson is about 3-4 hours long, with a 10-15min break in the middle. Also, Italy has this strange thing where classes start roughly 15 minutes later than the listed time. For example, the duration for one of my courses was supposed to be 09:15-13:15. In reality, classes were from 09:30 to about 13:00.

I found that the workload of the courses was quite different from what I’m used to at SFU. Many of the courses I took at Politecnico di Milano basically had a 100% weighted final exam. Other courses had two assignments or projects during the semester in additional to the final exam.

The grading system in Italy is very different – the highest mark you can achieve is 30L (30 cum laude) and a pass is 18.
COUNTRY INFORMATION

Culture: Italians live “La Dolce Vita” (the sweet life). They are very chill and relaxed. Life is about enjoying the things you like and being in the moment.

Weather: I would say that it’s similar to Vancouver’s weather during the spring, but the weather in summer reminds me of Asia. I’m very prone to mosquitoes and so I’ve received countless bites during the summer months. Also, there may sometimes be unexpected showers so be prepared.

Places to Visit: I managed to also travel to many other places in Italy. What I love about Italy is that each city or town is very unique! I would recommend visiting as many places as you can in Italy. Here are the top places I recommend to visit:

• Venice
• Florence
• Cinque Terre
• Rome (for history)
• Naples (for pizza)
• Verona or Mantova (charming, quaint towns)
• Lake Garda or Lake Como

SOCIAL & EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Erasmus Student Network (ESN): An organization that organizes activities – dinners, tours, and even trips – for international students in your city. Great way to meet new international friends! Another benefit of joining ESN is that you’ll get discounts at certain places and events.

Many popular places to just hang out in Milan with friends are:

• Piazza del Duomo (infront of Duomo)
• Piazza Gae Aulenti (near Garibaldi station)
• Navigli
• Darsena
• Colonne di San Lorenzo
• Parco Sempione / around Sforzesco Castle
CHALLENGES

I would consider myself to be a strong and independent person, and definitely not an emotional person. Yet the first few days were an extreme turbulence of emotions that I don't even want to remember. I became anxious to the point that I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep, and my body showed symptoms I didn't have before. I had never felt so alone, and it was to the point that I felt like I was hyperventilating from sheer panic. But things got better real fast, so don't worry. Give yourself some time and things will get better. I just didn't realize that I would freak out when I arrived in Italy – just be aware that it’s not necessarily easy if this is your first time moving to a totally foreign place.

GENERAL ADVICE & TIPS

Stay open-minded, explore, try new things, travel, and seize the moment! At the end of your exchange you’ll be amazed at all the things you did and the person you became through it all. Also remember that it’s not just all fun and excitement – there may be moments that you feel alone, feel out of your comfort zone, or where you have to deal with a difficult situation – but that’s all part of the experience and you definitely learn a lot and grow as an individual!
Watched my first “football” game in Italy at San Siro Stadium for only 10€ (because of ESN)!

At one of ESN’s “How to Cook” event I learned how to make bruschetta, tiramisu, and two types of pasta all from scratch.

Pesto pasta for lunch during a day trip out to Genova...it was very, very delicious!

This is a vending machine on campus...look at all those different types of coffee...
One of my favourite places in Milan is Piazza Gae Aulenti, which is near Garibaldi station. Lovely place to be at night in my opinion.

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II is beside Duomo. Another one of my favourite places due to its stunning demeanour.

Bhangra Bar is one of the best places to enjoy the Italian version of happy hour - aperitivo!