

# Degrees & Majors

## **A Challenge in Rome** by Kathryn Brackett

What better way to study a culture than to live there? While study abroad programs can be challenging, they also encourage personal and intellectual growth.



Women in the Sacred City, an interdisciplinary summer program headed by Dr. Corrie Norman, gives Converse students the opportunity to broaden their horizons by studying and living in Rome for a month. Offered alternate years, the program commences in the spring term on campus where students begin to explore women's issues and examine the ways in which gender, culture, and religion have evolved from past Roman society to today.



The program's intense curriculum not only academically challenges the student, but also expands her thoughts and views about other parts of the world. While on campus, students begin research on a semester long project that focuses on a woman or a group of women, or an image of women associated with a historical site in Rome. When the program continues in Rome, the project culminates with a site presentation. As part of the course requirement, the student leads a day trip and shares her expertise and research with her classmates through an on-site lecture. Such topics that have been explored in the past are Santa Bibiana, women and witchcraft, African American women in Roman history, Theresa of Avila, and others.

Students also have the opportunity to travel independently to places like Florence and Venice, to hone their foreign language skills by participating in daily language studies with native Italian teachers, and to participate in service work in the community. Students in the past have assisted Catholic nuns by cleaning books in their library and have also attended lectures by various guest scholars, such as author Tom Kennedy and Senator Tana de Zulueta.



Open-minded students who are seeking a challenging and interdisciplinary learning experience should consider the Women in the Sacred City program. Through independent work and travel, students will gain confidence and valuable experience as well as grow in their knowledge of other cultures.