

## **Participants' comments on the Seminar Program at the Delphi Academy of European Studies (2017)**

### **A). INSTRUCTORS**

*In my seminar for the Delphi academy we addressed the problem of secularism in contemporary European society with special attention to recent sociological and theoretical literature, focusing on debates that have arisen concerning the proposal by Jürgen Habermas that we think of contemporary multicultural Europe as a "post-secular society." The students read classical literature on secularization such as essays by Max Weber and David Martin, plus more recent challenges to the secularization thesis by sociologists such as José Casanova, Rodney Stark, and Grace Davie. Most of the seminar was spent addressing the quite formidable social theoretical contributions of Jürgen Habermas, though we also addressed some of the current controversies in Europe over the place of traditional and "integrative" religious movements in modern democratic culture [...] Overall I found the experience a remarkably pleasant one, and I was grateful for the opportunity to participate.*

#### **Professor Peter Gordon, Harvard University**

*Room with a view over the olive grove leading to Itea in the Gulf of Corinth. The building of the Delphi Academy conceived so as to have a room of one's own secluded and not disturbing the privacy of all other rooms. During the meals, too, we had the opportunity of fruitful discussions with students and colleagues as a follow-up of the seminars. This orientation was enhanced by the founder of the Delphi Academy of European Studies, Professor Panagiotis Roilos, who secured also the presence of extra lecturers in diverse disciplines (urban planning, political and cultural history). My wife Kalliopi (Paki) and I, being accustomed to monastery-like cells during our studies and our summer vacations, found the environment ideal for reading and writing. Of course, the human component is the most important: From the executive staff—starting with the warm welcome and the wide smile of Mrs. Anastasia Pasiou at the reception—to the academic presence of colleagues and research-oriented students with the watchful eye of Professor Pavlos Kalligas. The experience at the Delphi Academy included its externalities: re-visiting the unique archaeological Delphic sites and its museum beautifully renovated in 2004 for the Olympic Games. Magic and the feeling of elation are too commonplace expressions for the Delphic Landscape, but this is exactly what we experienced from the premises of the Delphi Academy of European Studies.*

*My seminar focused on understanding modes of thinking about "Europe," "Democracy," "Populism," War and "War on Terrorism", on questioning stereotypes, and on exploring general aporias. Nothing more and hopefully nothing less! Reading materials included mainly recent articles from dailies, periodicals, books, and websites. In view of the apocalyptically and dangerously complex situation we live in, the syllabus of the seminar was designed so that diverging views could be presented to the participants. The themes that we addressed included: 1. Current major European developments and the Socio- Political Disciplines; 2. Theories of "democracy" and current [EU] democratic "deficit"; 3. Overarching questions such as "populism" vs "liberalism"; "nationalism" vs "[constitutional] patriotism" were approached with*

*no prefabricated answers; 4. "Europe" (and/or Europes), the EU and their histories; 5. "Crisis": "Europe in Crisis": some economic, political and cultural co-ordinates. 6. "Terrorism" and "war on terrorism": violence and the rhetoric of humanism. 7. Western European approaches to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. European Perceptions on Islam & Political Islamism. "Balkanization of the Balkans" in the 1990s? 8. Europe after 2008: From Integration to Fragmentation, "secessionism"/separatism? 9. BREXIT and Scotland, Ireland, Gibraltar. 10. Trump administration and its impact on Europe: some tentative first impressions. 11. Germany: "economic domination" and renewed nationalism 12. On "lazy Southern cicadas" and "laborious Northern ants"; 13. France: Lepenism; 14. European Identity and the "refugee crisis" (special emphasis on the Greek island crisis); 15. In defense of democratic Europe; 16. "Democracy: Ancient and Modern": from Delphi, "the navel of the earth", through Hellenocentrism to "Eurocentrism."*

### **Stephanos Pasmazoglou, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences**

*The Delphi Academy of European Studies is an ideal setting for exploring the bigger issues behind the current political developments in Europe. Not just the inspiring location but the fact that Greece is a country directly concerned by the combined European crisis of recent years: migrations, euro and democracy. This indeed was the aim of my seminar entitled "Europe's Dividing Lines and Competing Narratives": to explore different ways of interpreting the European crisis, trying to put it in broader intellectual and political context and above all, offer participants of different backgrounds and nationalities a chance to reflect upon and debate the issues. Though the focus was Europe they all had an obvious transatlantic dimension which seemed fitting for participants from both sides of the Atlantic.*

### **Professor Jacques Rupnik, Sciences Po (Paris) and the College of Europe (Bruges)**

## **B. STUDENTS**

*My time at the Delphi Academy of European Studies was an enriching and engaging experience. The seminars fostered important conversations and created a close bond between the group. I still keep in touch with friends I made this past summer. As a student from the United States, it was an especially rewarding experience to learn from and converse with academics from across the world and spanning different disciplines. The seminars at the Delphi Academy of European Studies broadened my academic interests and have become the basis for my senior thesis. I look back at my time there with fondness and appreciation for the opportunity.*

### **Caroline Barnes, Bates College**

*For participants with a legal background, the Academy's program is a refreshing opportunity to engage in a multi-disciplinary dialogue on social, political, and international affairs. As for my experience, it allowed me to consider the socio-legal implications of law, as well as its philosophical aspects, from a comparative perspective drawing from other academic disciplines. The Academy gave me the unique opportunity to experience all this in a site near the world's*

*ancient oracle, with a stunning view over the Corinthian bay, in the company multinational participants and distinguished professors.*

### **Alexandros Kazimirof, European University of Cyprus**

*This last summer in Delphi [...] I experienced myself the coming together of people of different ages, origins and cultural backgrounds—this time to debate particularly Europe's current dilemmas across disciplines and across borders.*

*Through our debates –even the most passionately dividing ones –our group was bonding. Shared time and shared activities, shared interest in the issues that we explored at the Academy this past summer added momentum to the forces at work—a fact that once more proved that, when people sit down at the same table, more than bread is broken. [...] Everybody could have the floor both in and out of class. Anybody could raise a point, share a thought, and make their contribution. A commonly shaped space was created—physical, social, conceptual but mainly discursive.*

*This schema may at first seem not so much action-prone; however there is no better way, I think, for the people of Europe to realize their common interests and reach a dynamic consensus over their values, priorities and goals. This is the stepping stone, if Europeans are ever to create a positive narrative for themselves, and if any European cause has any chance of sustainable success.*

### **Ioanna Korpidou, Aristotelian University of Thessalonike**

*From the moment our bus started ascending the hills towards our destination, Delphi, I could feel the change of scenery affecting the aura of the journey in a very peaceful way. The sun had already set, when we reached the gates of the Delphi Academy, and looking at the darkness around me, all I could really think was that we were in the middle of nowhere. How wrong was I... In the next two weeks I realized that we, the small group of fourteen students from all over the world, were at the very center of it all.*

*Every morning the breathtaking view from our breakfast windows, looking down on the Mediterranean Sea, engulfed us in the peaceful aura of the Delphi mystic. Heading to our seminars everyday was something more than just a regular enrichment of knowledge: the professors had created a space where we felt at ease exchanging opinions and ideas on very delicate matters and issues, which trouble our everyday societies. It might sound like a very surreal idea, but even when I felt like I did not participate in a discussion, it was not because I did not have anything to say or was disinterested, but on the contrary it was because through the texts we were presented with, I put my own ideas and opinions into question, finding myself contemplating on things which I thought I had already a firm position on.*

*We were lucky enough to have professors with whom we were able to share our time together outside the seminars and continue our thought-provoking conversations till late after dinner. The Delphi Academy has managed to create a little world of its own in a breathtaking landscape. That is why even though you are physically far away from your everyday world, you feel like you*

*have escaped to a parallel universe; with everything you really need; inspiring discussions, international friends, divine Mediterranean food and the sea beneath your feet. I have participated in many seminars and youth exchanges all over the world, but this was without doubt a very unique experience, I am very grateful I was given the opportunity to be able to experience these two weeks!*

**Garin Tashdjian, University of Cyprus**

*The Delphi Academy summer seminars offered a chance for rigorous and fascinating discussion of contemporary issues in philosophy and political science, with an interdisciplinary and theoretical focus that is all too rare elsewhere. I learned about secularization theory, European migration, and the challenges of European integration and inclusion from brilliant scholars in a close and first-hand setting. In addition to the seminars, the Delphi Academy also granted rich opportunities for immersion in contemporary Greek culture and history, with guest lectures and visits to cities and historical sites across Boeotia, and a chance to experience the incredible setting and cuisine of the European Cultural Centre of Delphi. I had an unforgettable learning experience in Delphi and am very thankful to the Delphi Academy for making it possible!*

**Richard Yarrow, Harvard University**