

2026 Classical Summer School Program Guidelines

This five-week program provides qualified graduate students, and middle school, high school, and college/university teachers with a well-grounded understanding of the growth and development of the city of Rome through a careful study of material remains and literary sources.

Rome began as a cluster of Iron Age huts on a hill overlooking the Tiber River. This tiny settlement eventually grew to become the capital of an empire that stretched across the entire Mediterranean basin. The city's development reflects its long and complex relationships with the other peoples of the Italian peninsula, in particular the Etruscans and Greeks, as well as multiple influences from individuals and groups who came to the city as enslaved persons, merchants, or immigrants. Continuously inhabited since its foundation, the city has been frequently rebuilt, with layer rising upon layer. This program gives participants a deep understanding of ancient Rome's urban setting (from the Etruscan/early Roman period through late antiquity) and the contiguous development of its colonies and neighbors in the Italian peninsula. Through close attention to both textual sources—from narrative histories to inscriptions—and the material evidence of ancient art and architecture, the program participants recover and reconstruct the diverse experiences of multiple groups that gave rise to the city of Rome.

In 2026, the program will focus on three regions: Etruria, the Bay of Naples, and Rome. The first week will be based in Rome and the region of Etruria, primarily researching the early development of Rome, Etruscan and Faliscan cities and cemeteries, as well as early Roman colonies. The program then moves to Naples in the second week, studying Magna Graecia (Paestum) and the development of towns and villas around the bay and its hinterland prior to the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. We then move back to the center—Rome itself—in its last three weeks and focuses on topographically oriented study of the city and its rise, complemented by a few day trips to key sites in the region of Latium.

Director

Dr. Evan Jewell, Assistant Professor of History, Rutgers University-Camden
Email: cssdirector@aarome.org

2026 Program Dates

Sunday, June 14–Saturday, July 18, 2026

Application Deadline

Friday December 5, 2025, 11:59 PM EST.

Letters of recommendation must be submitted by this deadline to receive full consideration.

Notification of acceptance: early-January 2026

Notification of AAR scholarships: mid-January 2026

The Course

The program of the Classical Summer School focuses on the development of the ancient city of Rome from its earliest settlement through later antiquity in parallel with other contiguous regions in the Italian peninsula, namely Etruria and the bay of Naples. First, Week 1 includes some skills workshops and sites that track the development of early Rome, Etruscan and Faliscan cities and cemeteries north of Rome (such as Cerveteri, Tarquinia, and Falerii Veteres and Novi) as well as some early Roman and Latin colonies (such as Cosa), and considers their engagement with Rome. Second, Week 2 moves to the Bay of Naples and similarly studies the urban centers there and their cultural, political, and economic (dis)connections with Rome, from the Greek (and then Roman) colony of Paestum to the cities destroyed by Vesuvius.

Then Weeks 3–5 focus on Rome itself: an introduction to the material culture and urban topography of the city. Along with examining the better-known monuments, such as the Pantheon, Palatine Hill, Forum Romanum, and Imperial Fora, we will explore the hidden parts of the ancient city, behind locked gates and below its modern streets. Further visits to important sites in Rome's hinterland (such as Nemi, Palestrina, Ostia, and Tivoli) will complement the daily field trips within the city which train their focus on its different topographical zones.

From this series of visits to sites and museums during the five-week program, participants will develop an intimate knowledge of Rome and its ancient monuments, as well as Rome's neighbors. A key aim throughout the program is the development of participants' skills in analyzing and interpreting archaeological sites, urban space, architecture, and artifacts. Classroom and on-site lectures and seminars will relate the material of the course to its historical and social contexts, while pedagogical workshops will consider how teachers can bring this material into their classrooms. The development of architecture, sculpture, painting, the 'minor' arts, and inscriptions of the republican and imperial city will also be presented. Readings from primary texts and modern scholarship will be assigned to contextualize monuments and the urban experience of the ancient city. In addition, participants will develop presentation skills by teaching a monument or aspect of ancient Roman topography, literature, history, art/architecture or pedagogy of interest to them or relevant to their own research.

While in Rome, program participants will also have full access to the Arthur & Janet C. Ross Library of the American Academy, where there are excellent resources on the history, topography, and archaeology of the city of Rome and ancient Italy, and to the Norton-Van Buren Archaeological Study Collection.

2026 Classical Summer School

The 5-week session will begin on Sunday, June 14, 2026 and conclude with a final dinner on the night of Friday, July 17, 2026. Participants must plan to arrive in Rome by midday on Sunday, June 14 for an afternoon orientation and depart Rome no earlier than the morning of Saturday, July 18, 2026. Participants are expected to be present for the duration of the Classical Summer School and should not be absent from the program for any reason other than emergencies or illness. The course typically runs Tuesday to Saturday, with Sundays-Mondays and one long weekend available for participants' personal travel, rest, and free time.

Admission

Enrollment is composed of qualified graduate students and middle school and high school teachers, and (on some occasions) college/university teachers. Exceptional undergraduate applicants will be considered in rare circumstances. If the number of applicants is exceptionally high, preference will be given to teachers and graduate students. **All applications for admission must be received by 11:59 pm EST December 5, 2025.**

Important Program Requirements

Please be aware that the Classical Summer School is conducted largely on site in Rome and elsewhere in Italy. Participation in the program requires significant physical exertion due to long, strenuous walks and occasional steep climbs, sometimes over uneven terrain; standing in the hot sun at archaeological sites; and standing for prolonged periods of time in museums. The months of June and July are hot in Rome, with temperatures often in the 90s and occasionally exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit. For example, in 2025, participants walked on average 20,000 steps per day, and the average temperature was 88F, but with several consecutive days of heat over 95F. Program days typically start at 8am and end by 5pm with a break before dinner. **Please consider whether you have the physical capacity to undertake the program before applying.**

The cuisine of Italy is well known and much loved; however, if you cannot eat an Italian diet, this program cannot always accommodate other dietary requests. We will endeavor to accommodate vegetarians, vegans, and specific intolerances and allergies, but please be aware that our ability to accommodate dietary constraints is contingent upon our local restaurant partners.

Scholarships for 2026

Several scholarships are awarded by the American Academy in Rome upon recommendation of the Classical Summer School Director and scholarship committee. These do not require a separate application. There is a section on the application where applicants can indicate a preference to be considered for these awards.

Numerous local classical organizations support study at the American Academy in Rome. Check with your local classical association, school, or department for opportunities.

Applicants are solely responsible for finding and applying for financial aid. Every applicant must submit a full Classical Summer School application by December 5, 2025, regardless of any scholarships or other awards being sought.

Passport and Visas

If you do not already have a valid passport, we advise that you apply for one immediately. The passport agency is experiencing delays so please leave adequate time to process your application. Note your passport must be valid for at least three months beyond the date on which you plan to leave the European Union.

If you are on a visa in the US, please consider whether you will be permitted to leave the country and return. Likewise, if you are not a US citizen, please check the visa requirements for your entry into Italy.

Program Costs

The program fee of \$5,000 includes tuition, accommodation, lunches (on excursion days) and some dinners, and the cost of trips to sites included in the program (including transportation to sites).

Participants without sources of funding are eligible for an American Academy in Rome scholarship (minimum of \$1,500). While we work to provide scholarship support for all participants, high school teachers will receive priority.

The program fee does not include airfare, personal expenses (and additional, unplanned expenditures), some lunches/dinners, any travel not directly related to the program of the Classical Summer School, nor expenses such as laundry, tips, amusements, or shopping.

Successful applicants will be asked to pay a non-refundable deposit of \$200 to hold their place. The program fee must be paid in full by May 1, 2026. Payment instructions will be provided upon confirmation of program participation.

Accommodation

During the first two weeks of the program, participants will be housed in hotels inside and outside of Rome, in single rooms or double rooms (two beds in a shared room). For the last three weeks of the program, participants will be housed in shared apartments in Rome, with individual rooms and shared common spaces and bathrooms. The program fee does not include airfare, personal expenses (or additional, unplanned expenditures), some lunches/dinners, any travel not directly related to the program of the Classical Summer School, nor expenses such as laundry, tips, amusements, or shopping. Accommodation is only available between the program dates of June 14 (arrival) and July 18 (departure). It is not possible to pay for additional days. Please plan to arrive by midday on Sunday, June 14 for orientation. Departure should take place no earlier, and no later, than Saturday, July 18.

The program will provide some lunches for excursions and site visits, and likewise some dinners. While in Rome, participants will have access to a shared kitchen if they wish to cook their own meals when meals are not included. Please note: while we endeavor to accommodate the dietary restrictions of participants, it may not be possible to accommodate all requirements.

Applications

The Classical Summer School has an online application process. The deadline for all application materials is December 5, 2025. For questions about the Classical Summer School, please email Dr. Evan Jewell, cssdirector@aarome.org