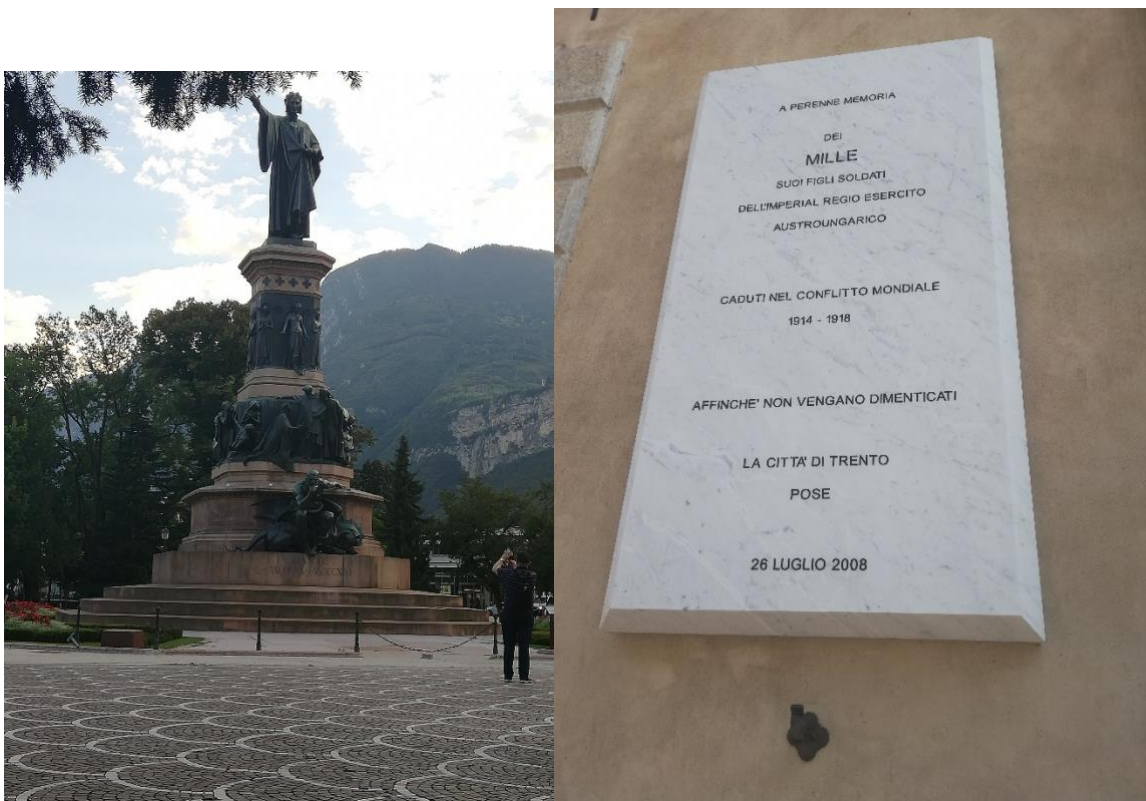


Clíona Nic Lochlainn, BA International Modern Languages S3



Erasmus in Trento, Italy has been an education in just about everything. Trento is the capital city of the Trentino-Alto Adige region in northwest Italy, an autonomous region which has been part of Italy since 1919. The other major city in the region, Bolzano, is majority German-speaking. It's an area with a long and complex history, which means that questions about identity and commemoration can be complicated.



Then again, living within another culture teaches you that even the simplest of everyday situations can be a minefield. Heaven forbid that you should order a cappuccino after 11 o' clock here, for example. A dictionary for hand gestures would prove useful—as stereotypical as it may seem, a solid 60% of all communication between Italians is surely conducted through these gestures and the respective facial expressions which accompany them.

Life at the Università degli studi di Trento is quite different, too. Courses in literature and language here consist of lectures. The absence of tutorials/seminars reflects the fact that a lot of emphasis is placed in Italy at undergraduate level on understanding/contextualising existing critical theory rather than critically analysing work yourself. Given that in every field there's a lot of critical theory, this means that preparation for exams (which tend to be oral rather than written) involves a huge amount of reading. This isn't anything to complain about, however, given the beautiful study spots that are available (see below).



The Erasmus experience has been nothing short of incredible so far. The chance to travel to cities like Rome and Venice is obviously brilliant, but the invaluable part of the experience has been living through another language and meeting people from all over the world. Travel really does broaden horizons. Personally it has made me realise that I would like to spend more time studying abroad in the future. Only through learning about other peoples and cultures can you really learn about yourself and your own.







Obviously, there are a lot of people who contribute to making an experience like this go as smoothly as possible. The staff at UCD International have been invaluable with the administrative end, and the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics couldn't have better prepared us for the highs and inevitable lows of our year abroad. Ad Astra Academy has to be mentioned in particular. My Academic Mentor left UCD just before I started Erasmus, but even though I wasn't at UCD for the year, the Academy sorted out a new mentor for me who has been so helpful, arranging meetings for me over Skype to talk about absolutely everything and anything.