This spring, Associate Professor Mark Blizard and Lecturer Norma Blizard are leading 14 students in a semester-long study abroad program in Tuscany, Italy. The program is based at the Santa Chiara Study Center, located in the hill town of Castiglion Fiorentino, a small town of 11,000 and only a one-hour train ride south of Florence. The Study Center is a renovated convent dating back to the 14th century and features dorms, a dining hall, and studio space all surrounding an interior courtyard. Students are immersed in the country’s culture as well as the art and architecture of the Renaissance and medieval eras. For the entire semester, the students take a studio course as well as two other courses. Professor Paolo Barucchieri, Director of the Study Center, teaches a course on Arts and Civilization which all students are required to take. Professor Barucchieri also helps to conduct field trips and study tours to nearby Florence as well as Siena, Assisi, Pienza, and Urbino. The students recently took a four-day trip to Rome where they explored, took photographs, and sketched the significant architecture the city has to offer.

Blizard has been sending weekly digital postcards to the CoA about their travels throughout Italy. They are also sharing an abundance of photos in a blog at utsa-italia2009.blogspot.com.