

## **The Oplontis Project: Integration of Geoscience, Humanities and the Arts in a Museum Exhibit and Related Courses for Undergraduate Students**

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The Oplontis Project is focused on the cultural and natural heritage of the Villas of Oplontis, a World Heritage Site, located 8 km from Pompeii, and destroyed by the 79 AD eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. A multidisciplinary team of scholars from Montana State University, representing the disciplines of art, art history, architecture, archeology, chemistry, philosophy, classical studies, and the first-year seminar, visited the Bay of Naples area to explore and discover possibilities for curriculum development and public outreach. This was in anticipation of a major traveling exhibit entitled *Leisure and Luxury in the Age of Nero: The Villas of Oplontis Near Pompeii*, which was displayed at the Museum of the Rockies from June-December 2016. A special geologic exhibit was developed to demonstrate the principles of volcanology, the sequence of events of the Mt. Vesuvius eruption, volcanic hazards past and present, and production of a scaled model of the Bay of Naples area with accompanying multi-media. The MSU academic team developed over a dozen courses that were offered fall semester 2016, all of which required multiple student visits to the exhibits. For public outreach, a public symposium brought international experts to present at MSU, a series of evening public presentations were offered to accompany the exhibit, extensive training of museum docents enhanced the public's experience, and over 180,000 visitors attended the exhibit. The integration of science, humanities and arts was an enriching experience for participating faculty, students, and the public.