

WHERE IDEAS MEET THE SEA

BRIDGING MINDS ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN

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Mediterranean voices intertwine this spring to reimagine our shared waters, converging at the REMED postgraduate Spring School and the Department of English Postgraduate Symposium to (re-)visit the Med through literature, culture, and connection.



Spring is in full bloom on the Maltese islands. The hills and fields are still lush before the dryness of summer, and the Mediterranean Sea grows warm and inviting as it shakes off those last chilly vestiges of winter. The University of Malta Valletta Campus is equally abuzz with transformation, humming with the energetic rhythm of cross-cultural connection. Students and academics have flocked to Malta, crossing the Med from Italy, Cyprus, Tunisia, and Ireland for two weeks of intense discussion, intercultural learning, and social connection bound by shared curiosity.

It is the second year of the (Re-) Visiting the Mediterranean: Literature, Culture, and Environment project (REMEDI), an EU-funded initiative through the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education Scheme. REMEDI is a collaborative exchange among the University of Malta, the National University of Ireland Maynooth, Università degli Studi di Firenze, the University of Cyprus, and Carthage University, and deep-dives into the intrinsic, ever-evolving dynamics found within Mediterranean literature, culture, and landscape. REMEDI partly draws from the Blue Humanities, an interdisciplinary field which explores how bodies of water shape our understanding of the world around us, representing an innovative approach to ecocriticism. REMEDI draws us close to home, focusing on

how the waters that surround the Maltese islands are conceptualised and re-imagined through literature, art, and human experience. But the Mediterranean is more than a static geographical backdrop – it is a living archive where ecological, cultural, historical, and political narratives merge. REMEDI situates itself within this vast intersection, providing space for academics and researchers to adopt an ecocritical lens and explore the nexus of literature, culture, and the environment in the wine-dark waters of the Mediterranean.

MEDITERRANEAN VOICES MEET AT SPRING SCHOOL

At the project's centre are Prof. Stella Borg Barthet and Dr Marija Grech from UM's Department of English, who are no strangers to interdisciplinary collaboration. With Mediterranean literature close to the department's heart, the REMEDI project has been years in the making and represents the collective efforts to sustain a common intellectual homeland among academics embedded in the Mediterranean's diverse realities. The first highly received session was held in 2025, with participants lauding the shared, open space where multidynamic thoughts could grow.

This spring, Grech and Borg Barthet return with their international partners to facilitate two weeks of academic and social activities for REMEDI participants, with the Spring School serving as the crucible for a melting



Photos taken at the REMED postgraduate Spring School and the Department of English Postgraduate Symposium
 Photos by James Moffett

pot of cross-cultural exchange. Each day, participants converge upon the Valletta campus for intriguing lectures which embrace the complexity of the Mediterranean waters, dissecting texts from across the ages with a critical eye on symbolism, historical context, cultural traditions, and ecological transformation. Students explore a chronology of Mediterranean literature, from Ancient Greek tragedies to Shakespearean plays, Victorian novels, and post-colonial and contemporary fiction, but beyond the lecture, something equally valuable takes place. At the Spring School, students bring the dynamics in these texts to life, sharing ideas built from lived experiences and shared realities of being within the Mediterranean basin. It is here that cross-cultural connection is sustained, where participants from different walks of life meet under a mutual curiosity to understand and conceptualise the space we share.

Discussions teem through UM's sun-soaked halls as debates from the most recent lecture spill into the stairways, where lingering thoughts are eagerly exchanged between sandwich bites and cold Kinnie. The afternoon brings in-depth seminars which delve deeper into the morning's topics, where ideas

that bubble up during lunch have space to be shared. Seminars encourage participant-driven discussions, opening the doors for multi-national perspectives that honour differences and stay attuned to the complexity of living within such a multidynamic environment as the Mediterranean. As conversations weave from classroom to corridor, the Spring School's academic efforts transform into a living dialogue. This dialogue is on full display at the English Department's yearly Postgraduate Symposium, this year aptly themed 'Voices', where Spring School participants share the fruits of the programme within the academic discourse. The Symposium becomes a meeting ground where the Mediterranean's layered histories serve to deepen our understanding of one another.

REMED invites the academic community to embrace the multiplicity of the Med and challenges us to sit with its dissonance, as a space that embodies vastly different realities. The Mediterranean is, at once, a migration route and a tourist destination, a living symbol etched in history and a tangible ecosystem we strive to protect in the present. In recognising that the Mediterranean means

different things to different people, the Spring School and the Postgraduate Symposium create a space where these voices do not compete, but coexist and intertwine. The transformative power of the REMED project lies in this marriage of perspectives, where scholars are invited to share and to listen to the plethora of lived realities that find a home on the Med's shores. At this crossroads of voices, a deeper understanding of our interconnectedness grows, and the boundaries of the Med are no longer fixed but continually reimagined.

COMMUNITIES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

REMED isn't just an academic exercise – academic lectures build on the social connections made outside the classroom, as visiting students integrate with Maltese participants over a shared love of literature and culture. Participants enjoy outdoor excursions, travelling to the Blue Grotto, Mdina, and Ħaġar Qim to explore Malta's history and landscape. Film nights showcasing Mediterranean cinema and open mics where students can share their creative works bolster a shared space where ideas and connections flow.



REMED participants eat, work, and live together, sharing stories of experience well beyond the boundaries of the classroom. This social exchange is equally valuable to the academic rigour of Spring School, solidifying bonds to form a lasting academic community grounded in shared curiosity, mutual understanding, and strengthened ties to the Mediterranean. It is this change that REMED seeks to actualise: a far-reaching network of intellectuals who share ideas, collaboration, and bonds of friendship that bloom in tangible projects and future innovations. Participants leave the programme with a sharpened eye for how language functions, how it can be critiqued, and how implications are formed. They also leave with lifelong friendships they can call upon to share expertise within their communities, and university connections are strengthened through this exchange of ideas, projects, and passions. Such ties will inform the future of the Humanities in the Mediterranean basin and provide more opportunities to unpack the complex realities that live alongside us.

REMED is also stoking passions within the wider academic community here in Malta. The project invites sixth-form students to share their

own voices through a short-story competition, and last year's submissions showcased the evocative writings of budding creative writers. This year, the competition opens the floor to submissions of both poetry and short stories. It is currently accepting submissions (until 30 April 2026) under the call 'Seeing the Sea', which encourages deeper reflection on Mediterranean identities and asks students what the Med means to them. Secondary students with an aptitude for the arts can also participate in a poster-making competition titled 'Protecting the Sea', which encourages young scholars to think more about marine conservation and the environment around us. These initiatives not only promote literary and visual art but also get students to critically reflect on how creative representation can instigate dynamics of change. Apart from promoting the Humanities, REMED empowers future scholars to see their creativity as a tool for environmental awareness and a medium for exploring and sharing their ideas. By nurturing the Humanities' future and keeping the Med at the forefront, REMED renews a sense of identity, responsibility,

and kinship to both the region and others who call it home.

(RE-)VISIT THE MED

The Mediterranean's richness goes beneath the surface of its blue waters and draws us into conversation. REMED invites us to rethink how we view Mediterranean identity, not as a singular entity divided by maritime borders but as a fluid, relational space shaped by centuries of interconnection and change. REMED is not only shaping academic discourse but also transforming it, encouraging communities to actively participate in assessing and sustaining the cultural, ecological, and social vitality of the Mediterranean waters we share. Through its Spring School and Symposium, REMED creates space to examine some of the Mediterranean's most urgent realities, particularly migration and environmental instability, and transforms an academic gathering into a shared, living dialogue – one that is eager to add your voice to the mix. **T**

Learn more about the REMED project, how you can register for the Symposium, and participate in the creative writing and poster competitions at revisitingthemediterranean.eu