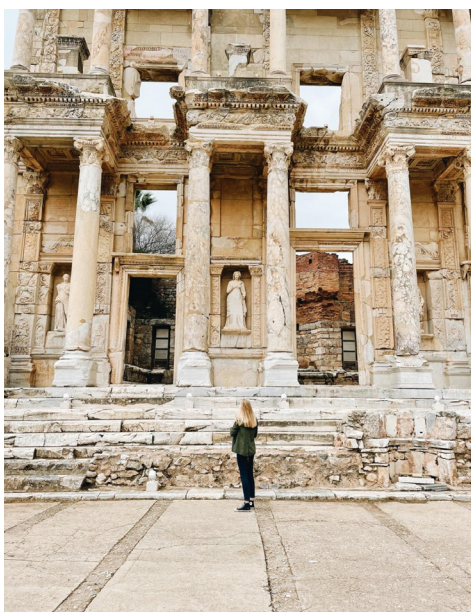


## "On the Challenges and Rewards of Teaching in a Virtual World"

**Clara Bartnik**

**2020-2021 ETA Program Grantee**

*University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Minnesota / Bartın University, Bartın*



*Pictured: Clara Bartnik in front of the Celsus Library at Ephesus*

## "Black Sea Region's Most Underrated Vistas"

**Ian Riley**

**2020-2021 ETA Program Grantee**

*Indiana University, Bloomington  
Indiana / Gaziosmanpaşa University, Tokat*

*Pictured right: Tokat Castle overlooking the city on a rainy day. Taken February 12th in the center of the city next to Tokat's historic caravansary, Taşhan*

Some days, my questions are met with a deafening silence. Other days, Zoom's 40-minute meeting limit brings our engaging discussions to a halt. Some days, the power goes out.

Other days, everything goes without a hitch. Some days, I can't help but feel discouraged. Other days, I close my laptop and smile; I think that a lesson could not have gone more perfectly. Some days, frankly, it feels like I'm talking to a brick wall.

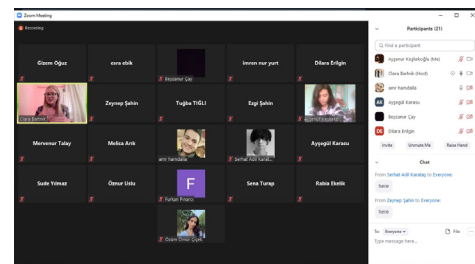
Other days, my students' curiosities lead my lesson down a welcomed rabbit hole of tangential thoughts: Can I teach them American slang? Can I tell them about campus life at an American university? Is America just like the movies? What is my favorite part about Turkey?

At first, it was hard to feel like I was "reaching" my students. All I wanted to do was to help them as much as I could, and I couldn't help but feel limited by the virtual format. Several students have shared their own concerns with me: "I wish I could participate more, but I'm too anxious to unmute myself." "I don't have good internet at home." "I'm sorry if I'm distracted-I've been worried about my family's situation."

My experience in Tokat has been great so far. I've met a lot of wonderful people and experienced some of the Black Sea region's most underrated vistas in the form of the Topçam Mountain; but the best thing about working at Gaziosmanpaşa University so far has absolutely been the other professors. They've been accommodating in a host of ways, but I think the way they've handled our Turkish



## "The classroom looks a little bit different this year."



*Pictured: Clara Bartnik teaching students*

Undoubtedly, this year's grantees face a unique set of challenges. However, I continue to be fueled by my students' excitement and appreciation for having a native English-speaking teacher. From their eagerness to learn about me and my culture to their gratitude at receiving individualized feedback from me on homework assignments, I am continuously reminded that my work as an English Teaching Assistant is valued. It reminds me that intercultural exchange continues to be important, not despite abnormal times, but because of them.

Additionally, I thought I would share a photo. It was taken on April 5th at the nearly-empty Ephesus-by far my favorite day in Turkey so far. It was quite incredible to have the space very nearly to myself.

classes here deserves special attention as it highlights the length they've gone to host us. Because both I and my other Fulbright companion came to Turkey already fluent in Turkish, our university contact had to get creative to find a way for us to take advantage of the depth of the university's language-learning materials. In my case, this took the form of arranging private Ottoman Turkish lessons with one of his friends from the history department. For me, this is an ideal situation, as my focus as an undergraduate was on late Ottoman history. My alma mater, however, didn't have the sort of materials to teach the Ottoman language while I was there, and I didn't have a deep enough knowledge of Turkish to attempt it on my own then either. Knowledge of Ottoman could help me get into a Ph.D. program down the road, so my work with the folks here has summarily been "çok güzel" – very good.

