



BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS 2017

GROUP OUTREACH PROJECT

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THE EXPERIENCE AND ITS VALUE FOR
THE UC COMMUNITY

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This program enriches the cultural scope of the students' lives by taking them outside of a bubble that they could've been in their whole lives. For me, personally, I had never left the country before coming on this trip. It has, in many ways, changed the way that I think about the world around me. It has immersed me in another culture and has allowed me, and it will allow other students, to see the innate similarities and differences that we share with everyone around the world. In a world that seems to be increasingly divided along trivial social lines, it is enlightening to see so many people from so many different places living together in a single community. It has for me added a level of humility. The world is so much bigger than me and my little bubble, so who am I to say that my culture or way of life is better than anyone else's?

THE EXPERIENCE AND ITS VALUE FOR THE UC COMMUNITY

Many times on this trip, I was listening to a lecturer, speaking with someone in the field of study that I am currently studying, or simply walking around the institutions that I studied about in class, and I felt a profound sense of security. This was the path that I wanted to take. It has helped me to solidify my goals and aspirations for my future. On the other hand, it can do the opposite for others- however this is not a negative thing. These experiences can help people decide what is and is not right for their lives and if someone had not gone on this trip they may not have ever known that they weren't truly passionate about their field of study. I overheard a person on the trip say that this wasn't what she wanted to do with her life and when asked if she regretted the trip she said "No!" and explained that it helped her to see what she really did and did not want to do.

THE EXPERIENCE AND ITS VALUE FOR THE UC COMMUNITY

This program benefits students at the University of Cincinnati because by immersing them in a new culture it shows students new perspectives and ways of thinking. By being apart of a program such as this not only introduces students to new cultures but also to issues that otherwise they never would have even known about. For me, a perfect example of this is the shortages of water in Europe. Until I was actually there I had no idea about the history of water use and how drinking beer became a way of sterilizing water. Another great aspect of this program is the fact that it takes you to more than just one country. By doing this, it allows the students to see not only similarities in different cultures but also the differences. One example was while in The Hague most people spoke English almost as a second language. While in Brussels, French was the main language and much fewer people spoke English. This created scenarios where I had no clue on how to understand or interact with some people and would have to find ways around this language barrier. This program by immersing us in the culture of where we went has allowed us to see these differences and shows us what to expect if we ever decided to go overseas again.



ENRICHMENT OF SCHOLARLY
KNOWLEDGE

ENRICHMENT OF SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE

Europe is currently facing three major crises; the refugee crisis, the economic crisis, and Brexit. Many hear about these crises' some way or another in the news and media, but are unable to connect the dots as to what leads to these crises, how are they preventable, and what the international community and international institutions alike are doing to address them. Before participating in the New Europe study abroad program, I was fortunate enough to have a slightly greater exposure than what's typical on these topics, simply because of the scholarly knowledge accumulated in the undergraduate courses, which prefaced this trip. However, I fervently believe that knowledge is best learned and enhanced through experiential opportunities.

ENRICHMENT OF SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE

For example, it was not until I inserted myself into the cultural ebb and flow of these other countries and their institutions where I was able to witness just how real these three problems are for Europeans and other neighbors in the international community. Prior to visiting Brussels, when I would hear about the refugee crisis, I could not possibly imagine what that meant for receiving countries. Our time spent in Brussels was truly eye opening to live amongst mass amounts of refugees and see how they desperately tried to better assimilate themselves into a new environment. At times Brussels was extremely chaotic, and I make this emphasis because this is one reality of the Refugee crises. Likewise, when we arrived at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers (SHAPE) and you are greeted with all these massive flagpoles just to realize, that one is missing, the UK, reality also sinks in. Now rather than just reading about Brexit, you are living or experiencing the effects in some way. For me this recognition evoked emotions, while solidifying that Brexit really happened. This symbolic implication of one empty flagpole serves as just one puzzle piece to the broader significance of this change. Similarly, before going to the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands, I was familiar with the functions of the institution, but when you're sitting in the courtroom listening to a witness report of a high-ranking police official who may or may not have contributed deaths in thousands on the ivory coast, you are hit with this new found perspective.

ENRICHMENT OF SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE

For me it was realizing 1.) the normativeness in such horrific acts of violence, in this case specifically Article 125 which involves taking matches to villages with the intent of destruction, and 2.) the importance of reaching new levels of objectiveness based on the principle that in places such as the ivory coast, this is all they know. The survival mentality of kill your neighbor before they kill you is such a large part of their cultural conditioning, making it very hard to determine appropriate accountability. It's easy for a westernized individual from a highly developed country such as myself, read about this in the news and point fingers towards an easy solution. However, when you're in the courtroom you soon realize that issues such as this one are much more complex and deserve greater objectiveness and critical attention. In this case, the psychology and energy which collectively made up the courtroom's atmosphere cannot be learned but only observed and experienced. Furthermore, one aspect of the trip that really helped enrich our knowledge on the topic of international institutions was a role playing game at the Parliamentarium. The purpose of this exercise was to gage better understanding on the European Union's legislative procedures. Here we were faced with the reality that passing legislation is very difficult, and it's almost impossible to reach a compromise the first time. Components that were the most divisive included budget, the intent of spending, whether it be generated towards research, infrastructure or marketing, and whether creating an agency was essential. In real scenarios these components also seem to be at the forefront of debate.

ENRICHMENT OF SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE

Overall, after participating in the New Europe Trip, I reached a new enriched threshold of understanding. This program offers a behind the scene approach with meticulously experienced members of the international community. Our duration abroad consisted of going to many different international institutions, talking to commissioners, foreign service officers, NATO officers, and others who are experts with first hand contact when dealing with these crises'. At the very end, we even got to hear a critic on the effectiveness of the European Union's parliamentary system. During her critique, she spoke about the many challenges with creating a united Europe. I found her presentation fascinating because she offered a different perspective than the synonymous one previously shared by many of the other speakers. I felt that her deviation from the norm contributed to our understanding of another reality within Europe; divisive viewpoints on both an individual and a state level. For example one dilemma that is continuously present is the idea of member states not wanting to give up their sovereignty to the international executive branch. Moreover, they fear trading their national and cultural identity for a united "European" one. With all of these crises occurring simultaneously, unification seems crucial now more than ever. The need for this principle of unity was recognized by every spokesperson, however mechanisms for getting there differed. It was also evident across the board that all speakers, despite some differences, felt that raising awareness and prompting new discussions and debates was essential for trying to reach solutions. Therefore, nonetheless, many of the guests speakers really engaged with the students allowing for an environment that was open for questions and debates. The learning setting did not feel like we were talked to, but rather talked with. Instead of just listening we experienced. We were challenged to think critically and to take ourselves out of the context of being American in order to think on a more advanced level with others and for others. Ultimately, we were becoming one minor part of the solution.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY- CHANGES
AND SUGGESTIONS

The European Commission

The display features a series of informational cards for European Commission presidents, each with a portrait and a list of key dates and events. The cards are connected by a line to circular icons representing policy areas. Visible presidents include Mansholt (1972) and Ortoli (1973-1976). Policy area icons include Information, Energy, and Regional Policy. The background of the display is a light blue map of Europe.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY- CHANGES AND SUGGESTIONS

One policy that I would like to change is that of the European Commission being the one to propose laws. The reason for this is because of the way it works in the United States. Here, the executive branch is not able to propose legislation to Congress. If they want a bill to be proposed they have to do what everyone else does. They must go through a congressman and have them propose it for them. I feel like this is a good policy because it keeps the executive branch from interfering too much in the legislative process. While they may still have a hand in the drafting of legislation, they must still work with a representative to prevent an even greater backlog of proposed legislation. Now, I know that the Commission doesn't function in the exact same way as the United States executive branch, it is still recognized as the executive branch of the European Union. And, one of the four roles of the Commission is entirely committed to the proposals of new legislation. If they took that role and left it just to the Council and the Parliament, they would have more time to devote to the other three roles, or a new role entirely. If they did that, they might even be able to implement the passed legislation even better than what they have been doing. The reason why I would like to change this policy is because I feel it would make the EU run, maybe not more efficiently, but better overall than what they have been.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY- CHANGES AND SUGGESTIONS

Another issue that needs to be addressed is how NATO and the EU can fight terrorist organizations like ISIS. When I approached both organizations, the answer for fighting terrorism was not in a group effort. However, individual states from both organizations can fight ISIS and other terrorist organizations separately away from the EU and NATO. This is what is happening now, however it is not enough. Until now, Article 5 has not been invoked by any country in NATO. Also, the EU has not tried to cut off imports and exports from countries that support ISIS. I believe Article 5 should be invoked and that all of NATO's alliances should declare war on ISIS and take it out at the root. I know that refugees that are fleeing their homeland do not want to enter European countries but have no choice. However, EU countries do not have the capabilities or the desire to have hundreds of thousands of refugees roam their countries. The EU was not designed to take in great numbers of refugees for asylum. So I recommend the EU to put pressure on Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia to take in refugees. If Gulf countries do not want to take in refugees they should help support the EU with funds in order to take care of them. If things do not tighten up soon there will be more repercussions of not taking out terrorist groups like ISIS. This will cause a long term problem throughout the world. As we watch the news, terrorist attacks are taking place throughout EU and NATO countries so it is in both organizations interests to go above and beyond to insure their citizens safety. Many operations that NATO was involved in have been very successful at stopping forces. Whether it be individual countries or the Taliban. NATO capabilities are designed to work together to take out great enemy forces. However, if the EU can work on the financial side of gathering money to put towards certain EU countries that are in NATO that have the capability to fight ISIS, the objective would take less time to accomplish.