

**POL 2097**

# **International Institutions: The Challenges of Global and Regional Governance**

**UHP Study Abroad Experience: Brussels and The Hague**

# Visit to Brussels (May 4-8, 2019)

During our travels to Brussels, we learned extensively about several of the institutions at the EU's core, including the European Commission, the EU Council, and the European Parliament. These organizations play a pivotal role in decision making, negotiation, and legislation throughout the EU, impacting millions of lives. In our down time, we also enjoyed a beautiful bus tour of the city and some delicious Belgian waffles.



# Europe Day Event

This occurs once every year in May to celebrate peace and unity among EU nations. Our class was fortunate enough to be in Brussels at this time!

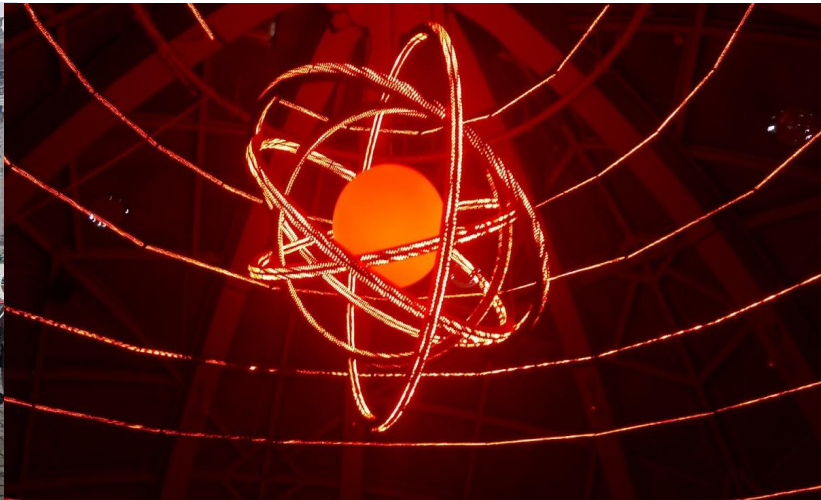
The Europe “Open Day” event consists of activities, booths, and events for people of all ages to immerse themselves in each country’s culture.



# House of European History and Bus Tour

On our second day in Brussels, we toured the House of European History, which houses several floors of European artifacts from 1789 to present day.

In the afternoon, we enjoyed a bus tour of the city and stopped at several prominent destinations, such as the Arcade du Cinquanteenaire and the Atomium.



# EU Council and European Commission

Our visit to the EU Council and the European Commission gave us great insight regarding the inner workings of the European Union. At the Council, we heard from speakers who discussed topics ranging from the Eurozone to the current refugee crisis. At the Commission, we listened to a speaker who walked us through the governmental structure. We were able to see the room where European leaders meet and learn about some of the topics they discuss.



# European Parliament and Parliamentarium

Our visit to the European Parliament gave us the opportunity to learn how policy is created and voted on in the EU. After learning about what the Parliament does, we were able to play an interactive game where we were tasked with creating and ratifying various policies. We were broken into the four largest parties of Parliament and voted based upon their party lines.



# NATO SHAPE

Before traveling to The Hague, we visited Mons, Belgium, to tour the NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). After touring the facility and enjoying lunch, we discussed the future of NATO-Russia relations with two soldiers.



# Visit to the Hague (May 8-12, 2019)

The second part of our trip was a visit to The Hague, Netherlands. There, we continued to visit several international institutions such as the International Tribunals for Rwanda and the former state of Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Courts, and the International Court of Justice. Through these institutions we learned how justice is served on a global scale, as well as what warrants international intervention in cases. We were able to enjoy the city itself with a boat tour of the canals and trips to the local shopping centers.





# OPCW

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is an IGO that facilitates compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. It currently has 193 member states who have agreed to identify and destroy all supplies of chemical weapons. Our group was able to attend an information session about OPCW's mission and ask questions.



# MICT

The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (MICT) is a court in The Hague that performs the remaining functions needed to complete all cases from ICTY and ICTR. Our class attended a presentation by Dragan Ivetic, a member of MICT's Defence Counsel, and viewed the courtroom in which MICT proceedings take place.



# Boat Trip

On our first evening in The Hague, we had the opportunity to see the city through a tour on the canals. We viewed many historical buildings along the way, such as the working palace stables. We also learned about how the canals were used for trade between cities and countries. Our tour guide informed us of the history of the city, including how The Hague was christened a city by Napoleon.



# Peace Palace and International Court of Justice

The Peace Palace is home to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), The Hague Academy of International Law, and the Peace Palace Library. During our visit, our class was able to tour the palace and speak with a representative from the ICJ. The Peace Palace was much stricter on photography than other places due to the nature of the ongoing cases within the PCA.



# International Criminal Court

The last event we attended as a group was a visit to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. This is a “court of last resort” that handles the trials of those accused of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. Currently, Dominic Ongwen, an ex-commander of the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, is on trial. While we weren’t able to see the trial live, we heard a lecture about the role of the ICC and were able to visit the courtroom.



# Free Day - Excursion to Amsterdam

On our last day in the Netherlands, we were given a free day, which gave us the opportunity to go on an excursion in a new city. All of us students took an early train to Amsterdam and spent the day exploring in small groups. Some of us rented bikes and enjoyed the outdoors, while others visited museums and went shopping.



# The Experience + its Value to the UC Community

This international experience challenged our class to work together to think critically, delve into important research topics, and pose vital questions. Throughout our nine days abroad, our class and faculty members developed great bonds that have brought us all closer as members of the UC community.

Thank you to UC Study Abroad, University Honors, and our wonderful professors who made this trip possible!

# Enrichment of Scholarly Knowledge

Our class's visit to Brussels and The Hague provided us students with a direct, hands-on opportunity to learn about the most influential international institutions and the ways in which they operate. Visiting these organizations significantly supplemented our classroom knowledge, as we were able to personally speak to professionals and experts working in these fields and ask questions.

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