

Bree Gelin

Many of us living in the United States live in a bubble. We tend to pay attention to our personal problems, such as what's for dinner or which car to buy. We unintentionally live a self-serving life with the occasional donations and tithing here and there. Because of this, I found myself being drawn to a major in International Relations for college. I wanted to see the grand scheme of things, become an influential decision maker and ultimately connect with others from different backgrounds and origins. When given the opportunity to study International Relations for a week at Georgetown University by the Naples Council on World Affairs, I was ecstatic. Not only would I learn more about the international system while making great friends along the way, I'd also have the opportunity to have a taste of the college life and roam through our nation's capital.

When I arrived at the Georgetown campus, I had no idea what the week would have in store. I was excited, anxious, nervous, yet kept an open mind. Throughout the course of the week, I was inspired by the lectures given by Professor Arend on the international system. He explained everything in great detail and added his own expert opinion on each topic. I was amazed by the amount of energy that accompanied each one of his lectures while feverishly taking down notes.

During that week, along with the academic knowledge I was receiving, I also met students from Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and South Korea who gave me an insight into their culture. We discussed traditions, gender roles, and the education system within those countries that is so different from America's. Being amongst such bright youth triggered me to know more about my country, surrounding countries, and the international agenda.

Although I enjoyed every aspect of the IR summer program, moments that I hold most dearly in my heart were visiting the National Mall and the Saudi Arabia embassy. The sense of pride and patriotism I felt at the National Mall was unexplainable. There was such a rich history there from the Lincoln Memorial to the WWII Memorial that takes you back in time. As for Saudi Arabia, that was a

country that I knew absolutely nothing about previously (except for the fact that it's located in the Middle East). After leaving the embassy, I learned the history of Saudi Arabia, that it's a well-developed country with a dynamic oil market.

Overall, I am extremely grateful for this opportunity. I entered the IR program not knowing what to expect but left feeling motivated, educated, and fulfilled. The program surpassed my expectations, left me with great memories to share, and a desire to seek a career in the international affairs. The last lecture given by Professor Arend was a very heartfelt one that resonated with me. He was speaking about the future of the international system that is not an actual formalized system but a web of actors and laws formed by a non-international legislative body. The one thing he emphasized so dearly that can even be applied outside of international relations is that, "the future is there for ANYONE to CHANGE."

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