**Attending University of Oxford Program
Laid a Foundation for International Study**

**Anya Brenner**

Attending the summer program at the University of Oxford has been one of the most valuable learning opportunities of my life. When I joined the Global Scholar Program as a sophomore, I had no idea how much I would gain from this program. The lectures and Great Decisions Zoom calls have been an incredible part of my life and I am so thankful to have this opportunity.

Through the generous support of the Council, I was awarded a full scholarship to study international relations at the University of Oxford for two weeks during the summer after my junior year. I learned the basics of theories within international relations and had the opportunity to debate and discuss a number of issues with interested fellow students and professors.

When I first arrived in Oxford, the first thing that greeted me was the unique medieval town. I was captivated by the differences between the colleges within Oxford, the variety of shops, the vibrance of the oldest botanical gardens in Great Britain, the activity of punting, and much more. Punting in particular took a lot of concentration and practice to not only not flip over the boat, but to move it in the desired direction. But I was challenged not only through the activities that we did, but by the academics that I pursued.

Throughout the two weeks, I studied a variety of theories within international relations, including realism, liberalism, constructivism, critical gender, class and race theory, and the English School. I learned the difference between hierarchy and anarchy, what a Leviathan and hegemony are, and the difference between a state wanting to survive and wanting to gain power. I understood that like everything, there are different sides to the theories. For example, states might want to pursue defensive realism to survive, yet they don't want too much power compared to states that pursue offensive realism where too much power is the end goal.

Our teacher, Haitong, pushed us to think outside of the box and relate these theories to specific topics, such as nuclear warfare and censorship in China.

Ph.D. students at the University of Oxford spoke to our class on their individual theses. One spoke about French foreign policy. Having never gotten a chance to learn about this, I was interested in subtopics such as immigration, international law and post-colonialism. When the speaker discussed that in order to fix a problem, you have to engage with it, I understood the importance that actions can have. In the future, I hope to learn more about other states’ foreign policies and compare the actions of one state to another.

After taking part in a “graduate level IR class condensed within the span of two weeks,” I understood the power that knowledge can have and how much can be learned within such a short amount of time. When discussing and understanding current global issues, I am now able to use different theoretical lenses to provide additional insight. After my experience at the University of Oxford, I came to realize that I want to continue to pursue international relations.

I recently was accepted to study international relations at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, and I would not have been able to do it without the Naples Council on World Affairs.