WEST Students Learn Firsthand about the European Union during Summer

Michael McLaughlin, a graduate student in West European Studies (WEST) and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA), and Todd Linton, a graduate student in WEST, spent the summer studying the European Union—by visiting it. Through a course offered by SPEA, the European Union in the Twenty-First Century, the two joined other area studies, law, and SPEA students on a four-week trip across Europe, accompanied by SPEA professor Eugene McGregor and joined later in Germany by another SPEA professor, David Audretsch, director of SPEA's Institute for Development Strategies. They stayed in five European cities and visited many major political institutions along the way to gain a fuller understanding of how the EU operates and what it means for a once-divided continent to pursue a path of peaceful integration.

The class began in Paris, where the students were hosted by the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA)—France's prestigious training school for high-level civil servants. The students heard presentations by important figures in French public affairs, including representatives from the Conseil d'État, the Magistrature, and the Foreign Ministry, as well as by analysts and academics from European universities and research institutions. The speakers were all engaging and knowledgeable and gave the students a great amount of insight into the workings of the French government, society, and economy, and also into France's place in the wider European context. The class participants were also given rare opportunities to tour the Palais du Luxembourg, which houses the French Sénat, and the Hôtel de Ville, the city hall of Paris. Despite the busy schedule of lectures and sessions at ENA, the IU students still found many opportunities to explore the celebrated City of Lights. Some intrepid students even rented a car and paid a visit to the historic beaches and memorials of Normandy.

The next stop was Brussels, the capital of Belgium and seat of the political institutions of the EU. They sat in on sessions at the European Commission and the Council of Ministers. After having studied these organizations for so long, the students found it incredible to be able to visit them firsthand, and gain an in-depth understanding of the issues currently confronting the EU. The matter of security policy was addressed during a subsequent visit to NATO, where different perspectives on the Atlantic Alliance were shared by a group of enthusiastic speakers.

After Brussels, the students traveled by bus to the town of Bingen, Germany. A boat ride up the Rhine River, past the region's beautiful castles and vineyards, brought the group to Boppard, a small town on the Rhine that is home to the Bundesakademie, a monastery converted into a training center for German civil servants. After resting for two days in this picturesque town, the students departed by bus for Berlin.

As in Paris and Brussels, the class had a full and busy schedule. After a walking tour of the city, the group attended sessions at the Ministry for Internal Affairs; the Ministry of Economics and Labor; the headquarters of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union, the current opposition political party; a law firm; and the offices of the weekly newspaper Die Zeit. They gained a strong sense of many different aspects of public policy in Germany, including how the issues that remain from the country's long division are being addressed and how Germany is affected by the evolving nature of the EU. The Berlin part of the course concluded with a guided tour of the Reichstag, the German Parliament, whose famous dome offers a spectacular view of the city.

The next stop was Erfurt, where they participated in a two-day conference at the Erfurt School of Public Policy entitled "Where is Europe Going? (And What Has America to Do with It?)." This conference gave the IU students a remarkable opportunity to discuss the issues they had studied with a group of other students from around the world. Erfurt and SPEA students sat together on

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International students needing to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to gain admission to a U.S. college or university can ready themselves with Preparing for the TOEFL Written Essay, an online, noncredit course offered by the IU School of Continuing Studies (SCS).

Developed by Bruce Leeds, adjunct assistant professor with the Indiana University Center for English Language Training (CELT) and an official reader for the TOEFL Test of Written English, the course has 10 weekly lessons. For each lesson, students write essays in response to official TOEFL essay topics. CELT instructors read and score the essays, providing individualized feedback on grammar, punctuation, word choice, and style.

“Preparing for the TOEFL Written Essay is open to individuals worldwide. To take the course, students need only a modern PC or Macintosh computer with Internet access via modem or Ethernet. They must have an e-mail account. Essential software includes Microsoft Word and an up-to-date Web browser such as Internet Explorer (version 5 or higher) or Netscape Navigator (version 4.7x or higher).”

For registration information see the School’s Web site below or contact by e-mail: scs@indiana.edu; or telephone: (812) 855-2292 or 1-800-334-1011.

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panels and debated a range of topics, from the future of transatlantic relations to the problems and possibilities associated with EU expansion. A variety of perspectives were presented, and the discussion was stimulating and thought provoking for everyone. The conference ended with a dinner held at a restored medieval castle outside of Erfurt. It was a unique and enjoyable experience and gave the American and European students an opportunity to mingle in a less formal setting. The Erfurt conference was, for many, the highlight of the trip, and a wonderful chance to interact with other students and engage in a dialogue about Europe’s place in the world and the future of the EU.

—Todd Linton
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