

9/29/2016

## Reflections on EAO Experience

I enjoyed the overall experience at EAO immensely, and it has left a deep impression on me. The program was well planned and executed. The combination of panel discussions and excursions to nearby towns and historical sites offered us a range of perspectives from which to discuss the issues confronting Europe, and the informal conversations with colleagues and panel participants not only generated intellectual value but created social bonds with faculty from across campus with whom we rarely have much personal interaction. It was fascinating just to learn about the way things are done in other departments and colleges, and what is going on in other parts of the University.

The EAO warrants praise for a well-run program. The Academy really went all out to make us feel welcome and bent over backwards to make sure we had a positive experience. Everyone from the program directors to staff was friendly and helpful.

Since returning to campus I have maintained my interest in the issues we discussed and the overall experience. I have woven various issues from our discussions into my courses for this semester – such as European perspectives on nationalism and identity formation in my Political Ideologies class, as well as a “globalist” perspective in the same class. I have also included discussions of EU relations in the Foreign Policy section of my American Government class, and also woven a comparative perspective of European experiences of contemporary issues such as immigration and terrorism. During the days leading up to the Brexit vote I offered to write analytical pieces for a couple of local newspapers, but wasn’t taken up on the offer. I will continue to look for journalistic outlets to publish insights and observations from the EAO experience.

While most (or maybe all) of the other participants seemed to be experienced travellers abroad, this was my first trip outside of North America, and perhaps this added to the profound impact this program had on me. I would encourage the program to keep these trips open to faculty without the extensive travel experience, as well as veteran world travellers. I have never actively pursued teaching classes for Study Abroad programs, but after talking with these colleagues who have regularly led Study Abroad classes I am determined to pursue these classes in the future. I have already begun the process of proposing classes for 2018 and will start teaching our Global Issues course, in large part stimulated by the EAO experience.

Sincerely,  
Ralph Durham