

# How has studying abroad shaped your vocation in Politics?

## **Liz Poulin—London, England**

Having studied abroad in London, England, through the London Internship Program, I had the unique privilege of interning for a Member of the British Parliament while studying political science in an international context. During my time in London, I gained skills in evaluating European political issues and expanded my worldview of politics as a vocation. The London Internship Program provided me with the opportunity to apply the knowledge I have gained through professors and courses at Messiah College to real-life political settings. Working

**Palace of Westminster (British Parliament Building)**



daily with a Member of Parliament allowed me to experience the inner-workings of the British Political System and better grasp the importance of being a global citizen. Reflecting on my time in Westminster, I realize that a politician's role to his or her constituents is not solely a job, but a vocation. Citizens in England, like citizens in the United States, have real problems, concerns and needs; governmental leaders are the catalysts bringing about the necessary change.

## **Becca MacVaugh—Middle East Studies Program**

Studying in the Middle East allowed me to live and experience life in one of the most politically and religiously charged environments in the world. Having the opportunity to speak and learn with authors, diplomats, pastors, journalists, and countless other influential people challenged me to respond to hard questions related to many topics such as gender issues, American foreign policy, Israeli-Palestinian conflict and interfaith relations. Living in a predominately Muslim context allowed me to explore the relevance and meaning of my Christian faith on a more personal level. From living in Egypt and traveling to Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine, I am now able to understand the interconnectedness of the political systems and structures in the larger Middle East. Furthermore, I now understand how history has shaped the current political arena. Staying the summer for an internship with a media company allowed me to explore the role of media journalism within politics, especially related to current events, such as Obama's visit to Cairo. From my experience in the Middle East, I have come to a deeper understanding of the interrelatedness of both politics and religion, particularly as I explore my vocation as a Christian in the field.

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**Nelson Mandela's Cell—Robben Island**

## **Matt Crawford—South Africa**

During January term in 2009, I went with a group of twelve to South Africa, a trip which primarily focused on Apartheid and reconciliation in the post-Apartheid era. Since the end of Apartheid the country has been in a period of democratic transition and during this time there have been a number of political scandals and continuing social problems. During this life-changing experience in South Africa I learned that as Christians and students of politics we must be active in the pursuit of justice for the oppressed and seek to improve the lives of others. Since we are all children of God, we should be given an equal opportunity in the pursuit of what we desire and are called to do.

## **Luke Smith—Oxford, England**

My semester abroad at Oxford University was truly a life-changing experience. I discovered the value of clear oral and written communication with Oxford professors, hard work, and strong research capabilities. Not only was I pushed to new extremes by the rigors of an Oxford education, but it was through this study abroad that I also learned about aspects of the British political system as well as the greater international political arena. In addition, it was incredible to gain British perspective on issues within American politics. I feel that my semester at Oxford equipped me with the skills that are necessary to be successful in whatever I do, whether that be in my college education or even my future career.

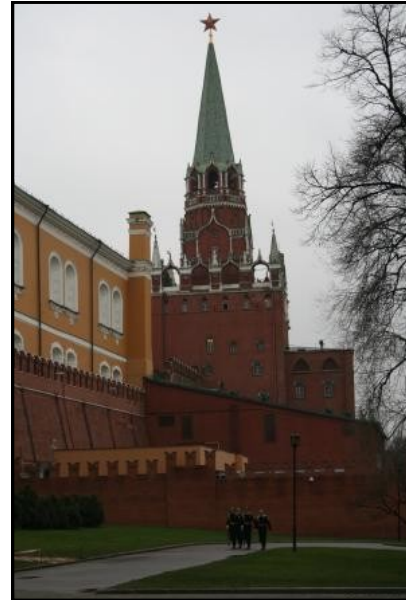


**Christ Church, Oxford**

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## **Ronny Thompson—Russia**

Prior to my study abroad trip to Russia, I studied contemporary Russian politics at Messiah. I thought I knew all I needed to know. Oh was I wrong. I was able to get a new perspective on the Russian political spectrum by getting first hand accounts and lectures from Russian students and professors at the university where we studied. It is helpful to get real life experience in one of the countries that I studied in classes here at Messiah. Learning Russian language also helped me understand words and names better than before I went on the trip. Not only did we learn about the Russian political system, but also why the political system is the way it is and how a Russian views current events. Overall Russia has changed me for the better and given me an experience I will never regret.



**The Moscow Kremlin**

## **Beau Wilson—Uganda**

I came into college with the optimistic outlook that politics can change the world; politics has often accomplished this, but often in a negative manner. We as Americans try to influence parts of the world from an oval office, yet never feel the heat of the sun on our back as we attempt to harvest crops during a drought. We can donate money to a charity, but never have to give any time towards its goals. I believe Americans often look to politics to do the dirty work that Christ as called each one of us to do, and this has so often gone awry.

As a Christian I look to Christ, not the President for the answers. I can't look at what this politician did to influence what in turn I should do. If we look to Christ as our example, we are presented with a great challenge. We must wade into the world's problems. We no longer can avoid what happens to our neighbors, and that includes global neighbors. I believe that anything anyone does can be a ministry to God; that ministry has to be genuine from your very core. To do this, to understand how and what someone is feeling, struggling with, and to make an actual difference and change in their life we must walk a mile in their shoes; struggle and suffer with them. Christ never looked at suffering as good, or something to obtain, but He saw, as we need to see, that God is hidden in the midst of suffering. Christ did this for us. When we change 'politics' into this type of view point maybe we will be able to change the world for good.

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## **Mike Donghia—Cheltenham, England**

Studying politics in another country gave me a better perspective of how America fits into the global political scheme. By comparing our political system with European systems across the ocean, I was able to notice the strengths and weaknesses of each. I feel this new knowledge has humbled my exclusive outlook towards American foreign policy and made me more of a world citizen.

## **Danielle Crooks—Washington, D.C.**

The American Studies Program is a unique, thought provoking institution that enabled me to grapple through the challenging issues of our times and relate my faith to the world of politics. Additionally, the program also exposed me to all the various actors in the political realm which helped to guide my passions to possible career options in the near future.

## **Sam Pirondi—China**

Studying abroad is almost essential to getting a broader understanding of the world we live in today. Through my experiences in China I was able to further understand the Asian perspective of the world that is very different than the usual Western perspective one gets in America and Europe. Not only was I able to learn about these different views, I was able to learn to respect it since it became a personal experience. Study abroad has certainly enriched my education and shaped a better understanding of politics in the complexity of the world we live in.

## **Mike Nolt—Spain**

In May of 2008, I had the opportunity to spend three weeks studying in Spain. The heated democratic primary between Barrack Obama and Hillary Clinton was in its final, intense weeks. This provided me with a unique opportunity to read and hear about American politics from a foreign perspective. The election had captured the attention of those with whom I was staying, and Hillary Clinton's decision to drop out of the race was front page news in Spanish newspapers. Being able to experience the way in which American politics was viewed in Spain helped to broaden my understanding of the importance of the political process. To see the engagement of people in Spain over a nominating contest in the United States encouraged me. When people see democracy in action, they get excited. This fact really came home for me while studying in Spain.