

SMALL WORLD NEWSLETTER

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From Ireland to Jordan—Peace & Conflict Studies



Abbie Levine (pictured above) is a second-year student, double-majoring in International Studies, specializing in Security & Intelligence, and Arabic, and minoring in Peace Studies. She spent nine weeks of this past summer in the academic program, Conflict and the Struggle for Peace: Explorations in Ireland and the Middle East, with an intensive Arabic extension.

“This summer, I studied abroad in Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Jordan with the Foundation for International Educa-

tion (FIE) and America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST). I know — an odd combination of locations for a program. Trust me, though... there is a reason.

For the first ten days I lived in Dublin, Ireland, with the ten other students in the program from a variety of colleges in America. Each morning we walked to our class at the Dublin Business School, where we were lectured for about three hours a day on the Northern Ireland conflict that plagued the region for much of the twentieth century. We also

discussed the potential impact of Brexit on the Good Friday Agreement, the signed document that has halted the violence since 1998. In the afternoons we took class field trips in and around Dublin, from the Kilmainham Gaol to the Leinster House, or explored on our own locations such as the Trinity College Library and the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Over the next four days we drove up to Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom to view the remnants of the violence with our own eyes, touring Stormont



One of the dozens of murals in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, depicting an infamous scene from Bloody Sunday.

Castle and the street in which Bloody Sunday took place. Listening to accounts by those involved on each side of the conflict, through organizations including Theatre of Witnesses, Museum of Free Derry, and the Apprentice Boys Museum, humanized the violence, trading unfathomable statistics for faces and names. Experiencing everything I had studied for months, both at Ohio State and through FIE, in person was a bit overwhelming. The tension remains after more than 20 years since the signing of the Agreement, reinforced by the continued segregation of more than 90% of the homes in Northern Ireland

along religious lines.

We returned to Dublin briefly to fly to Amman, the capital of Jordan, where the 11 of us were paired off to live with host families. I lived with one girl from the program in an area known as the Gardens. We were paired with a family of five, which was comprised of a Palestinian father, a Bedouin mother, and their three young daughters. My roommate and I became a part of the family—from helping them care for their three cats, to shopping at the local markets together.

Our peace studies continued for three weeks with AMIDEAST. Each three-hour class delved into a different matter in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Our field trips ranged from an excursion to Petra to a meeting with the Israeli Ambassador. We investigated the possibility of using the Irish peace process to address the problems disturbing the MENA region, particularly in Israel and Palestine.

Half of the students returned to the United States, while the rest remained for an additional four weeks to participate in the second session of AMIDEAST's intensive Arabic program. Based on several factors, the now 17 of us were each placed in an Arabic level that best suited our skills. Outside of class we had the opportunity to continue exploring not only the country but much of the region. As a program, we visited the ruins in Jerash and toured Ajloun Castle, but others used their free time to travel outside of the nation's borders to places like Jerusalem and Egypt. I tried to gain a stronger familiarity with the capital, trying out new cafes and outdoor markets.

Unfortunately, the trip came to an end, but I have been genuinely transformed by the experience, as I, and my perspectives, have grown tremendously. Immersing oneself in another culture is truly priceless. And for that I cannot emphasize enough how much I recommend that others study abroad as well."

The ancient city of Petra in Southern Jordan.

