LEIDEN

Study Abroad Reports
FINAL STUDY ABROAD REPORT

INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Write a one page report assessing your experience abroad, in light of your academic and personal goals. Topics to consider:

Courses  Professors  Housing
Social Activities  City Life  Money Matters

2) Please indicate whether we can share your information with current BU Law students interested in participating in study abroad programs.
   a) Will you share your personal email address with students who request to contact former program participants?
      YES  X  NO  □
   b) Will you share your final study abroad report (with any identifying information redacted) in a binder housed in the OGIP?
      YES  X  NO  □

Please write your Final Study Abroad Report below.

PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER: Leiden University, Spring 2014

I returned from my semester abroad at Leiden University just under a month ago. Looking back, I have to say that it was an incredible experience. I am so glad that I decided to go, and I would do it all again if I had the opportunity.

I enjoyed my courses overall and found the professors to be interesting and thought-provoking. During my semester at Leiden, I took Introduction to Public International Law, Law and Governance in Developing Countries, Basics of International Humanitarian Law, and Economic Policy in the EU. I enjoyed each of my courses at Leiden, with the exception of Economic Policy in the EU. Although the professor was great, the course was much more economics-based and much less policy-based than I expected from the course description. As economics is neither my forte nor my general interest, I struggled to follow the lectures and grasp the content. However, I would say my feelings about the course have more to do with my
knowledge background than the quality of the lecturing. As for the other three courses, I enjoyed them very much. Introduction to Public International Law and Basics of International Humanitarian Law were my favorites. I feel that taking these courses at Leiden provided me with a different view of the laws, and I am not sure that I would have been able to have the same public international law experience had I taken only the courses offered by BU. The professors had impressive resumes, were very kind, and were dedicated to making sure the students understood and stayed interested in the topic. I also enjoyed Law and Governance in Developing Countries, although, as I stated in my mid-semester review, it was not exactly what I expected. It was not very focused on law, but looking back I have realized that I gained a lot of knowledge about post-conflict institution building and where developing countries generally need the most help in terms of institutions and government. Depending on my future career, I think this knowledge could be very useful. In terms of exams and workload, I would say there was slightly less work. However, exams are difficult at Leiden and it is quite nerve-wracking to know that people fail exams fairly regularly. I found that studying much like I do for exams at BU was successful. Overall, I enjoyed my courses at Leiden University very much.

In terms of housing, I chose to live in one of the school’s buildings, called Klooosterpoort. I rented a studio, which was just what I needed. Although it was quite small, I had enormous windows with a great view of the courtyard. I was stressed out about finding somebody to take over my lease, as it did not end until August 31, but the school has a program where they will offer your apartment to summer exchange students. Luckily for me, a student found by the school took over my lease. I enjoyed living in the school’s building, and found it to be much easier than searching for a place online. The rent was slightly higher in the school’s buildings, but it was the most convenient for me and I think it was the right decision.

As I stated in my mid-semester review, money was one of my biggest struggles during the semester. I feel that more money should be available for students studying abroad. I understand that I am there to go to school and study, but I feel strongly that part of the study abroad experience is traveling and learning about other cultures as well. Although I budgeted well enough to be able to take three small trips to other countries, money was incredibly tight. I am not sure that I would have had enough money to thoroughly enjoy Leiden alone, even without traveling. I did make the best of it and feel content with my travels, and luckily my
parents were able to help me when necessary, but I could see this dampening the entire experience for students who may not be as fortunate or budget-conscious.

In terms of social activities and city life, I found Leiden to be the quintessential Dutch city. Although it is quite small, it has its own hustle and bustle and there are plenty of activities available. There is a great jazz bar, a beautiful university botanical garden, plenty of history, and delicious food in quaint restaurants. In addition, the people are friendly and will generally help you and provide recommendations. One of my favorite things about Leiden was the market on Wednesdays and Saturdays. On Wednesdays, the market is fairly small, but you can buy fresh produce, cheese, and baked goods. On Saturdays, the market is about twice the size and it seems as if all of Leiden spends the day enjoying the city and the market. It was great to pick up some groceries, and then grab an outdoor table at a café and enjoy people-watching on the canal. Even if boredom strikes in Leiden, as it occasionally does, it is easy to hop on an inter-city train and spend the day in another city or town. The tickets are cheap and the travel times tend to be short. I took day trips to Amsterdam, Haarlem, Rotterdam, The Hague, Delft, Noordwijk an zee, and Utrecht. I believe all of the train rides were under an hour. During my time in Leiden, I also met plenty of people and made a few life-long friends. It was great to interact and spend time with people from different countries and different parts of the world. I learned so much about our similarities and differences. It was a lot of fun, and truly eye-opening. Overall, I found Leiden to be a beautiful, interesting city and I enjoyed my time there very much.

I had a wonderful semester at Leiden University. It was just what I needed both educationally and personally. It was nice to be away from the stress that seems to accrue at the law tower throughout the semester. I also feel that learning from professors who have studied, worked, and lived in different parts of the world has provided me with a wider understanding of international law and a different perspective on a variety of topics. I found the experience to be a fulfilling one, and I would recommend it to students in the future.
MID-SEMESTER STUDY ABROAD REPORT

INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Write a one page report assessing your experience abroad, in light of your academic and personal goals. Topics to consider:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Professors</th>
<th>Housing</th>
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      YES X NO □

   b) Will you share your mid-semester report (with any indentifying information redacted) in a binder housed in the OGIP?
      YES X NO □

Please write your Mid-Semester Study Abroad Report below.

PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER: Leiden University Spring 2014

I am currently spending the spring semester studying at Leiden University in the Netherlands. I have been here for about a month and a half, and so far I have found the experience to be incredibly satisfying and mostly what I expected.

In terms of courses, professors, and my experience with the university, I have been enjoying the experience so far. Although I have only had two classes up until this point, Introduction to Public International Law and Law and Governance in Developing Countries, I have found the experience to be fairly similar to courses at home. I was surprised to find that the professors teaching these courses not only speak near perfect English, but they also speak with barely any accent. I have not struggled in that sense and everything has been clear and easy to follow in class as taught by the professors. However, I have been slightly disappointed with the substance of my Law and Governance in Developing Countries course. It is not what I expected, as it is not quite focused on the law, and it feels very much like an undergraduate course, which
my other course has avoided. I have been in the course for six weeks and am still struggling a little bit to figure out exactly what the professor expects us to gain. Overall, I would say that my class experience has been pretty great, and because my last two courses should be more law-focused, I am expecting the rest of the semester to go just as well.

I chose to avoid the stress of searching online for housing and dealing with individuals while I was living on another continent, so I am living in a studio apartment that is owned by Leiden University. It has been a good experience overall and I think I made the right decision in this sense. The rent is not too expensive, and utilities and internet are included, which is nice. Further, the apartment came with bedding and cooking utensils, which was a great discovery upon my arrival.

One of my biggest stressors since arriving abroad has been money. I understand that because I have student loans, the budget for studying abroad at Leiden University is a set number. However, I really do not think the provided budget is realistic and it does not provide any additional money at all to experience other parts of the Netherlands and Europe. I have planned very few trips (much fewer than other classmates I have spoken with) and I would not be able to do this without extra money that I had saved previously. While I understand that I am here to study and not necessarily to travel, I feel that traveling and experiencing everything to the fullest is part of studying abroad, and I wish the budget was more supportive of this.

In terms of city life and social activities, I have found Leiden to be what I needed in my semester away from Boston. It is a small, but bustling city and the people are incredibly kind. The market on Saturdays is one of my favorite things I have experienced, as it seems that everyone in Leiden spends the day outside enjoying their city. The school also plans social activities for international students, which I have found helpful in terms of meeting people and making friends. I have really enjoyed making friends from different parts of the world. It is so interesting to experience firsthand how similar we all are, yet how many huge differences there are in our cultures.

Overall, I think spending the semester at Leiden University will fulfill my academic and personal goals. It has given me a chance to get away from the different kind of stress that comes with time spent at the law tower, even though it is stressful in its own way with exams coming up. I think that learning about international law topics from professors who have studied in different countries and have different views about politics and the world will provide me with the
right outlook for the career that I would like to have one day. It has been my favorite part of the experience and it has been truly eye opening. Being able to provide a different perspective on international law could help me in the future should I ever become employed in a related field in Europe or at home, and that is what I was looking for from this experience.
PROGRAM NAME & SEMESTER: Leiden, Netherlands; Spring 2011

I recently returned back to the United States after spending a semester studying law at Leiden University in Leiden, Netherlands. In this report, I will reflect back on my experiences and express my honest opinion about the program. I will begin by saying that in my opinion, students at the Boston University School of Law are very fortunate that our school offers its students a unique and wonderful opportunity of studying abroad in Leiden.

Academics

While in Leiden, I took four courses: European Union Law, Law & Culture, Cyberspace and Cyberlaw, and Information Technology Law in Europe. For me, the most challenging course was European Union Law because the legal system in the European Union is structured much differently than the one in the United States. Unlike most students in the class, especially the ones from the EU, I was completely unfamiliar with the subject. For this reason, I spent many extra hours in the law school library finding and reading supplemental literature so that I could feel comfortable discussing the issues of the EU law with the future European lawyers. My hard work paid off, and now I understand fairly well how the legal system of the EU functions.

Every course that I was enrolled in had a different format. For example, in EU Law, professors assigned lots of reading, which included the EU Treaties, case law, and supplemental literature explaining the Treaties and the case law. Law & Culture course was structured completely differently: we did not study any black letter law or any case law; the course revolved around discussion of articles written by legal scholars on a variety of subjects. Class discussions were always very involved and enlightening.

I am particularly interested in intellectual property law, which is one of the reasons why I chose to participate in the Leiden exchange program. Cyberspace and Cyberlaw was my favorite course in Leiden. Professors who taught the class were practicing attorneys, and for this reason they had lots of fascinating real-world examples of the issues discussed, which made learning the law behind those issues very interesting. The course involved writing three papers on open ended topics, which allowed me to develop and express my personal ideas about the direction in which I believe that Cyberlaw should head in the future.

The amount of time I spent preparing for classes and writing papers was comparable to what I usually spend at BU. I did well in all of my courses, which was very rewarding. Law school library in Leiden is absolutely beautiful and studying there was pleasant.

Life Outside of Law School

My favorite part about living in Leiden was that it is a very international city: students from all over the world come there to study. This diversity facilitated numerous enlightening discussions. I have made many friends with whom I intend to keep in contact. Social life in
Leiden is absolutely amazing because most people are very outgoing and open to expanding their circle of friends.

I rented a room in private house, which was an excellent decision. Renting from private landlords is much cheaper than living in the dorms, and no long-term lease is required. I rented a simple but comfortable room and shared the common areas of the house with four Ph.D. students, who were all from different countries. Everyone was busy with schoolwork so the house was always quiet, and therefore, provided an excellent atmosphere for studying.

Public transportation in Netherlands is convenient and efficient. However, the most preferred way of transportation is by bicycle. Bicycles are everywhere: in fact since everything is only a short bike ride away, most people do not own cars. This took some time to get used to, but once I purchased my own bike and started riding it everywhere, I absolutely loved it because it provided me with an opportunity to constantly exercise and enjoy the picturesque city of Leiden.

In conclusion, I am very happy with my decision to participate in the study abroad program at Leiden University. I learned a lot, both inside and outside of the classroom. I made many good friends, got a chance to travel throughout Europe, and experienced a different approach to education and life in general. I would highly recommend to my peers at BU Law to participate in this program: my experience was absolutely amazing.
MID-SEMESTER STUDY ABROAD REPORT

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   Courses
   Professors
   Housing
   Social Activities
   City Life
   Money Matters

Please write your Mid-Semester Study Abroad Report below.

I am taking four courses at Leiden University: European Union Law, Law and Culture, Information Technology Law in Europe, and Cyberspace and Cyberlaw. Courses are interesting and engaging. Professors are very knowledgeable about their subjects and always encourage class discussions. The discussions are absolutely phenomenal because law students from all over the world share their views on various issues. I truly learn a lot from my classmates, and our debates, both in and out of the classroom, are vigorous and enlightening. This is important to me because one of my major goals for spending a semester in Leiden was interacting with future lawyers from different countries and learning in what aspects the U.S. legal systems differs from others. The focus of most lectures is the policy underlining the law and the direction the law should take in the future. Exams are similar to what I am used to at BU Law: a three-hour written exam at the end of each course. Overall, I am very satisfied with the quality of education, and the knowledge and insight that I am getting here is invaluable.

The city of Leiden is gorgeous. Leiden is an old city with many historic buildings and a distinct character. Numerous canals run throughout the city, thus making it even more beautiful. People enjoy spending nice sunny days in outdoor cafes, which offer excellent food and coffee. The preferred mode of transportation is bicycle. At first, it was strange seeing so many people of all ages riding bicycles, but now, I am used to it, and I actually enjoy riding my bike to class instead of waiting for the T.

Leiden is a college town, and therefore, there is a large student population. Many students are international, which makes meeting new friends even more exciting. Everyone speaks excellent English, and I have not run into any language problems. A BU Law student who studied in Leiden last semester, recommended that I stay in the house where she rented a room. I followed her advice, and I am happy about my housing arrangement. I share the house with five international Ph.D. students, and our Dutch landlady. My room is simple, but comfortable and quiet, which completely suits my needs. Prices in Leiden are similar to prices in Boston; the only thing worth mentioning is that food here is slightly more expensive, especially when dining out. Overall, I am happy with my decision to study for a semester in Leiden, and I believe that this experience will be a great asset in my future career.
15 May 2005

End of Year Study Abroad Evaluation: Leiden University

I begin by saying I am extremely satisfied with my decision to study abroad at Leiden University. The classes offered at Leiden University are typically more dynamic in their non-legal areas which allows the student to study the law in its more richer context. The classes I chose did not simply focus on black letter law or case-law but also brought in elements of sociology, development, history, and culture. As one of my goals was to take classes which provided a fuller understanding of the law, this goal was certainly fulfilled.

It was also beneficial to be exposed to stylistically diverse methods of teaching. The classes here have less focus on student/teacher dialogue in the classroom and more focus on following the professor’s critical examination of the material. While I was not at first used to this, as BUSL typically engages a more dialogical approach, I was able to switch gears and find myself adapt to this method as well. I still believe, however, that in this way the American system succeeds better in getting the student’s highly involved and engaged.

As I mentioned last time, one of my paramount goals was to utilize the surrounding atmosphere outside of the classroom, to supplement my academic ambitions. The Hague was particularly relevant for this goal. It is possible, within a 20 minute train ride, to be in one of the focal points of European judicial matters. Attending trials at the ICTY offers fascinating insight into international criminal law in practice and the student also has ready access to all the resources and experiences at the International Peace Palace [Permanent Court of Arbitration, Peace Palace Library, etc.].
I also was very happy with particular student organizations here. While I was not a full-member of these, I received many of the similar benefits. In particular, this included English language lectures from prominent journalists or government representatives along with a roundtable event which involved diplomats from over 25 state embassies. During this latter event, students had a chance to meet intimately in small groups with various diplomats, discussing issues that are of specific importance to the individual countries. This was particularly appropriate for my interests and goals as I find myself professionally interested in the diplomatic and political world. I know of no other location other than Leiden which has such a unique program to fully utilize the rich international resources in its backyard.

Another important goal was to gain exposure to other international legal systems. The course offerings, such as Chinese Law, Indonesian Law, and African Law, certainly met this goal in the academic sense. This goal was further supported by the student population. Leiden has an extremely strong and established ESN program which brings in student’s from all over Europe for the study of law. The English language classes served as the lingua franca of all these students and thus each class was composed of some ambitious Dutch students along with a very high percentage of international students. The professors would often call on particular students, whose background might be relevant for the day’s discussions, and in this way all of us were exposed to multiple international legal systems. Then, of course, time spent outside of the classroom is with these same students and the discussions often continued in this way.
I would say that my goals and ambitions for studying at Leiden were fulfilled and I would recommend it for other BUSL students looking to gain serious exposure to diverse international law issues.

I would also note that until Leiden switches to the semester schedule, I believe Fall 2006, BUSL students will likely continue to take their 4 classes only in the second trimester. This trimester runs from about January until mid to late April. Thus, these evaluations would be more timely and less repetitive if the due dates were early to mid-February for the mid-year report and mid-April for the full-year report. Thanks again for providing the opportunity to study at Leiden University, I gained immensely from it.
FINAL Study Abroad Report

Leiden, The Netherlands

Courses

*European Migration Law*
This was a lecture course and grades were based on three, five-page papers. For each paper, we had to take a position in a hypothetical case as a state, the court, or an applicant for immigration into a European Union country. On the days the papers were due, we had mock trials in which the state and applicant read their opinions and the court issued a ruling. These sessions were entirely moderated by the court (students) and the professor would offer his thoughts on the subject at the end. The topics covered were asylum and family reunification and we dealt primarily with jurisprudence from the Court of Justice for the European Communities (ECJ).

*European Protection of Human Rights*
This was by far my favorite, despite the hefty reading load that averaged 100 pages per class. The course was co-taught by two lecturers – a legal philosopher and a human rights law practitioner. Each of them brought a different perspective to the course and had distinctly different teaching styles. The course reading was case law from the European Court of Human Rights and each class we read cases interpreting a different article of the European Convention on Human Rights.

*Law and Governance in Developing Countries*
This class contained students with both law and social science backgrounds and is the least “law-type” course I took. We concentrated mostly on case studies in developing countries written by rule of law practitioners instituting legal reform programs. Coursework included a (incredibly difficult) final exam and a group paper and presentation on different areas of legal reform. My group examined solutions to three core problems identified with legal reform projects in Russia and Eastern Europe. If I had to choose my courses all over again, I would have avoided this one. It was a little too theoretical and unsettling as a field of study for my taste, but others may certainly enjoy it.

*Political and Legal Philosophy: The European Tradition*
A fantastic professor who peppers his lectures with witty anecdotes teaches this course. Overall, we examine the roots and present status of European identity. The course requires brief weekly response papers to questions he poses at the end of class and a final paper, 15 pages in length, on any topic we addressed in the course. This class was pure enjoyment and I am really happy I took it, if only to hear what the professor had to say every class.

Living arrangements
I lived alone in a studio apartment that cost 650 euro/month. This was ideal for me, but might not work so well for everyone since study abroad can feel really isolating. The building I lived in is 50% student housing, however, so there was no shortage of visitors. While I ended up really enjoying my time in Smaragdlaan, I would avoid living there again at all costs. The building is not well kept – despite the facts that the apartments are
great – and it was located outside of the city center (about a 10-minute bike ride from school).

Finding a place to live is incredibly difficult in Leiden. I found my room through SLS Wonen (the short stay company that works with the school). Roofs is a good option if you can find something. While most people do find something either before they arrive or shortly after, there are stories of people living in hotels or crashing at a different houses for long periods of time. One caveat with SLS Wonen is that their lease periods are typically longer than desired. For example, in the fall semester they require a lease until January 31 of the next year. This might not be a problem for people coming in the spring who will have a place to keep their stuff while they travel. For people returning to the US in December, the longer lease is a bit of a pain (although I was able to get out of paying for January). The longer period is to accommodate the actual length of Leiden’s fall semester. While exams are scheduled to take place before Christmas, re-takes are offered in January, so the semester doesn’t actually end until January 31. If you do try through SLS Wonen, Hugo de Grootstraat is the location closest to the law school and is located in a really picturesque part of town. The rooms might be more expensive than other places you might find, but nothing is as pricey as Boston.

Travel
In conjunction with my human rights law class, I took a group study trip to visit the European Institutions. The weeklong trip cost 190 euro and started in Strasbourg, France where we visited the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights. After two days in France, we went to Luxembourg where we visited the European Court of Justice and sat in on oral arguments for a case. The trip ended with a visit to Brussels, which is the main seat of European Parliament. I believe the trip will take place next fall and will follow a similar itinerary. That trip was by far the best experience of my trip abroad.

I would seriously recommend traveling as much as possible throughout Holland itself. The country is beautiful and even though it is small, there is quite a bit of regional diversity. Utrecht was by far my favorite city.

Other info
There is a very active international student organization that organizes multiple activities every month – from ice-skating to trips to Amsterdam to go to the movies. They also organize a weekly gathering at a pub called Einstein’s, so there are plenty of opportunities to meet and hang out with other international students. Leiden is small, but it offers a great opportunity to get to know it well, which I always appreciate. Amsterdam and The Hague are only short trains ride away.

Finally – GET A BIKE!!!! It makes life so much easier and you’ll have great legs when you get back. Plus, you can bike to the ocean in about a half an hour from Leiden.
LEIDEN: Overall Experience

My overall experience studying abroad in Leiden was superb. I cannot overstate how the experience there colored my law school career, and I imagine will impact my entire life. My time in Leiden can best be separated into three areas: academic, professional, and personal goals, each of which provided me with unique experiences, challenges, understandings, and appreciation.

Academic goals

My initial reason for choosing to apply to study abroad in Leiden was due to its reputation regarding the study of public international law. Very early on, I realized that I wanted to get the best education possible from Leiden University; for me that meant petitioning to take Masters level classes in L.L.M. programs. This was not an easy task, as prior BU students as well as students from other American law schools were only enrolled in the Bachelors level classes, and that was customary for the registrar there. After a bit of perseverance and a strong BU interest (towards Leiden's Public International Law programs in particular), we were able to gain enrollment in three of the most interesting legal classes I have taken to date: (a) European Protection of Human Rights, (b) International Criminal Law, and (c) International Dispute Settlement.

Also unique to this experience was the ability to take Masters Classes from two of the different programs offered in Leiden: class (a) is from the Masters in European Law, and classes (b) and (c) are from the Masters in Public International Law. As for the one non-Masters class, it was entitled Law and Governance in Developing Countries and despite its de-emphasis on traditional legal notions, it was an informative and useful look on how laws shape different types of societies, a truly revealing look at global rule of law. Moreover, some of my classes were taught by professors of unmatched reputation and ability—from a former attorney at the International Court of Justice, to one of the foremost scholars in European Human Rights, to the chair of a global institute, these professors were not only impressive, but had a wealth of knowledge to share, and contagious enthusiasm to infect us with.

One of the most memorable moments of my academic times in Leiden was in late November, a week entitled The RIO Trip; where for 5 days, a school field trip organized a group of students to travel to Strasbourg, Luxembourg, and Brussels, to visit and receive presentations from over a dozen European Institutions. From meeting a judge on the European Court of Human Rights, to witnessing a hearing at the European Court of Justice (which, to note, involved translations into over 14 languages on a headset), to learning about the E.U. Parliament, to visiting a former Nazi concentration camp, to visiting NATO’s headquarters, this trip was an unparalleled look at international organizations, institutions, courts, and people. To top it off, every person on the trip wrote a one page report about one of the people or places we visited, and Radhika and I had the distinct pleasure of editing and compiling this “Report,” which was later distributed to all participants and presenters from the trip. Not only was this a truly educational and enlightening trip, but it is forever commemorated by this Report.

Professional goals

1  February 2008
Despite my fondness for learning, choosing Leiden was not just an educational choice. Law school is a professional school, and my career was a significant factor in this journey. Thus, Leiden’s proximity to The Hague and its reputation among scholars and the international community is unmatched and provided for amazing opportunities for those willing to seek them. Luckily, after a summer completing an internship in Geneva, Switzerland, I was more than willing to explore the options that The Hague could present.

Home to the International Court of Justice, the International Court of Arbitration, the International Criminal Court, and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague is the peak of public international law venues. Scholarly talks occurred weekly, research at the ICJ was always an option for Leiden students, and it was especially exciting to see the places where “law in action” occurred.

For me, my professional goals were most influenced by an internship with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. I worked for the Office of the Legal Adviser, and for seven weeks, I participated in drafting legal opinions and speeches, researching penal codes around the world, and having the opportunity to sit and listen to international meetings with members from over 190 countries discussing various matters. My experience at the OPCW was a significant part of my Leiden experience and my professional path. I look forward to taking the lessons, information, skills, and individuals from this experience into my emerging legal career in public international law.

**Personal goals**

Lastly, Leiden was more than just another law school choice; Leiden ultimately became a statement about life decisions. There, I learned to appreciate the value of personal time, of healthy lifestyles, of helping out fellow students, of exercise, and ultimately, Leiden became a story about balance. I remember law school orientation and the emphasis on balance that BU Law did a great job of pointing out. But in the tower of 765 Comm Ave, I found balance difficult to sustain, and this sentiment was shared by many of my classmates. Conversely, in Leiden, balance was hard to lose sight of. Riding bikes, fresh fruits and vegetables, and the absence of public transportation did wonders for my physical health, while friendships, compelling readings, and support networks enhanced my mental well being and place in the universe.

Being in an international environment, where students shared cultural experiences from India, South Korea, the U.K., Turkey, Lithuania, Germany, and Cyprus (to name a few) helped me understand the difference between cultural chauvinism to interested observation. And Dutch culture and its wonderful people provided insight into dichotomies both familiar and foreign: tolerance vs. acceptance; is immorality really the opposite of morality? do human rights and security have to diverge; are career and life synonymous or forever in tension—these to name a few are some of the social commentaries that formed my experience, not just as a citizen of the United States but as an inhabitant of planet Earth.

To sum up, my experience in Leiden was truly significant. Just to note, negative experiences were small and unremarkable. However, life changing experiences were notable and inspiring.
Study Abroad Final Report
February 3, 2010

This past fall semester I studied at Leiden University in the Netherlands. The program was exactly what I hoped for: it was very international in both student population and course material; it gave me a great perspective on American law and culture; it helped me better understand the practice of international law, and determine whether I would be interested in practicing it myself; and it allowed me to develop relationships with colleagues in a wide variety of legal markets. In short, it was an incredible experience, one that I would recommend to any law student even remotely interested in spending a semester abroad.

The program at Leiden draws students from all over the world, especially Europe. With English as the course language, and English known so well by so much of the world, there was a great variety of nationalities represented in the class. That diversity really affected the atmosphere at the university, especially in our international and comparative law classes. Professors were very conscious of, and interested in, the variety of perspectives of their students. Professors were quick to ask students to compare their own system to the system presented to us. There was a strong focus on Dutch, German, French and British law as our base systems, and comparisons were drawn from there. It surprised me how readily people assumed American law would seamlessly parallel British law—to me there were innumerable differences, but in the scheme of legal systems, I had to admit the differences were small and nuanced. Even in the courses that were not entitled "comparative" law, professors took time to compare to make the concepts relatable for all of their students. I always found that process interesting, and so did my classmates. In comparative tort law, for instance, a German friend of
mine commented to me how silly the French tort system seemed to her, while I had been thinking throughout the same class that the German system seemed a little cumbersome and awkward. In the end, I think this constant exercise in comparative law made me approach international law in a more informed, more analytical way.

The University also makes a great effort to keep this large international group entertained. There were organized events every week, and from time to time there were longer weekend trips to different areas around the Netherlands. This meant that, by the end of the semester, the group had become very tight-knit. One of my goals in spending the semester abroad was to build professional and personal relationships with law students from around the world, and I certainly accomplished that goal.

Through Leiden’s proximity to the Hague, I also had an opportunity to meet and speak to attorneys who are already working in international law and hear about their experiences and opinions about practicing law abroad. Another goal of mine for the semester was to determine whether I wanted to commit myself to practicing international law, so those discussions were influential. Once I was in the Netherlands, I felt much more hesitant about living and working abroad for an extended period of time. Though the idea of living in Europe is exciting, there are drawbacks as well. I found it took moving away to realize some of the implications of being so far from home. For example, there were a number of events in my family, including my sister’s engagement and a cousin’s wedding, that I missed while away. Though my semester was outstanding, it also helped me realize the sacrifices involved in being so many miles away.
Overall, I am incredibly grateful for the experience at Leiden. It gave me a chance to reflect on the type of law I would like to practice, and I had a lot of fun while doing it. I traveled all over Europe: I climbed the Swiss Alps, drank beer by the liter at Oktoberfest in Munich, ate chocolate in Bruges, went clubbing in Budapest, visited a fellow BU Law study abroad student in Paris. It was an amazing semester. I think it also makes me a more attractive, well-traveled, well-informed candidate for any type of job I pursue in the future, and for that I am incredibly grateful as well.