

LONDON MAY TERM UPDATE

Fall 2015

Dear Alumni of the London May term,

Greetings from beautiful Holland. Looking at the construction cranes out my office window reminds me of our time in London. I can't recall any time in the past in which so much renovation and new building was occurring in downtown London. Even our modest lodgings at the Celtic Hotel underwent a significant overhaul. Bathrooms now reside in almost every room.

Once again, we had strong demand for our program, and once again it was difficult to limit the number of participants. We had a wonderful group of fifteen students that displayed the character traits of curiosity and humility that we look for in the selection process. The first three pictures below highlight what we did best—fellowship over meals. We have become convinced that the best teachable moments, and perhaps the best moments overall, are the ones we share with our students while “breaking bread” together. Therefore, the number of group meals scheduled into the program has grown over the years. Desserts have also become mandatory.



Part of the group in the café at Wimbledon



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Eating at an old favorite—Belgo Centraal

We were privileged to have Professor Sarah Estelle co-lead the program this year. Sarah joined Hope three years ago and has been a very welcome addition to the department. This was her first time in London, and we were fortunate to have her husband Aaron join us as well. Sarah is very interested in economics and public policy and how these play out in different contexts and in different countries. She also suggested many new venues for our program, some of which may become

mainstays. One such venue was a tour and history of the Poppy Factory. The Poppy Factory employs disabled veterans to produce all the poppies that are used for memorial events and keepsakes. The workplace and workers were quite a contrast to the visit we had at the Royal Bank of

Scotland the previous day. It is precisely this type of exposure—the wide variety of places and opportunities one can work and serve—that drive the design of our program.

Another trend that has occurred over the last few years is the variety of experiences and locations that our students have ventured forth and “attacked” during their cultural exploration opportunities. This year’s production of *Les Mis*, and the wonderful seats we were able to obtain, piqued the theatrical interest of many of our students. *The Lion King*, *Billy Elliot*, *Matilda*, *Miss Saigon*, *Wicked*, *Jersey Boys*, *Woman in Black*, *War Horse*, and *The Strange Incident of the Dog in the Night* were all musicals or shows that were attended by more than one person in the group. This year also saw several groups on different occasions making their way to visit the town of Dover, the castle, and the white cliffs. Both Sarah Estelle and I made it there as well.



Students making their own poppies



A small piece of the grounds at Dover Castle

Two final thoughts to sum up our letter. First, please remember the Heisler-Muiderman London May Term Scholarship fund. Once again, it provided some much needed funding for three financially needy students. The three recipients were extremely grateful for the support they received and all stated that they would have been unable to attend had it not been for the scholarship money. We invite you to consider supporting this scholarship fund. Checks may be made payable to Hope College with “London May Term Scholarship” on the memo line of the check. We have enclosed a return envelope

should you decide to contribute. All gifts of all sizes will help make this program a reality for deserving students.

Finally, I (Tom) have decided that 2014 was my last year leading the London May term. I have had the privilege of co-leading this program since 2002. My mentor Jim Heisler put up with me and taught me for the first seven years. I was also able to co-lead with some wonderful colleagues—Kim Hawtrey, Brian Porter, Peter Boumgarden, Marty LaBarge, and Sarah Estelle. And, over the fourteen years, I have been able to share the experience with 208 students. As I mentioned to you during the trip, it was through the curiosity and eagerness of my students that continued to make the experience fresh for me each year. As Paul states in his letter to the Philippians, “I thank God in every remembrance of you.”

Cheers,

Sarah Estelle & Tom Smith
Co-Leaders, London May Term 2015