

Sunni Brown

Professor Weathers

MKT 4270

02 June 2023

European Perspectives on Marketing: Final Report

Introduction

On our last big family dinner, Professor Weathers shared with us the process he goes through each year as summer, and the trip for European Perspective on Marketing approaches. He told us that about two weeks before the trip he starts to get feelings of uncertainty of whether or not he should have done the trip again or not but by the end of the first day once we get there, those feelings are gone and he realizes he made the right decision. When he was sharing this experience with us, it really stuck with me because I too, had those feelings of regret and uncertainty at first. Worried that I wouldn't make friends, or make memories – but like Professor Weathers, by the end of the first night I knew I had made the right choice to do this program. The European Perspectives on Marketing course not only exposed me to the numerous opportunities that are available to us beyond the United States, but also helped me find who I am as a person and student. During the two week course we spent a week in London and a week in Paris. We traveled and met with a total of 12 different companies to discuss what they do, how they do it, and challenges they face everyday. It was interesting to learn how they differ from American companies in terms of how they strive to meet customer needs while working their hardest to be culturally aware. Along with the company visits, we also got to tour many different sites as well as a walking tour in both cities. In London, we had the chance to see things like Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, and I even had the opportunity to travel to Stonehenge. In Paris, we toured

the Louvre, Musee D'orsay and a river boat tour where we rode past the Eiffel Tower. This course truly demonstrated to us what international marketing looks like through hands-on experiences and the ability to make connections with people of all different cultures and backgrounds.

British Poultry Council

Our very first company visit was with the British Poultry Council in London. The BPC is a trade association that was founded in 1967 for those involved in the reproduction of poultry meat in the UK. They handle different types of meat such as chickens and turkeys. The council is an unsubsidized sector meaning they must get creative as they receive no funding from the government. Their member business spans the whole supply chain – from farm to fork accounts for nearly 90% of production. This includes integral parts of the production process such as breeding, hatching, growing, slaughter, processing, and packing. Their goal is to provide high quality products at an affordable price.

One of the biggest challenges that the British Poultry Council is still facing remnants of is Brexit. Brexit was happening before and after COVID making it even more difficult to handle. In their presentation they shared with us that they had only 7 days to prepare a new trade agreement with the EU, which was announced right at the beginning of the pandemic. The BPC faced many issues at the border which led to exports dropping significantly and financial loss as there were delays and rejected loads. Now, they are still facing trade issues that are hurting the vitality of British poultry companies. Their biggest goal at the moment is to establish a mutual veterinary agreement with the EU, which would address the structural issues they are facing and allow for smoother trade and less friction at the border. They described it as “leveling the playing field” to make both sides more fair and equal.

Another issue that we saw many of the companies we met with are facing are the effects of COVID-19. For BPC, this looked like many issues such as food shortages and the collapse of the food market all while the demand for chicken only increased. The pandemic affected every part of the supply chain for BPC. However, this only gave the council a new meaning of building resilience into their work. They focused on things such as minimizing supply chain disruptions and how to quickly adjust to an ever changing workspace. They are trying to look at covid as an opportunity to address the national food security issues and use this as a way to leverage their influence on getting people the safe, affordable food they deserve.

The Avian Flu, which is having effects on a global scale is also affecting the British Poultry Council. They are facing the worst outbreak of this strain they've ever seen. Not only does it threaten the national flock, but also puts trade with the EU and other countries in jeopardy. 70% of the world's high value genetic breeding stock derives from the UK and the BPC fears that if they cannot keep up with the trade moving because of the avian flu, they will not be able to feed the world or their own nation.

PLMR

Our second visit was with PLMR, a company founded in 2006 is a fully integrated communications agency with offices in London, Edinburgh, and Cambridge. They deliver timely, impactful, and effective communications to clients including the most challenging and sensitive of briefs. They work in many different segments with departments such as public affairs, PR, crisis management, media training, film and design, and planning communications. We got the chance to hear from a wide array of employees that spread across their many different departments. Along with their effective communications, they also value their philanthropic efforts, one of their biggest being PLMR Education. PLMR works alongside school, academy

trusts, and higher education to raise awareness of their work and to build their brand. One of their best examples is their STEP Academy Trust which works to build PR so more schools will join. They worked with an elementary school in an underprivileged area and brought back a famous soccer player to help build a new soccer field. Along with the education sector, they also work with the public as well as parliament to help influence the decision makers. PLMR also offers their services across the legal, tech, and financial services sectors. They focus on working with multinationals, FTSEs, trade bodies, and disruptor start-ups to deliver results that make an impact.

As a professional services business, they understand that a changing regulatory framework can have a dramatic impact on the profitability and viability of the business. With this being said, a challenge they face is dealing with reputation management. Because PLMR dips their toes in so many different sectors, it is important to prioritize the public perception. Meaning when they work with lobbyists on one campaign for a decision being made by parliament, they must decide how they will situate themselves as this could affect how the public and new/existing customers will view their brand and company as a whole. Because we are in a world now where media spreads faster than we can think, effective communication and strategic thinking are important in order to remain in the positive eye of the public.

Another challenge PLMR is facing is the face of technology that is constantly changing. Whether it be a new social media platform or the emergence of a new piece of technology it can become difficult for PLMR and PR firms as a whole to keep up with this realm that has constantly got something new. It is important that they are able to stay educated on these new topics and harness their ability to be adaptable in order to keep up with the different outlets and

remain relevant. When they are able to do this they can expand their audience and customer pool to beyond just the UK.

British-American Chamber of Commerce

The British-American Chamber of Commerce, which has been in business for over 108 years, advocated for policies between the UK and USA. They focus on trade promotion to make trade promotion as easy as possible. They also focus on issues such as sustainability, diversity, and cyber security. This company is extremely important as millions of Brits work for American companies. With the impact of Brexit, there are some pros as far as their trade policies. The United States and UK have been doing business with each other for a long time meaning they have a very close network. With that being said, the BACC holds many different business forums, educational programs, and networking opportunities for its members. Along with speaking the same language, the US and UK also have similar regulations in some areas which makes it easier to understand the different systems. During their presentation they discussed further the positives of Brexit for the BACC. They have full autonomy on their own policies as they no longer have to follow what the EU says anymore meaning they get to choose what is best for their country and citizens.

While they do have that autonomy, they are still facing issues from Brexit. They have lost out on different trading opportunities as well as strikes due to labor cuts for a lot of medical cuts. These cuts are due to the fact that getting work visas are much more difficult now. Now that the UK has left the EU's single market, they are facing the challenges of trade barriers as they are navigating new tariffs and customs checks. Similar to the BPC, the BACC is facing different supply chain disruptions due to Brexit. With issues at the border and potential delays because of

regulatory checks, the BACC is having to get creative in finding ways to ensure that trade is going smoothly between the US and the UK.

Again on an international level, the exit of the UK from the EU has caused the British-American Chamber of Commerce to face some issues with market access. There were many European businesses that counted on the UK's membership in the EU to help them with marketing strategies and the entering of new markets. They relied on the BACC to expand or maintain their existence in the EU. With this support provided, the BACC was able to connect them with different companies both in the UK and United States to promote trade and investment. However, now that the UK is no longer a part of the EU, they are facing the losses of those potential trade opportunities not only for the UK but also the United States.

Vertex Pharmaceuticals

Vertex Pharmaceuticals, a company with headquarters in Boston and London, is a biotech firm that invests in scientific innovation to create transformative medicines for people with serious diseases. With about 4,500 employees, they have hubs worldwide for different parts of their company. As most of their funding goes into research and development, they focus on the difficult diseases that affect a large part of our population (diseases like Cystic Fibrosis, sickle cell, and type 1 diabetes. Vertex, an international company has been recognized in many different areas for being a respectable place to work. Fortune has recognized them in the top 100 Best Companies to work for as well as #4 on their Best Workplaces in Biopharma list.

We had the opportunity to hear from a Clemson grad himself who has been working with Vertex for a long time. When discussing the issues they have with being an international company, something he brought up that I found interesting were the different cultural contexts they face and different communication barriers. A section that he focused on that we saw in a

different presentation, at P3, was high context communication vs. low context communication. In high context culture – the communication might need a little bit more explanation as to what they mean as different things such as body language and tone attribute to the overall context of what they are trying to communicate. Countries such as Japan and China are examples of countries with high context cultures. On the other hand, low context cultures are more straightforward and explicit as to what they mean. This means there is little left to infer about what they're trying to communicate. Countries like the US, Canada, and even the UK are more low-context cultures. He discussed that since they are an international organization, he and his colleagues have had to learn and educate themselves on how communication works in these different cultures in order to be successful and maintain a positive relationship with their clients.

One of the main diseases the focus on at Vertex is Cystic Fibrosis – a genetic condition that affects a protein found in the human body. Vertex has made a life-changing drug to help with this condition, Trikafta. However they are currently facing backlash as Vertex is unable to make Trikafta available in poorer countries. Governments in countries such as India, Ukraine, and Brazil are working hard in order to push for generics of Vertex's Trikafta in order for patients in these countries to receive this life-saving medication. This is a challenge for Vertex as they're goal is to provide aid and medication for people worldwide and even though they own intellectual property rights for Trikafta, if these international governments were approved for generics – Vertex's profits would suffer (<https://www.vrtx.com/our-company/>).

Premier League

At our visit to London University we had the opportunity to hear from a professor there who is an expert on the highest level of the English football league – The Premier League. Headquartered in London, the Premier League was created in 1992 but started in 1863 with the

formation of the Football Association (FA). It was started by common folk and public schools which had a common set of rules. Today, the Premier League has become one of the most successful soccer leagues known around the world. Because the sport has been present in England for so long, fan loyalty and participation is one thing that comes easy for the Premier League as their attendance has doubled since 1992 giving them almost an 100% occupancy rate for every season. The PL generates the most revenue than any other league in Europe which is largely due to their great salaries and high transfer fees which lead to an overall great quality that beats the other European leagues. On an international level, highest international broadcasting revenues of any European league with a revenue of 1.055 million euros in the 2021/2022 season. Their football stadiums being some of the most modern in the world, gain international attraction that helps bring awareness to their brand.

While this league is extremely successful, they do face some strategic challenges – one of those being club ownership issues. There has been discussion of different club ownership's falling into the hands of international buyers, for example a bid from Saudi for Newcastle United. The professor described this as potentially being an “Achilles Heel” for several reasons such as human rights issues, political involvement, and international law issues. Because of this, the Premier League has made a set of new “Disqualifying Events” which demonstrate the concern for those issues by current club-ownership members.

Another challenge the league is facing is the changing landscape of availability for fans to watch their favorite teams on a screen. While originally games were shown on Pay-per-View, the emergence of different streaming platforms has caused some to worry about the future for the EPL. With the traditional broadcasting services on the outs, it is important that the Premier League must stay educated on what is to come as far as streaming popularity in order to make

sure they're able to keep up and give their fans what they want. While they have made efforts to stay with the changing times, the Premier LEague worries that that traditional sense of watching games that fans love will fade with the increasing popularity of streaming services. It is important to keep in mind that the traditional fans are important but the potential to reach more of an international audience is something to take into consideration with the globalization of our world.

Retail Tour - London

Instead of doing a tour of the Silicon Roundabout we did a West End Retail tour of London with private guides. They showed us how in London, shopping malls are a little different as they have grocery stores other than just clothing or department stores. We had a great example of this as the main road with all the designer and high end shops we walked past were right next to the Whole Foods where we all took a bathroom break! One of the most important parts of the tour was stopping at Liberty's department store which was actually constructed with the measurements of a ship. When we got to look around the shop, we were all in awe of how cute everything was and then we looked at the price tags and understood quite a bit. Our guide told us before entering that it is customary to get lost in Liberty's and not find your way out which held true as we did get stuck on one of the upper floors.

London's West End is known as one of the best shopping locations in Europe with an estimated 9 billion euros spent there every year, meaning it has an international draw. The West End's popularity dates back to the 17th century when it was first built. Being in close proximity to Buckingham Palace and the mansions of aristocracy, it has always been a prime location for the well off to spend their fortunes. Regent Street is one of the oldest and most well known streets in the West End with the world's oldest toy store, Hamleys but no restaurants or bars are

found. Bond Street is where you'll find the most luxurious shops and well known brands like Chanel and Louis Vuitton. Another one of the most famous streets, Oxford Street, is synonymous with high-end retail and often earns the title of "Europe's Busiest Street" as upwards of half a million visitors flock to Oxford Street everyday. However, this street initially started as a home for public hangings, street traders, and prostitutes in the 1700s. It took nearly a century for its turnaround to begin.

While now we saw the streets of West End busy and crowded, COVID did have a negative effect on the regional shops. These shops faced challenges much like the rest of the world due to the fact that customers were no longer allowed to go inside stores and shops and with that came the increase in online shopping. Because rent in the area is so high, when people were forced to shop online rather than giving the brick and mortar stores business, this became a challenge for these stores to keep up with (<https://www.westend.com/shopping/>).

Guided Perfume Tour of Paris/Musée Parfum Fragonard

The private, perfume tour of Paris was a great experience as Paris is known as the city of Perfume (at least that's what our tour guide said!). Throughout the walking tour we got to smell multiple different kinds of perfumes and talk about the scents and how they relate to the perfume industry. The guide shared with us how historically they used a lot of animatic materials like flowers or roots in order to cover up the bad smell streets. Lack of hygiene and illnesses cause the different stench which perfume was used to mask. It was so interesting to me how she purposefully planned out what scents for which stops on our tour. For example, one scent she gave us had a fruity smell that was actually used with fig and we ended up stopping right next to a fig tree which was commonly used for perfume historically. Along with that she told us that often perfumes are made after the commercials to match the commercial, which I found hard to

believe. This is the case for marketing purposes but for some reason I always believed it to be the other way around. Lastly, she shared how difficult it actually is to become a big time professional in the perfume industry and that schooling for it takes 5 years. I was shocked when I heard this thinking that it takes longer than law school!

After the guided tour, we headed to the Musée Parfum Fragonard which first opened in Paris in 1983. The tour throughout the museums follows different perfume tactics and processes from all different cultures with the display of different artifacts. A huge collection of those being from Ancient Egypt to the 20th century with pieces such as pomanders, perfume burners, and kohl pots. Along with ancient pieces they also have unusual and rare finds made by Françoise Costa, a perfumer in Grasse since 1926. One of the rooms featured, the “stills” room which holds photos and archive films that retrace various stages of perfume making and how the trade of it has evolved over the years. The lighting of the different rooms throughout the museum set a precedent and tone for the information we received and how we perceived the artifacts and pieces we were looking at (<https://musee-parfum-paris.fragonard.com/en/museum/>).

European-American Chamber of Commerce

The European American Chamber of Commerce, established in 1926, was created to develop and strengthen the economic relationship between Europe and the US to promote an ongoing dialogue among the major players in this business community. The EACC is not about lobbying but rather networking between Europe and the US. They focus on facilitating growth, supporting fellow businesses, and making those business connections. They are a private, independent, non-profit organization that was founded in Paris as the French-American Chamber of Commerce but in 2003 was turned into the European-American Chamber of Commerce.

Within their company they are broken into different committees. A few of those include the tax committee which analyzes French law, the intellectual property committee that organizes conferences for member companies on the various regulations, the working group which focuses on HR talks about trends in France and internationally which their latest recommendations, and lastly the transatlantic tech working group which enables their members to expand their business across the atlantic. They focus specifically on the tax and legal issues to starting a business in the US.

A huge challenge that the EACC faces are the cultural and language barriers present between all the different countries and cultures that make up their company. While members that are also a part of the EU work under one single market, that does not account for different societal norms, legal systems, and business practices. They face the challenges of overcoming these differences and working to educate themselves in order to network as best as possible and make as many connections as possible. If not, becoming a successful, international business becomes much more difficult.

World Trade Center - Paris

During our presentation with the World Trade Center - Paris, they gave us a look into the main breakdown of successfully being a part of the French Market. I found this presentation interesting as it gave us a different perspective as to what it takes in order to be successful in this market and direct steps that are important factors. First he talks about the utilization of the french language and how french people as a whole are evolving as far as learning a second language but it still remains an issue. With this being said, buyers or managers may speak English but most of them will prefer to negotiate in French. The presenter told us that it is important to hire someone who can speak French for this part in order to establish a positive, long-term relationship. He

also talked about “The Buyer’s Profile”, this is something that is highly requested as tens or maybe hundreds of proposals are made per day. However in French culture, it is normal for a lack of response as they’re busy and should not be taken as a negative response. It is important to remain curious and attentive about innovation.

One issue that they have seen affect the French market are the consequences of COVID. With remote work being required for some companies, work organization is looking much different. They were forced to adopt new modes of communication through things like Google Meet or Zoom and there was a greater sense of autonomy for project management as collaboration in the same office was not possible. With the consequences of COVID they also saw a change in lifestyle with the changes in career orientation and key businesses choosing to relocate their industries to France or Europe for goods and services proximity reasons.

Along with the challenges of COVID, as I discussed above the cultural differences can cause some issues for international companies to be successful with entering the French market. If they are not educated on the importance of having someone who speaks French present at business meetings, it is possible that those positive relationships will not be made and neither will the business be successful. Being updated societal norms are also important because for example if a business in the US is trying to do business with a company in France and the US company is worried about the lack of response from the French company (when in reality they’re just busy) this could be a loss on both ends.

ERG Europe

Entrepreneurial Resources Group, or ERG Global was founded in the US in 1997. They are a multidisciplinary team of senior executives that provide companies experts with a proven international and operational track record. ERG is an international company as they have hubs

located in several European countries and in the US. They discussed how their client base consists of large multinational companies, private equity firms, and firms between 50 million and +500 million Euros in revenues. Their project and transition management focuses on the improvement in operational performances, strategic development, and the entry into new businesses and markets. ERG Global is able to differentiate themselves as they're a team of executives where each member is recognized for their effective management leadership skills. Each executive is assigned benefits from the support of the ERG Core Team during the whole length of the mission. The involvement of the executive is associated at the beginning during the diagnosis phase of their process.

Some examples of companies that use ERG are huge companies like Louis Vuitton, Good Year, and Honeywell meaning they cater to clients at an international level. Their experience with cross-cultural management in situations or crises still takes into account all their partners associated with their missions. Also, even though it was founded in the US, they have many different hubs located in Europe like the one in Paris.

Like most of the other visits, ERG Global has endured challenges from the effects of COVID. They've had difficulties finding the right fit of companies that need their services while also struggling keeping up with the different country regulations and cultural barriers. However they use their international status to learn from each other and help different businesses globally through crises in order to strengthen their industry.

France Assureurs

France Assureurs is a part of the insurance sector at both the European and international level. They value letting the individual decide how much risk they want covered. As far as on a global scale, this market is fifth in the world market and first in the EU with 240 billion euros in

insurance premiums. The France Assurers is a group of 247 insurance and reinsurance companies that cover 99% of the market. They are headquartered in Paris as it is the “central metropolis” with key advantages such as being at Europe's geographical center meaning fast international air and rail connections as well as the heart of France's economic, political, and financial center. Because this is an international company, France Assureurs works to participate in discussions about global insurance and be a voice for French insurance on a global scale.

The presenter discussed how natural disasters aren't as big of an issue in France, but he said the pandemic became a big challenge as they were unable to ensure everyone. Because the pandemic led to a widespread of business closures, that came with many policyholders filing claims for their financial losses. This was difficult for the FA as this increase in volume was a challenge to keep up with and accurately assess their coverage. This also involved creating new policies and claims for COVID-19 related issues that were not simple to create especially in the unprecedented times where businesses were not in the office and isolation was so common.

After hearing about the background of their organization, we then heard from an employee of their public affairs department and what direction they were wanting to take their company in. On an international level, they are focused not just on European affairs but also beyond that to maintain on an international level. They shared with us their department's missions and levers of influence. First, they want to strengthen the Federation's international visibility and consolidate their presence with national authorities on international issues. They also want to strengthen their visibility of the department internally while staying educated on trends in order to compete with others and maintain client relationships.

P3 Group

Our last visit was with P3 Group, an independent and global management consulting company that was founded in 1996. With over 1800 employees and 17 different subsidiaries they cover a wide range of industries spanning from IT & media, to banking, to aerospace. They offer software solutions at attractive conditions through nearshoring excellence centers. Their services have been in Europe since 2019. They shared with us that they follow their values forever and try to align every-day centered around their most important value: “we place customers at the heart of our organization”. Something interesting that I appreciated about their presentation was when they brought up SMART goals and how they use them in their everyday jobs. I appreciated this because I’ve learned about SMART goals since high school so seeing something I have learned actually be applicable in the workplace gives me confidence in what I am learning and further affirmed what I am interested in.

When it comes to facilitating international business, P3 stood out to me because they really value making sure their international clients are comfortable during business meetings. They do this by ensuring that someone that understands their language and culture is assigned to their project in order to ensure that things run smoothly. For example, they had a project with a German company, so they assigned one of their German employees to the project which made for a more positive relationship and for communication to be easier. This interested me because I myself am bilingual in Spanish and could envision myself in a position like that being able to help people while still creating and consulting.

P3 has 17 different locations across the globe to cater all of its different customers and clients. The expertises and employees are directed to their clients current needs and their branches. While their main focus is the energy and automotive industry, they have a wide array to their portfolio as I discussed earlier. They use the globalization of technology to their

advantage to collaborate with many different branches across the globe to make sure their clients are getting exactly what they deserve (<https://www.p3-group.com/en/about/>).

Tower of London

One of the last things we did in London all as a group was visit the Tower of London. The Tower of London was designed originally as an important fortress, palace, and prison built by William the Conqueror, but it has also been home to the Royal Armouries and the Crown Jewels. Some very important royals such as Edward I, Henry VIII, and Queen Elizabeth I have stayed or lived at the Tower. They used the Tower in times of trouble to protect their possessions and themselves. Along with being a palace and place of protection, the Tower was also a prison for over 800 years. Some prisoners stayed for days and others, unfortunately for years.

One of the most fascinating parts of the Tower to me when touring, was the section on “royal beasts” that showed the range of wild and exotic animals that were kept in the Tower for over 600 years. One of those beasts being King Henry III polar bear that was tied to a long rope so it could go fishing in the Thames. Because the animals were exotic, they often had to make long and dreadful journeys in order to reach the Tower. The zoo inside the Tower drew in an international audience as many wanted to come explore and see the royal beasts for themselves.

I enjoyed this activity because it showed a different aspect of how much depth the British monarch's history has. Rather than just where their government works or where the royals get married, we get a deeper look into their history of how interesting they were. Whether it be their moats with awful smells or their inhumane zoos it was a different experience and perspective. I had no idea the Tower of London existed until this tour but I'm very glad we got to experience it. Walking through each spiral staircase or hallway was an interesting look into their lives that we hadn't got the chance to do before

(<https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/the-story-of-the-tower-of-london/#gs.14lkjp>).

Walking Tour of Paris

After getting off the train from London, we started our time in Paris with a walking tour. From the beginning, we could immediately tell the difference in architecture between the two cities. Especially with a river flowing right through Paris, the streets were a lot more sharp edges and clear corners with big bridges over the river. We got to see and learn about Notre Dame and what the restoration process has been like since the fire. Fortunately, I had the opportunity years ago to visit and tour Notre Dame and even go up to where the gargoyles are located so seeing it like it is now, was a different experience. One of my favorite parts of the tour was when we first entered the courtyard of the Louvre. I am still taken back when I go back and look at the videos and pictures of the immaculate structure and its immense size. Again like in London, I am unsure how they were able to build something like that, that long ago.

This walking tour was meaningful to me because it was interesting to see what I remembered from Paris from the first time I visited. I didn't remember much about the first visit but after our week there the memories began to come back. It was also my first opportunity to compare the two cities from my experiences. With where our hotel was situated in London, it felt like we were in a neighborhood that felt comfortable. On the other hand in Paris, it felt more busy and crowded which took some getting used to. It was also interesting getting used to the language differences. While the metro system was easier to use in Paris, we were unable to read some of the signage. I really appreciated this tour because it gave me a sense of what type of aspects I enjoy about one location from another.

Musée d'Orsay

Our last cultural activity on the trip was visiting the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. When I told my parents we were visiting they were very excited for me as they said this was their favorite museum in Paris. Once we entered the museum, it was interesting to see how they had divided up the different sections of artwork. Mostly everyone I feel like in our group was interested in seeing the Van Gogh's and the Monet's, but I found my personal favorite piece to be "Le Château des Papes" by Paul Signac. I really enjoyed this painting because of its bright colors. I found that a lot of the paintings were dark or muted colors but this one was full of bright blues, purples, and oranges which is more my style.

I appreciated this trip because other than the British Museum this was the only other museum we visited. I enjoyed being able to look at the paintings and wander at my own pace as I felt that the rest of the trip was constantly something new (which I also loved). I was just a different change of pace. It was interesting because I feel like art museums are not something super common where we live in the South but I do enjoy art so being able to go to these museums made me appreciate it more. Lastly, it made me feel a little more connected to my parents even though they were so far away as that was their favorite museum that I was also able to enjoy.

Walking Tour of London

The first thing we did, as soon as we arrived in London, was a walking tour of the city. While at first I was jet lagged and cranky, this ended up being one of my favorite things we did on the trip. I had never been to the UK before and before this trip, I had no desire to ever visit London either. However I think after these two weeks, our group collectively decided that while both cities were amazing, we preferred London! After walking off the metro and seeing the amazing site of Big Ben and the Parliament building for the first time, it was truly an astonishing

feeling. I am still shocked that they were able to build such gigantic, intricate buildings that far back in history. Our tour guide started off with a small history lesson of how parliament came to be and how it currently works. We then moved on to a garden that paid tribute with statues of different important, international leaders including Gandhi and even Abe Lincoln.

Next we walked by Westminster Abbey which is the beautiful church where the coronations and royal weddings have taken place for centuries. After that we headed through St. James' Park where she told us how most of the green parks we see now were actually once hunting grounds for different royals. Our walk through the park eventually led us to Buckingham Palace – which was quite magnificent. I was shocked to learn that despite their popularity, the monarchs actually have no power. While the King does meet with the Prime Minister once a week, the Prime Minister does not have to take any advice the King provides. Moving on from Buckingham Palace we reached the home where the King currently resides and she shared with us the history of the Queen's Guards and what their distinguishing feathers mean. It was fascinating to learn that wherever the King is residing at the moment, his flag will be raised. So for example, when I toured Windsor Castle, his flag was raised meaning he was staying there that day.

I found this activity so meaningful because it made me realize just how different US history is from not only UK history but European history in general as most of their history consists of different monarchs and reigns. It was so interesting to see how much longer their country has existed and how different their historical architecture looks from that in the US. I also feel like this really gave us a good look into London and I appreciated the guide because she kept it interesting with different stories of historical drama or fun facts about whatever site we were visiting. This activity was also meaningful to me because it was the first one we did as a

group. I only knew my roommate before coming on this trip but this walking tour really gave us the opportunity to meet people in a less awkward setting because we were constantly moving around and seeing new things.