AMSTERDAM & LONDON
KARINA BARRETTO

Program: CIEE Comparative Public Health Systems, Summer

Karina’s Majors: Pharmacology & Toxicology; Biology; Global Health Certificate

Academic Life: The program was divided into two halves, each centered around learning about the Public Health System of the country. The Amsterdam course was taught by a doctor with a PhD in Medical History. In addition to lectures, we learned from guest speakers such as a drug policy specialist and doctors who perform euthanasia. We also visited a hospital, a mental health facility, and government-funded clinics. We learned not only about the ins and outs of the Dutch system, but also about how their policy works hand-in-hand with their culture. The London course was taught by a professor with a PhD in philosophy. We focused more on the future direction and the philosophy behind the NHS. We also visited a hospital, an NGO focused on aiding the creation of effective health policies, and a former operating theater! The other students in the program were from different universities all across America, making for great discussions comparing the systems of all three countries.

Advice for Someone Considering this Program: The Dutch approach to health and health care is so refreshing and is something that you cannot understand fully without immersing yourself in their culture. It is so different learning policy and practice on paper compared to understanding how and why policies work within a certain population. In London, it was intriguing to see a policy so different from America’s work in a culture that felt not all too different from home. This program really gives you a great sense of the necessity to take into account culture when considering something as objective as medicine and health care.

How Study Abroad Sets you Apart: I now have an incredible appreciation for the role culture plays in health care and health care policy. I also pay more attention to the nuances that culture creates in a population’s needs and capabilities in regards to health care.

“’This experience has widened the scope of where my future can take me.”

Karina with one of the many canals in Amsterdam in the background.