If you never return to the same place or project again, is there one lesson you learned about improving the health and well-being of humans, non-human animals and/or the environment that you could transfer to another setting?

To me, the one take away lesson from this experience was that education is the best way to improve health and well-being of humans/animals/environment. People may be completely unaware that an action they do has harmful effects on other people, animals, or the environment, and all it would take is education to reduce the impact of these effects. In most cases, people don't WANT to harm others, and a small amount of education about what they are doing could help prevent these health issues all together.

How did your study abroad program fit with your academic plans?

This program was a quick one-week summer course, shortly after spring finals ended. The timing was perfect as I had no other academic or professional conflicts this early in the summer. My main interest in this field course was the algae aspect, as I am interested in aquatic conservation and ecology...other larger components were lead poisoning and speaking with several different professionals about issues regarding the Madison lakes. Furthermore, the wide range of professionals we spoke to over the five day course opened my eyes to all of the career possibilities that exist in the field of public and environmental health that I didn't necessarily know even existed.

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Describe what the academic and classroom experience (if any) was like on this program.

Field experiences dominated classroom time in this course which helped dramatically in keeping students engaged and interested. There was a classroom/learning component for most of the stops we made, but we spent a significant amount of time doing hands-on learning and seeing what it's really like to be out in the field and working with others. We learned about the many management and educational techniques of solving these public/environmental health problems, and how we might be able to start a career in any of these fields. In the instance of the Dane County Landfill visit, we were able to see first hand the amount of effort that goes into waste removal, disposal, and long term storage which make a landfill an incredible resource (which we usually see as a problematic pile of trash). Hearing first hand from professionals really helps understand how much thought and effort go into these health initiatives and opens up your opportunities to things you might be interested in.

Do you think having participated in this program makes you more prepared for a career in public health? Some other career?

While this not only opened my field of view of what careers are possible within public and environmental health, it also helped me connect with professionals in my career field who are doing very similar things to what I wish to do. I have since been in contact with one of the professionals we met, and am getting involved in volunteering and hopefully a summer internship with their organization.