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Joseph Bergson, Postgraduate Study trip to Delhi

Joseph Bergson (MSc International Development) reflects on his experiences during the **Postgraduate Study trip to Delhi (/schools/government-society/teaching/enhancing-student-experience/postgraduate-study-trip-delhi.aspx)** . Each year, a group of Masters students from across the School of Government and Society are given the opportunity to travel to Delhi, India, to take part in a week-long international module entitled 'Traditional and New Security Challenges: South Asia in Global Perspective'.

"Having worked briefly in Nepal I have an interest in the region. The security and post-conflict elements of the course fitted well with other modules which I am taking this year. I wanted to take lectures with the UK academics involved in the course as I knew they were really good. Also the chance to visit Delhi and take part in a module involving Delhi and Melbourne students seemed like a very exciting opportunity.

This experience changed the whole trajectory of my masters study. I really enjoyed taking part and the focus of the course towards South Asia and the perspective of the Indian students as well as location on the Delhi University campus all together made for a very different type of module from others I have studied this year. The week in Delhi, outside of classes, also had a profound effect on my outlook towards my studies and threw up a lot of questions for me about what development and modernisation means in different parts of the world.

The module was very different from others I have taken, firstly because it is intensive and so a lot is crammed into a short space and a lot of time needs to be set aside before-hand to prepare for the whole course. It was great to have students from all over the world (but from three very distinct university systems), the class discussions were dynamic and people did not necessarily hold the opinions that I may have expected prior to the module. We took part in group projects that meant that we had to work formally and informally outside of lesson hours to manage a presentation on security in a specific country. This enabled us to work very closely with students from the other universities.

I found that in both class discussions and group work the level of knowledge from everyone on the course was very high and it felt really great to be among outspoken and clever people! The additional parts of the course also set it above others classes I have taken. We had extra speakers from an Indian strategic think-tank and we attended a lecture by a visiting Indian scholar on America, Imperialism and Terrorism; this was a compelling presentation in a fresh format to what I am use to – this gave interesting insights into how security studies is seen and taught in India. Furthermore the lectures taught by the Indian faculty were brilliant. We had a gender talk by an Indian academic who was very inspirational. Talks on nuclear weapons in the region and terrorism were also captivating. One of these lectures was conducted by a retired Indian army commander and this was a very different point of view from lectures on other modules and he reflected experiences of his position that gave rare insight into the military side of international relations.

The most enjoyable aspect of the module was India itself and the exposure to intense cultural experiences inside and outside the classroom.

I would advise anyone taking this module to prepare well beforehand so that you can have as much free time in Delhi as possible on this whistle-stop trip! But also to come at it with an open attitude to discussing conceptions of security and development and expect to have your assumptions and preconceptions challenged. Finally I would say, although there is a culture shock, it is best to relax and be adventurous in exploring Delhi. Of course be careful, but a trust in – not fear of – the people and culture goes a long way. India is beautiful, colourful and welcoming and even for such a short trip it will strongly impact your view of the world!"

More information about the Postgraduate Study trip to Delhi (/schools/government-society/teaching/enhancing-student-experience/postgraduate-study-trip-delhi.aspx)
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