From March 6 to March 10, thirteen ASU students attended Washington Week in Washington, D.C. Each day of this trip had a theme regarding international leadership and policy, which teaches the cohort valuable lessons that could be applied in their career postgraduation.

In the International Affairs and Leadership MA program, students are given the annual opportunity to attend this week-long event of networking, professional activities, and training. This year, thirteen students embarked on the trip, namely, Jonathan Andropoulos, Yarusa Azariah, Austin Bennett, Kimberly Curry, Juan Sebastian Fragozo, Sean Gallagher, Shannon Kammerer, Jorge “JR” Lopez, Emily Muller, Skylar Swartz, Joshua Solorzano, Tara Toone, and Brian Valenzia Arvizu. These individuals are based all across the United States and joined together at the capital for an immersive group experience.

The first day of the itinerary kicked off on a Monday, where the cohort formally introduced themselves to each other and engaged in a leadership building activity as depicted in the picture below. Afterwards, they took a walk through the capital’s monuments, which included memorials dedicated to Jefferson, Lincoln and FDR. The students were led by Ambassador Michael C. Polt and Lieutenant General Benjamin C. Freakley, who focused the tour on character-driven leadership and foreign policy. Ambassador Polt is the standing ASU Ambassador-in-Residence.
at the LDNS Lab, and prior to that served as the Senior Director at the University's McCain Institute for International Leadership. As for L.G. Freakley, he is currently the Professor of Practice of Leadership for ASU, as well as the Special Advisor to ASU President Michael Crow for Leadership Initiatives.

The following day, the group’s lessons focused on human rights and security. They partook in a diplomatic security leadership training exercise, followed by a tour of the Holocaust Museum. Dr. Jake Newsome led the group, discussing the topic of “Responding to Crisis: Information, Agency, and Responsibility”. Dr. Newsome has a PhD in History from the University at Buffalo (SUNY), and is the standing manager of Civic Learning for Campus Communities at the Museum. After the tour, the group attended talks hosted by Dr. Sean Kirkpatrick and Ambassador David Scheffer. Dr. Kirkpatrick has a PhD in Physics and is currently the Chief Scientist at DIA’s Missile and Space Intelligence Center. He presented on the “Role of the Intelligence Community”.

Ambassador Scheffer followed up with his talk on “War Crimes Accountability”. He is currently a Senior Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations from Washington D.C., and currently teaches the “International Human Rights” course (LAW 709) through ASU’s School of Politics & Global Studies. He is also a new member of the LDNS Lab, focusing his work on building out our national security portfolio.

Wednesday was a day full of briefings and guest speakers that revolved around international diplomacy and development. Ambassador Juan Carlos Pinzon, the former Ambassador of Colombia to the US from 2015-2017 and 2021 - 2022, opened the series of talks with a presentation on democracy.

Following that were guest speakers Mr. Ryan McElveen of the Brookings Institution, Mr. Nitin Madhav of USAID, Brenden Verma of UNIC, and Nick Callender of the World Bank. They each went over the general career experience of their respective institutions, giving the students the chance to envision potential career paths at one or more of these organizations.

Come Thursday, the cohort toured the Capitol building and attended a briefing at the Embassy of Ukraine. They learned about Congress and the ongoing affairs happening in Ukraine. The students were guided by Katya Smagliy, an ASU World Innovator. Smagliy has also been serving at the U.S. Embassy of Ukraine since 2022, and was the former Director of the Kennan Institute Kyiv Office. On Friday, the final day of programming, students attended a final briefing at USIP Friday’s lessons focused on peace and conflict resolution, so Mona Yacoubian presented the cohort a presentation on current events taking place in the Middle East. Afterwards, the group had their farewell brunch at Founding Farmers before splitting ways.

Learn more about Washington Week at https://spgs.asu.edu/ial/washington-week.