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Recommended Citation

Prabhakar, Sid, "Spring 2009, Experienceing a Trans-Atlantic version of the U.S. election" (2009).
International Educator: the Newsletter of the UNH Global Engagement Editorial Board. 67.
https://scholars.unh.edu/international_news/67

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Center for International Education

Spring 2009

EXPERIENCING A TRANS-ATLANTIC VERSION OF THE U.S. ELECTION

by Sid Prabhakar '10

Economics major Siddharth Prabhakar from Bedford, NH, is spending the year studying at the London School of Economics.



Sid Prabhakar '10 took a break from his studies in London to visit Rome.

About half way through the month of October, just a few short weeks after arriving in London, I checked my mail and saw, to my great surprise, a letter from the State of New Hampshire. I rushed back to my room and opened the envelope to find the greatest piece of mail I've received all year: My presidential absentee ballot. Within hours I had found a black marker and filled in my choice for president. It was indeed a momentous occasion, as it was my first presidential election, but I couldn't help feeling sad that I had left the US in the year of what could be the biggest and most important presidential election ever. Little did I know how involved I would be.

The day I received my ballot, I happened to mention this great news to my flatmate, Simon, a British student from just outside of London, and the ensuing conversation was really quite amazing. Being a political science student, he was very interested in the U.S. elections, not only because of the historical significance, but also because of its political, economic and social impact on the world. Our discussion ranged from

economic recovery to President Obama's big health care ideas to Senator McCain's choice of running mate to our collective anticipation of what could be a landmark era in U.S. and world history. This conversation made me realize how incredibly involved the rest of the world was in our elections and how much fun it would be to experience this election from across the Atlantic!

My school, the London School of Economics (LSE), being the politically minded school that it is, took full advantage of the enormity of the situation, hosting myriad public lectures on election-centered topics. The student body was alive with debate and discussion, similar to the one I had with my flatmate. This fervor, for an election taking place in a foreign country, climaxed on election night, when the results-watching party was packed with as many British students as American. Being a predominantly pro-Obama campus, the excitement was electric when it was officially announced that Senator Obama was now President-elect

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Obama – almost 5:00 a.m. GMT!

It was incredible to see how invested these British students were in our U.S. election and it made me realize how internationally minded and aware they were. I do admit that the students at the LSE are more motivated, academically and otherwise, than the average student, so my insights into British society might be slightly skewed. However, I still get a sense that in these students, and perhaps in this society as a whole, there is an inborn interest in and desire to know about the world and what goes on in it. It's this, among many other reasons, which makes me so glad I picked the London School of Economics to spend my year abroad.

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