

It's a pleasure and an honor to be addressing all of you on this momentous occasion. It is also such a relief to be standing here today, able to finally say "Phew, we made it. The thesis is finally over." That's not to say that I'm not sad to see my time at AGS come to a close. No, on the contrary. These past two years have been an amazing time for personal growth and self-discovery. The fact that our campus lays against the beautiful *and diverse* backdrop of Paris has provided for the optimal environment in which to study International Relations and Diplomacy.

While studying diplomacy, we learn that tact and diplomacy are skills centered on an understanding of other people and the ability to be sensitive to their opinions, beliefs, ideas and feelings. One of the benefits of getting an education at AGS is the exposure we get to so many different opinions, beliefs, ideas and feelings. AGS is truly an international school. We have students coming from literally all over the world. For me personally, being a student of IR, having so many countries and regions represented among my fellow classmates and professors has expanded my mind and has made me think about the world in so many new ways. One of my favorite classes that I took while at AGS was a course on American Foreign Policy, co taught by Dr. Ruchi Anand and Ambassador Lawrence Cannon. As an American, going into that course, I thought to myself, I've already taken US foreign policy courses several times from high school to undergrad. What more could I have to learn? Boy was I wrong. I actually ended up being one of only two Americans in a class of about 15 students taught by an Indian professor and a Canadian ambassador. My fellow classmates were equally diverse in their backgrounds and opinions on US foreign policy. We tackled intense issues and had some pretty interesting debates. I came out of the class having seen American foreign policy from a completely different perspective. This is just a small example of how an education at AGS is a different experience from any other university.

AGS has also provided us with a lot of opportunities. It is very special circumstance to be among so many professors and staff members that go so far out of their way to help their students. Everyone here is devoted to our success and I have seen that first hand with all the help I received in trying to find various research topics, internships and just general life advice. AGS provides countless networking opportunities with the wine and cheese night, the student conference, and other AGS

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hosted events. We've had the opportunity to meet and mingle with some very important people in the field of international relations including ambassadors, film makers, various heads of non-governmental organizations and other international organizations. One of my favorite events that I attended was the discussion that took place after the election this last fall of the new American president. The house was packed, almost everyone was there including professors, students, staff members, and even members of the public. Everyone was there for different reasons whether that was due to shock, curiosity, disbelief, or to just to brag that he knew from the very beginning what the outcome of the election would be. Regardless, we were all able to come together to figure out this means for the United States and the implications it may have for us. It was a really special and unifying moment; we were all looking for answers and we were able to go to AGS to find them, along with some really good cheese.

On behalf of myself and my classmates, I would like to take a minute to thank all the staff and faculty members who have contributed their time and hard work in helping us to reach this day. They are our advisors, our mentors, and our friends. Not only were every one of my courses here at AGS enlightening, engaging, and intellectually stimulating, I would leave the classroom knowing that our professors were truly passionate about teaching us. Thank you for the discussions, thank you for providing us with interesting and challenging material. Thank you for grading our papers and exams and for answering our *very* late night (sometimes stress induced) emails (looking at you Professor Anand!). Our professors have provided us with the tools that will help make us successful in whatever we decide to pursue in the future.

Thank you to the wonderful staff members who make sure AGS is able to function. Your warm and welcoming smiles were always encouraging especially in the most stressful of times. From the very beginning, I've felt supported and guided for everything, from visa issues, personal problems or just handling stress. Their support was absolutely vital to our success.

To my classmates: It has truly been a pleasure sharing the classroom and the city of lights with each and every one of you. Our diverse opinions and backgrounds led to many interesting and sometimes heated discussions in the classroom but without which, our minds would not have been able to grow, so for that I thank you. We've had a lot of fun outside of the classroom as well. I'll always remember our trip to Budapest, the long philosophical discussions in the library (that always seemed to take place right before a final exam or due date when we were supposed to be working), or the intellectually stimulating wine and cheese evenings we shared.

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The vision of the American Graduate School is “Peace through Education”. Eleanor Roosevelt said, “It isn’t enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it. One must work at it.” At AGS, I truly believe that I find myself among the future leaders and thinkers that will contribute towards our quest for peace. During our time at AGS, we have seen a lot of major political events happen. We were here during the refugee and migrant crisis of 2015, as it has continued to today. We were here for the Bataclan attacks in Paris and for all the other terrorist attacks that have happened here in Europe and around the world since. We played witness to the Brexit and the campaigns that preceded Britain’s decision to leave the EU. We were here during the elections for two of the world’s major leaders, President Trump and now President Macron. Being in Paris has allowed us to have a front row seat and formed an integral part of our education. These important and tough events were never ignored here, we embraced them and were able to talk through them in and outside the classroom. Now, more than ever, it is important to take to heart this vision of peace. Equipped with our educations, I know that we will go out into the world and we will, to put it simply, **do good**. We will spread this message of peace through our words as well as our actions wherever the future brings us, whether that be as future diplomats, leaders, humanitarian workers, representatives of the UN, or whatever position we find ourselves in. It has been a pleasure studying alongside all of you and I wish everyone the best of luck as we go forward to the next challenge and that although in the future, I know that we will all be spread across the world, our time and education at the American Graduate School will always unite us.

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