Dr. Rose’s Presidential Field Trip

Gary L. Rose, Sacred Heart University
Dr. Rose’s Presidential Field Trip

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On March 26, students from Professor Gary Rose’s American Presidency course took a field trip to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s home and Presidential Library and Museum located in Hyde Park, New York.
“I really enjoyed the trip, because we were able to physically see where an important American president lived. It was overall an amazing opportunity,” said sophomore Nicole Gemba.

The field trip began with a guided tour of the presidential home, “Springwood”, complete with all original furniture. A National Park Service Ranger led the tour.

“I enjoyed going inside the home and seeing where FDR conducted fireside chats. Those chats were a very important time in history, and that was the first time a president used the media to inform the citizens of the United States of important topics that were occurring in that time period,” said junior Caitlin Isherwood.

After the guided tour, students were allowed to independently tour the presidential library and museum.

“I loved seeing all the letters that had been saved and put on display that adults and children had written to FDR in the museum portion,” said junior Rose Hatch.

The museum recently went through a complete renovation, with brand new exhibits on display.

“The museum took you through every step of FDR’s life from his early days, through his illness, presidency, and death. It was fascinating and remarkable,” said junior Josh Murphy.

One of the highlights of the museum tour was FDR’s personal car located on the bottom level of the museum.

“It was interesting to see the car he actually drove even with his polio. The car was in pristine condition, and it even showed the levers that he used to drive with his hands instead of his feet,” said Gemba.

As America’s only four-term president, the field trip offered students many opportunities to learn further about FDR’s role as president.

“In my presidency class we not only cover all of the presidents, which includes a block on FDR, but we also spend considerable time on the ‘modern presidency’ which came into existence during FDR’s presidency,” said Professor Gary Rose. “For students who want to understand the current scope of a president’s domestic and foreign policy powers, they have to first understand all that transpired under FDR, as it was his presidency which transformed the presidential office into the office that President Obama now occupies.”

Due to the close proximity of the location of the field trip, a two-hour drive, Professor Rose is considering making the trip a mandatory component of his course on American Presidency.

“You can study FDR, his policies, and their effects on the world, but until you know who the man was you can’t really say that you understand the whole picture,” said Murphy. “This trip allowed you to see FDR, not solely as a president, but also as a man.”