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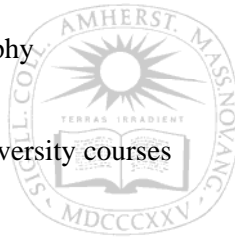
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IRELAND | FALL 2007 STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM EVALUATION

FIRST: Cynthia
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TEL: 413-687-5930
ABROAD_DURING: Fall 2007

PROGRAM: IFSA Butler, University of Limerick

COURSE_#1: conservation ecology
COURSE_#2: sociology of media
COURSE_#3: irish folklore
COURSE_#4: intro to human geography
COURSE_#5: irish music and dance



TYPES_OF_COURSES: Regular university courses

EXPLANATION_OF_COURSES:

COMMENTS_ON_COURSE_WORK: classes were mostly large, with relatively little work to do outside preparing for exams at the end of the semester. the grading system is scaled differently, and people say that it is harder to get good grades than at American universities.

STUDENT_BODY_COMPOSITION: Irish studies classes were mostly Americans, other courses were mostly Irish

COMMENTS_ON_TEACHING: Because classes were larger, there was a lot less personal interaction, but classes usually divided into smaller section weekly, where there was more discussion. the focus in papers was more on recitation of facts and views from other scholars, without the analysis professors demand at Amherst, which i had a little trouble adjusting to. Overall, professors weren't nearly as good as at Amherst--they either didn't seem to be experts in their fields or didn't seem very intersted in teaching, but a couple were pretty good.

ACADEMIC/LANGUAGE_PREPARATION_NEEDED: none.

DESCRIPTION_OF_HOUSING_&_MEALS: I was in Dromroe village, in a single room with a private bathroom, with a living room and kitchen shared with 5 other students. there was no meal plan, so mostly i cooked for myself, but there were several restaurants on campus.

WHO_MADE_HOUSE/MEAL_ARRANGEMENTS: yes, butler.

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LIVING_COSTS: food was about 50 Euro/week

MEDICAL_FACILITIES_AVAILABLE?: yes.

WHAT_PROGRAM_SERVICES_WERE_AVAILABLE?: i didn't find butler very useful after i got to ireland, but i didn't ever need help with anything. before going, it was convenient to deal with them for paying tuition and arranging housing.

HOW_DID_YOU_MEET_LOCALS?: join clubs, take regular classes (not just irish studies).

DID_YOU_EXPERIENCE_DISCRIMINATION?: no, but there was very little diversity.

DID_YOU_TRAVEL?: there were planned excursions with butler and with the UL international students office, but I didn't go on any of them. I did travel on my own and with friends i made there, and there was plenty of time. Travel was convenient and fairly inexpensive.

WOULD_YOU_RECOMMEND_THIS_PROGRAM/UNIVERSITY?: probably not, because the classes were pretty bad, but the campus was nice and ireland was a great country to visit.

SUMMARY: Experiencing another culture first hand is a valuable addition to the things we learn about at Amherst. As a sociology major, i appreciated the opportunity to live with people from another country.



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IRELAND | FALL 2007 STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM EVALUATION

FIRST: Emily
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MAJOR1: History
ABROAD_DURING: Fall 2007

PROGRAM: Trinity College Dublin

COURSE_#1: Semester Start-Up Programme
COURSE_#2: Irish Language and Literature
COURSE_#3: Ireland and the Wider World, 1500-1800: Part A
COURSE_#4: History of Ireland 1800 to the Present

TYPES_OF_COURSES: Combination of program and regular university courses

EXPLANATION_OF_COURSES: During the fall term, I took two regular university courses and one regular university course for foreign students. Prior to the start of term, I was enrolled in the Semester Start-Up Programme for visiting students.

COMMENTS_ON_COURSE_WORK: Trinity runs on a trimester system, so the fall term is quite short: from mid-October through mid-December. The Semester Start-Up Programme for visiting students ran through the month of September, making the term approximately the length of a regular semester.

The grading system was quite different: although the equivalents may vary, a 63% and better was roughly equal to an A-range grade, a 55% and better B-range, and 45% and better C-range. These cutoffs are, I believe, slightly different from what Trinity students are accustomed to thinking of as a First (the highest mark), 2.1, and 2.2, but they're similar. Continuous assessment is gradually becoming part of academic life at Trinity, but grades in most courses are still based on a final exam or one or two large papers.

Classes were, in general, quite a bit larger than those common at Amherst - probably 30-60 in each of my two history classes. Classes were lectures, but usually had tutorials led by grad students once a week or once every two weeks to allow for a bit of discussion. There is very little "assigned" reading - just a syllabus listing between 5-20 books or articles for each lecture that would provide helpful information. It is up to the student to decide how much of that reading to do. For the tutorials, however, students are expected to do the required reading - usually a primary source document and supporting secondary sources.

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STUDENT_BODY_COMPOSITION: Nearly all Americans in the Semester Start-Up Programme, all visiting students (mostly from various European countries) in my Irish Language and Literature course, and a mixture of Irish and foreign students in my history classes.

COMMENTS_ON_TEACHING: The quality of the faculty ranged from disappointing to mediocre to stellar. While faculty members were not generally as accessible as those at Amherst, and some proved impossible to get in touch with outside of class, most of them were quite happy to meet with students during office hours. Unfortunately, a few of my lecturers (each class had several) seemed less than thrilled to be standing in front of a room of students. They all clearly knew their material, but some weren't very interested in actually teaching it. I did have a few amazing lecturers, however, who were so excited to have the opportunity to tell someone about their subjects that it was impossible not to be engaged.

ACADEMIC/LANGUAGE_PREPARATION_NEEDED: If you can handle Amherst courses, you're ready for Trinity. Some of the academic expectations are different - be prepared for some faculty to be looking for a slightly different approach to writing - but that's not too hard to adjust to. However, if you're planning to enroll in history courses, try to get at least some grounding in the basic names and dates of Irish history; the Semester Start-Up Programme helps tremendously in that regard, but if you know the basics going in you'll make things much easier on yourself.

DESCRIPTION_OF_HOUSING_&_MEALS: I lived in on-campus housing, in Goldsmith Hall. My "house" consisted of four single rooms with a shared kitchen/common area.

I was responsible for my own meals, and so ate out occasionally, but more frequently cooked for myself in the house kitchen.

WHO_MADE_HOUSE/MEAL_ARRANGEMENTS: Trinity College

LIVING_COSTS: Accommodation in Goldsmith Hall for the fall term: €1,683, Food: varied week to week, averaged to something around €30 per week; Other living costs, including supplies for the house: somewhere around €200. While I was there, the Euro fluctuated from somewhat less than \$1.50 to slightly more.

MEDICAL_FACILITIES_AVAILABLE?: yes

WHAT_PROGRAM_SERVICES_WERE_AVAILABLE?:

HOW_DID_YOU_MEET_LOCALS?: To get to know people, get involved in clubs and activities: I sang in the chorus. Try to live with Irish people; my housemates were incredibly nice and helpful. To become more familiar with the culture, keep an eye out for cultural events. In my time in Ireland, I went to see a performance of Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, attended traditional music seisiuns, and went ceili dancing. I was on the email list for the Cumann Gaelach, the Irish language society, and the Traditional Music Society, both of which frequently let me know about events that were going on. I also took an Irish language class. For learning about traditional Irish culture and its impact on modern life and arts, I highly recommend the Irish Language and Literature class offered for visiting students by the Irish department.

DID_YOU_EXPERIENCE_DISCRIMINATION?: None that I was aware of.

DID_YOU_TRAVEL?: I went on several planned excursions around Ireland - to the Boyne Valley, Kilkenny, Northern Ireland, and Galway - with my program, in addition to several tours of sites within Dublin. I also was able to travel to France, Scotland, and Wales on my own.

WOULD_YOU_RECOMMEND_THIS_PROGRAM/UNIVERSITY?: I would indeed recommend this program to other Amherst students. For someone interested in Irish history and culture, there's no better place. While some of the professors weren't as good as those at Amherst, most were very good. The Semester Start-Up Programme is incredibly helpful as an introduction to the country and the coursework, and the faculty running it were amazingly supportive. The opportunities to explore a beautiful and interesting country were wonderful.

SUMMARY: What I learned this fall will certainly help me write my thesis, in which I'm hoping discuss the history of the Irish language as a political issue. Living on my own in a foreign city for a term was, as they say, a broadening experience, as was the chance to really travel and explore other countries for the first time in my life. The experience of studying abroad has both made me more eager to travel in the future (plenty more places I didn't get around to seeing...), and left me more content with being a US citizen.



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IRELAND | FALL 2007 STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM EVALUATION

FIRST: Selena
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MAJOR1: Economics
MAJOR2: Political Science
ABROAD_DURING: Fall 2007

PROGRAM: Trinity College, Dublin

COURSE_#1: Economics of Developing Nations

COURSE_#2: European Economy

COURSE_#3: European Public Policy

TYPES_OF_COURSES: Regular university courses

EXPLANATION_OF_COURSES:



COMMENTS_ON_COURSE_WORK: They were all large lectures which you didn't have to attend if you didn't want to. The lectures and lecturers were largely hit or miss and the classes are a lot easier than at Amherst but you're in physically in class for about as long as at Amherst. I only had one exam or paper for each class but lots of reading.

STUDENT_BODY_COMPOSITION: All Irish with some Erasmus students from Europe

COMMENTS_ON_TEACHING: There are some great lecturers depending on which major you enter into but like the US, postgrads also teach and they are usually not so good. The professors are helpful if you seek them out.

ACADEMIC/LANGUAGE_PREPARATION_NEEDED: No extra preparation necessary.

DESCRIPTION_OF_HOUSING_&_MEALS: I lived in a dorm across the street from campus. Some of my friends were very lucky and they got huge rooms but I happened to get stuck with a small room. We had a kitchen so I cooked all my meals.

WHO_MADE_HOUSE/MEAL_ARRANGEMENTS: Accommodations office

LIVING_COSTS: 1000 Euros per month?

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MEDICAL_FACILITIES_AVAILABLE?: yes, their medical facilities were great. cheap flu vaccines!

WHAT_PROGRAM_SERVICES_WERE_AVAILABLE?:

HOW_DID_YOU_MEET_LOCALS?: Go to pubs and talk to students in your classes.

DID_YOU_EXPERIENCE_DISCRIMINATION?: Some Eastern European discrimination because of recent influx of immigration.

DID_YOU_TRAVEL?: Tons of time to travel and Dublin is a great city to travel from.

WOULD_YOU_RECOMMEND_THIS_PROGRAM/UNIVERSITY?: Yes, study at Trinity College. Ireland is beautiful. Dublin is a GREAT city and it is so easy to travel from here since Ryan air is a huge hub.

SUMMARY: It has given me perspective on the strength of our classes and has helped me reevaluate my values.

