

EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

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University of Washington is the only University in the States that political science at University of Aarhus has a cooperation agreement with. I went to talk to a current professor at political science that had been studying at UW. She spoke very warmly about the university and her experiences. She explained to me that you as a political science student from Aarhus could choose classes not only from Political Science at UW, but also from Jackson School of International Studies, Evans School of Public Affairs and Law School. I looked at the course descriptions at the webpage, and realized that I thereby could choose from a wider range of classes and topics related to my interest areas then I could in Aarhus. This was very motivating for me and encouraged me to start the application process.

I have to admit, that I was surprised by the amount of papers you need to fill in in order to study in the US. I understand that some people can find it overwhelming and therefore choose to study in another European country in stead. Another advantage of studying in Europe is that the systems are more standardized and comparable. For instance are all classes calculated in ECTS points. When I came to UW I was struggling trying to find out how the credit system was comparable to the ECTS system, and how many classes I should choose in order to fulfill my agreement with Aarhus University. I found out, that a syllabus of 1200 pages was equivalent to 10 ECTS points. However, this discovery did not help much when I had to choose classes, because non of the teachers had uploaded a complete syllabus and they had no idea how many pages we would be reading during the course. I therefore decided to sign up for more classes than I expected necessary to fulfill my agreement. I had the idea, that I could just skip a class later on, when I got the complete syllabus, if I figured out that it would be to much. So I started following four courses and ended up finding all the courses so interesting and inspiring that I didn't want to skip any of them. I should have followed classes equivalent to 30 ECTS points, but I ended up following classes equivalent to 50 points... so I had a very busy quarter, but I had only myself to blame and I enjoyed it.

Another frustrating issue when choosing which courses to follow was, that when I got the chance to register many courses where already full. In this case, it is apparently common practice to write a letter to the professor saying that you are an exchange student, you can only follow the class this quarter, you have a particular interest in the area... bla..bla.. but how should I know? It would have been nice with some general information about the registration system, formal as well as informal rules.

However, I ended up following some very interesting classes. For instance I followed a graduate class at Law School about health and human rights. Every week we had a new guest lecture or a videoconference with knowledgeable people in the field. This was an opportunity I would not have had in Aarhus. The other students in the class came from many different faculties with very different backgrounds. The classes and assignments were very much built on interdisciplinary collaboration. I find it very useful to be able the work with people and learn from others in an interdisciplinary context, but there is very little focus on this at Danish universities. Therefore I was happy to get this opportunity, and I learned a lot from it. It was also a positive experience realizing that we, as a student from another country, actually have something to offer. We might think slightly differently then many American students, and therefore it is fairly easy to contribute to discussions in class. I especially encountered this in a class I followed about U.S. Energy Policy. It was a class that practiced my communication and argumentation skills in a way I would not have experienced in Denmark. I learned a lot from it, and at least the students expressed that they learned a lot from me also.

My overall experience with the classes I took was extremely positive, and I think I was very lucky with the professors and fellow students I met.

Another thing I felt very lucky about, when studying in Seattle, was the sport facilities. You could do any kind of sport and it was either free or very cheap. As I love sports, it was a true heaven for me. My mental activity function a lot better, when I also have the chance to do physical activity. I would love if Universities in Denmark were related to a sports culture in the same way as I experienced in Seattle. Sport activities are also a great way as an exchange student to meet new people and socialize.

The nature surrounding Seattle is amazing and worth spending some time experiences. My group of exchange students organized trips during weekends to different places surrounding Seattle and also other cities as Vancouver and San Francisco. Doing things like this is some of the most unforgettable parts of my study abroad experience, and I kind of regret that I was so busy studying, that I some times forgot allowing myself time for these experiences.

On the practical side, it would be nice, if it were possible to receive more help with practical issues such as accommodation. For instance it would be very useful, if every Scan Design Foundation student upon departure registered their accommodation and contact information in a database with basic information about price, standard ect. I was very lucky to find a nice duplex, very cheap and close to the University, which I shared with another Aarhus student. I found it through the Danish Society in Washington. Thereby I rented the duplex from a nice elder lady who had ancestors in Denmark and still spoke a little Danish. I joined her for gatherings with the Danish Society for instance to a "fastelavns party". They had kept all the Danish traditions, and it was fun to see American children "slå katten af tynden". They were probably thinking "why are we doing this, the Danes must be very weird people".

I left the contact information for the duplex at FIUTS and Aarhus Universities International Center, but I would be more than happy to share it with more people. I know she has had a lot of Danes living there since I left.

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Home phone: [206-542-8660](tel:206-542-8660)

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The duplex address: 817 N.E. Ravenna Blvd, Seattle, WA 98115

It is a house separated into a duplex upstairs and one downstairs. You live two people together with your own room and share a fairly big kitchen, living room and bathroom. Apart from this you have a small garden, garage and washing room. The price was 500 dollars per person per month, which was very cheap compared to what I heard other students were paying.

Summing up. My advise for future students would be:

- Don't be frustrated when you feel you spend ages on paperwork in order to study in the states, it is worth it.
- It would be nice with a paper with basic information about practical issues as ECTS points, how you choose classes ect. Contact FIUTS and Internationalt Sekretariat for info.
- It can be a challenge studying everything in English. You may additionally follow classes together with Ph.D. students and start thinking that you cannot contribute with much. However, we actually think a bit differently and we have learned other things than most American students, so it is not as bad as it may seem ☺
- Use the sport facilities! Sport is always a great way of getting to know new people and socialize.
- Remember to experience the amazing nature surrounding Seattle!
- Live in Edit's duplex, if you get the chance.

Enjoy your stay!