**Major/Minor:** History  
**Country:** France  
**Term & Year Abroad:** Spring 2009  
**Program:** Immersion

### Instructors

- **What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?** Not as organized, but they were friendly for the most part, and very willing to explain things if you had questions.

- **Could you call them by their first names?** No, we called them “Madame” or “Monsieur.”

- **Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?** Yes, in some cases. In a couple of my classes it was less formal.

- **Were they available for help during office hours?** They did not have official office hours, but we were generally able to find them in their offices if we needed to talk to them, although often there was a lot of waiting.

### Courses

- **Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?** No, the only difficult part was the fact that it was all in French. The actual work was very easy.

- **Was the grading system similar to UCSB?** No, they used a numerical system instead of letters. Sometimes it was hard to tell if you did well on an assignment.

- **How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?** For the most part we just had exams and a couple of in-class assignments. All of my classes had both a midterm and a final.

- **Did you have oral and/or written exams?** For my phonetics class the exam was oral and for the rest of my classes the exams were written, with some listening components.

- **Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?** Not very flexible. There was a schedule and we were responsible for figuring out when the exams were.

- **What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?** There was a writing tutor available for the EAP students, but I did not use her.

- **Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?** Yes! I needed to take the initiative when planning my courses and trying to talk to my teachers. No one will help you unless you ask for help.

- **Was classroom participation expected?** In some classes. Some classes were mostly just lecture-style.

- **How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?** I took courses at DEFLE, the center for non-native french speakers, so most of my courses were focused on learning the language rather than actual content.
- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?** Classes were Monday through Friday, although very people had class on Friday. They were usually 1 hour-1 ½ hours. Many classes were on strike and did not meet regularly.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?** You are not allowed to eat or drink and they are very strict about that. They also told us that it was very important to be on time, but our professors were rarely, if ever, on time.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?** French, and a couple in English.

- **What language did you take your courses in?** French.

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.** The placement exams seemed pretty arbitrary, but most people were placed in the middle group, which ended up being easy. I did not really have trouble understanding my classes, especially because the material was very easy. I feel like my French definitely improved while I was there, thanks in part to having to speak it every day in class. My phonetics class was the most helpful, although it was very frustrating sometimes. The teachers were very specific about the way they wanted us to pronounce everything and it involved a lot of reading aloud and being corrected.

**Host University**

- **How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building?** The university was fairly large, but it was divided into several different campuses, so I’m not sure if it was as big as UCSB or not. It was in a suburb of Bordeaux, Pessac, with several big, ugly buildings. The campus was not very pretty. It was drab and gray.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?** Some live at home, some in university-owned dorms/apartments, some off-campus.

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?** About 20 minutes by tram.
  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?** I could walk to school, but others took the tram. It was 30 euro for a month-long pass.
  - **Could students take cabs -cost?** I don’t know.
  - **How long would it take to get to the city center?** 20 minutes by tram.

- **Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?** Yes, I believe that all the clubs were open to everyone. There was a English-French club that was promoted to us.

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?** There was a bookstore near campus and a big one in the city center.
- Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops? There was a computer lab at DEFLE and there were also 2 computers and printers available to us in the UC center.

- What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc) There were a couple cafes, restaurants, and bakeries, a bookstore, and a corner store. Other than that, there was not much else around campus.

Housing
- What types of accommodations are available to UC students? Homestays or apartments.

- How close are they to campus? It varies. My homestay was 10 minutes away, but some students had to commute 45 minutes to get to campus.

- How did you find your housing? I was placed there by the UC center in Bordeaux.

- Where did you live and with whom? I lived in a house in Pessac with a family (mother, father, and 23 year old son), and another UCSB student.

- If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate? No, the UC center set everything up.

- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms? The room in my house was definitely nicer and bigger than any dorm or apartment I’ve lived in. I heard that the dorms were horrible, though.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars? I do not remember.

- How/who did you pay for housing? I withdrew money from the ATM and paid my host mother or father by the 5th of each month and they gave me a receipt.

Food
- What was the food like? The food was good, although extremely rich.

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc? Our host mother provided us with breakfast and dinner every day, and lunch on the weekends. I ate lunch in the cafeteria or made a sandwich at home or bought something at a café.

- How much was an average meal? An average meal could be between 3 euro and 8 euro.

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner? People ate lunch at around noon and dinner much later, around 8 or 9 o’clock.

- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals? I think it would be moderately difficult. There was a lot of cheese and bread, but not a lot of vegetables.
Travel/Safety

- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city? There was a tramway that went around downtown and to the train station. There was also a bus system.

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students? I felt relatively safe. There are always sketchy people, no matter where you are, but Bordeaux felt pretty safe, especially since it is a college town, with a lot of young people.

- Describe the public transportation in your host country?

- Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries? It was easy but expensive. There are not a lot of airlines that fly out of Bordeaux, so you could take a train to Paris or Lyon and then continue on from there. There were discount train passes you could get, but it was still expensive.

Host City/Country

- What was the weather like? It was COLD. It was easily the coldest place I’ve ever lived. It snowed a little bit in the beginning and it rained and was windy for most of our stay. There were a couple big storms where we weren’t allowed to go outside. In the spring it got sunny and warm for a little bit.

- Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)? It was not like any city in California!! There was a big downtown, but all of the buildings were old and the streets were paved with stones and very narrow and twisty. The main street downtown was closed to cars and it was a wide boulevard with lots of shopping and cafes and kebab vendors. There was a huge, ancient cathedral in the center of town as well. There were a couple of parks, which we went to regularly when the weather finally got nice. The town is on a river and there was a nice walking area next to the river, and a farmer’s market there every weekend.

- What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city? We visited a couple of museums, including one at an old submarine base. I really liked hanging out at the parks and cafes and people-watching. We went out to bars and clubs every week as well. We went on a tour of a winery with EAP.

- How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses? As a university town, it was pretty diverse, and there were a lot of young people. I don’t think there was as much tourism as there is in other French cities, but there are a lot of wineries, which older people might find interesting.

Culture

- Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
  - Time & punctuality: No one is ever on time. It is all very flexible to them.
  - Eye contact & staring: You are not supposed to make eye contact; it is considered rude. If you make eye contact with someone of the opposite sex, supposedly it means you want them sexually.
- **Relationships**: French boys love relationships and want to date girls, nothing less committed.
- **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?** Yes, French people are very stylish all the time and always wear black, gray, or tan. No bright colors.
- **Alcohol consumption**: They drink a lot of wine. People don’t really get as drunk as they do in IV or in the US in general.
- **What culture shock did you go through?**: It was mostly just weird being in a place where no one spoke English.
- **Other?**

**Banking**

- **Were credit cards widely accepted?** Yes, but you got charged extra.

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?** No.

- **If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM? Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?** Yes, it was easy. Bank of America has a sister bank in France (BNP), so you get charged less to use it and you can access your account directly.

- **Were there ATMs on campus?** Yes, there was one.