Major/Minor: History

Country: France  Program: Bordeaux Immersion Term & Year Abroad: Fall 2010

Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
All of my teachers were very knowledgable in their subjects, but were much less accessible than my
UCSB professors

- Could you call them by their first names?
Definitely not.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
Yes. The TA equivalents would call students Mr. or Miss + last name, and students show a lot of
respect to their professors

- Were they available for help during office hours?
They don’t generally have office hours. They don’t even respond to emails usually.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
Taking the language factor out of consideration, the courses were not horribly difficult. The teachers
understand that learning subjects in a foreign language is hard, and so are very lenient with you in
terms of assignments and grading.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
No. they grade out of 20, but a 10, for example would be considered a B here.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
The course structure really depends on the class. I had no assignments in any of my three classes, just
finals and in-class essays. Some of my friends, on the other hand, had papers and homework.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
I had only written exams, although some professors hold oral ones.

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
It was flexible in the sense that professors let you take your exams early if you were leaving before it
was to take place.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
One of my teachers sent me all his lecture notes so I wouldn’t be lost. Otherwise, I was pretty much on
my own. Students are super friendly though, and will lend you their notes if you ask.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
Definitely

- Was classroom participation expected?
Yes, but foreign students are excused from too much participation due to the language barrier

- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
I felt like the teaching technique was different. UCSB tends to base its teaching on theory, while French universities base theirs on facts. The writing style is also very different—you have to learn a whole new way of structuring essays and papers.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**
  All my classes had one lecture a week and one section a week, and each of these lasted around 2 hours each.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**
  It is considered rude to be late to class, although like at UCSB, the bigger the class is, the more easily you can sneak in if late.

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**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
  French

- **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.**

  Some of the lectures were more difficult to understand than others, but the teachers understand your difficulties and take that into account during grading. Reading background info on class subjects on Wikipedia or in assigned books definitely helps because the classes are based on hard facts rather than the teacher’s interpretation of the subject.

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**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?**
  It’s pretty big, but spread out over the city. Depending on your major and what classes you’re taking, you usually will go to only a few different buildings.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**
  All of the above

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?**
    About 20 minutes away by tram (which goes pretty slowly)
  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**
    The only public transportation available that goes directly to campus is the tram, although you can rent bikes if you have a bank account. The tram costs about 200 euros for a year pass or
  - **Could students take cabs -cost?**
    Cabs are not very prevalent in Bordeaux and they are not worth the cost
  - **How long would it take to get to the city center?**
    About 20 minutes by tram

- **Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?**
Yes, but I did not join any so I don’t know much about them

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?**
  No, but there are multiple bookstores in the city, and a library on campus.

- **Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?**
  I don’t think there is a computer lab, but I’m not sure

- **What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)**
  There are cafes, but not much else

**Housing**

- **What types of accommodations are available to UC students?**
  You can find an apartment or live with a host family
  - **How close are they to campus?**
  
  It varies. Some are very close and some are located in the city center, farther from campus
  - **How did you find your housing?**
  
  I found my apartment using the Centre de Californie’s list of available apartments/homes that previous students had lived in.
  
  - **Where did you live and with whom?**
  
  I lived in the city center with an older woman who owned the apartment and two other students
  - **If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?**
  
  Not horribly, but it is difficult to find an apartment that is not on the list the Centre gives you
  
  - **Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?**
  
  They seemed nicer, but since many of the apartments are older, the rooms are sometimes a little rundown
  
  - **Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?**
  
  No. I lived in an apartment considered very expensive that was the equivalent of about 650 dollars here.
  
  - **How/who did you pay for housing?**
  
  I paid my landlady by cash

**Food**

- **What was the food like?**
  Good, once you get over the fact you can’t have burritos. The cheese and bread are fantastic, and the wine is great too. It’s a little hard to eat good food that is cheap, though.

- **Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?**
  I bought most of my meals from the supermarket, and cooked at home
- **How much was an average meal?**
  If you eat at a restaurant, anywhere from 4-15 euros, from the market probably about 3 euros

- **What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?**
  Lunch around 12, dinner 5-7

- **Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?**
  No, there are plenty of vegetarian choices

**Travel/Safety**
- **If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?**
  See above

- **Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?**
  Yes, Bordeaux city center is very safe, but I would advise not to walk home alone at night if you’re a girl, just in case.

- **Describe the public transportation in your host country?**
  See above

- **Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?**
  It was kind of a pain because the cheap airlines in Bordeaux do not fly out to that many places, but you can take a train to Paris and fly out or take a train to wherever you want to go

**Host City/Country**
- **What was the weather like?**
  Much colder than Santa Barbara in winter. It snowed a couple times.

- **Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?**
  Bordeaux is similar to Santa Barbara in that the people are very friendly and laid-back, and also to LA in that the actual city center is rather small, and the suburbs make up the majority of the city.

- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?**
  Go to bars!

- **How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?**
  There were a lot of foreign students in Bordeaux.

**Culture**
- **Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.**
  - Time & punctuality
  - Eye contact & staring
    - Not acceptable
  - Relationships
    - Couples are much more open about their relationship and there’s a lot more PDA

- **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
No short-shorts, no pajamas. Most girls get dressed nicely for school
  - Alcohol consumption
    No one gets wasted, you drink a glass of wine with dinner.
  - What culture shock did you go through?
    It wasn’t too different, but France’s system is much less convenient than that of the US
  - Other?

Banking
  - Were credit cards widely accepted?

Not really, many places only accept cash, and usually you have to buy a certain amount of whatever it is you’re buying to pay by credit
  - Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?
    Yes, it took a long time, but the process was easy enough
  - 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?
  - Were there ATMs on campus?

There was at least one right by campus, I’m not sure there were any on the actual campus though