Major/Minor: Anthropology
Country: Spain       Program: Language and Culture – Córdoba       Term & Year Abroad: Fall 2009

Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
They were friendly and incredibly helpful. I would say that they were a lot more easily accessible because of the small class sizes and the duration of our classes.

- Could you call them by their first names?
Yes.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
Not at all. While certain classroom rules were different than at UCSB, the general climate of the classes was laid back and there was more informal interaction between students and instructors.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
Yes.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
No. The amount of reading and written work was significantly less than at UCSB.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
No. Grading was done on a 1-10 scale.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
The course structure did not differ much.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
In my grammar class, there were both oral and written exams. I also had to give presentations in two out of three of my classes entirely in Spanish.

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
It was inflexible.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
I received a lot of support from my grammar teacher. She was very willing to take any and all questions we had about Spanish, even if they had nothing to do with whatever we were studying, and she encouraged us to approach her at any time.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
The coursework was pretty prescribed, so I did not feel the need to take more initiative than I would at UCSB.

- Was classroom participation expected?
Yes, it was, and this participation was an important part of our grades in Córdoba.

- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
The Language and Culture program is a UC constructed program, so the courses are in essence not too different. The main difference was that they were much smaller classes and they were more intimate because of this.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**
  Classes were Monday through Thursday from 9:30 to 2 p.m.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**
  Students dress up more to go to class, which means that wearing sweatpants to school is a no-no. Eating during class is seen as incredibly rude, so there is absolutely no coffee or food in class, and lateness is frowned upon.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
  Spanish.

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

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.**
  In the beginning, it was a mental workout to have to comprehend five hours of class entirely in Spanish. I would come home for lunch and be absolutely exhausted. However, the program is designed for people with only one year of university Spanish, and the professors are really good about making sure that everyone understands the majority of things going on. I learned so much Spanish in school. Obviously grammar class is focused on language acquisition, but I also learned a lot from my literature and history classes; for example, I learned a lot of vocabulary in literature and listening to my history teacher’s lectures really helped me learn specific verb tenses. After about a month or so, I wasn’t feeling so tired when I went home, I was translating less and I understood nearly everything. I highly enjoyed the classes I took in Spain and I felt like they were really conducive to language learning.

**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 is spread out over the city. I am not sure about how many students are there, but there are many different buildings.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**
  Local students live at home.

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?**
    Córdoba itself is not a very big city, so everything is close to the city center.
  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**
    You can take the bus to school, but most people just walk.
  - **Could students take cabs -cost?**
    It would be unnecessary – again, most people just walk.
- **How long would it take to get to the city center?**
  15 minutes walking.

- **Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?**
  Not that we were really aware of, but I’m sure there are.

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?**
  Yes, but most people did not buy books, including myself.

- **Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?**
  Yes, there is. However, it would fill up quickly and the university wireless was very good, so it is worthwhile to bring a laptop to school, especially if your piso does not have WiFi.

- **What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)**
  There is a café on the ground floor of the building that we were in, but it’s a bit out of the way of most other things.

### Housing

- **What types of accommodations are available to UC students?**
  Home stay families.

- **How close are they to campus?**
  It really depends on the family. Some were fairly close and others were a bit farther away, but the program does a good job of making sure that nobody is too far away from campus.

- **How did you find your housing?**
  EAP arranged it.

- **Where did you live and with whom?**
  I had a home stay, which consisted of one Spanish woman and another UCSB student.

- **If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?**

- **Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?**
  I thought my accommodation was much nicer than a lot of what there is in IV. I had my own room, shared a bathroom with just one other person, and the neighbors were all very nice and considerate – no loud music was ever blasting at 4 in the morning! I think Spaniards in general are much more respectful of each other because most of them live in apartment buildings.

- **Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?**
  I paid through EAP fees, so I didn’t pay per month or anything. I am not sure how the cost broke down in terms of actual rent, because room was combined with board.

- **How/who did you pay for housing?**
  Through EAP.
Food
- What was the food like?
Food is a lot different than American food. Spaniards love olive oil, ham and olives, to name a few things. There is a lot of seafood and a lot of meat eaten there.

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
Host families are required to provide three meals a day for the students, so if I was in Córdoba, I always ate at home because I really enjoyed it.

- How much was an average meal?
They could range between 6-15 euro, but you can get snacks and other stuff for cheaper. Tapas could be pretty cheap, as well.

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
Lunch is around 2 or 3 and dinner is around 9 or 10.

- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
Yes.

Travel/Safety
- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?
There are a number of buses that cover the city pretty well, but Córdoba is a very walkable place. I took the bus just one time.

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
I felt very safe in my host city. I think it’s a pretty safe place to be, but there are certain precautions to note. During siesta, especially when it’s hot, the streets are pretty much empty and it’s not good to be hanging out by yourself in deserted areas. Because the nightlife is so different and you are more likely to be staying out much much later than is usual in the States, it’s best to walk with someone when coming back from clubs or bars past 2 a.m., or take a taxi.

- Describe the public transportation in your host country?
It’s really efficient. There are a million different buses that travel all over Spain, as well as the high-speed trains (Renfe-AVE) that go everywhere you could possibly think of. Also, air travel is relatively reasonable within Spain if you are traveling north/south.

- Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
It was really easy.

Host City/Country
- What was the weather like?
It was ridiculously hot when I first arrived in Spain, and it stayed warm until early to mid November. After that, it nosedived and was colder than I had ever experienced in my life. The coldest days were around 30-35 degrees.

- Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?
Córdoba is a small, very old city in the heart of Southern Spain. Its size does not compare at all to places like Barcelona or Madrid, but it is not similar to any U.S. city I’ve ever been to. I found it to be incredibly charming and I quickly fell in love with it … I miss wandering aimlessly around narrow streets, bar hopping, and drinking in Córdoba’s cute parks.

- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?**
  There are a lot of cool patios to check out, the Arab baths are fun (though they are common throughout the south of Spain), and there are endless amounts of bars and restaurants to try. I loved going for chocolate y churros at Café Niza and buying litros de cerveza at Barra Fija. There was also a really cool hookah lounge near the Mezquita that was fun.

- **How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?**
  Córdoba is definitely less international than places like Madrid and Barcelona, and also less culturally diverse. It is a small place and attracts a good amount of tourism, but there are mostly just Spaniards living there.

**Culture**

- **Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.**
  - **Time & punctuality**
    Spanish time is slow. Things move a lot more slowly and saying you’ll meet someone at three o’clock really means you’ll be there at half past three or so. I really had a difficult time with how slowly things went at times.
  - **Eye contact & staring**
    People are definitely more open about staring, especially if you are doing things that make it obvious that you are a foreigner (i.e. talking very loudly, talking very loudly in English, speaking Spanish, wearing flip flops). I feel like I got stared at a lot, but I got over it quickly.
  - **Relationships**
    I think it is a little bit more difficult to form friendships with Spaniards, but once you do, it is really rewarding because they really care for their friends.
  - **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
    Until I went to Spain, I never realized how laid-back California style is. Spaniards do not leave their house in sweatpants. Ever. Or without putting on all their makeup and accessories. They are much more fashionable than us Californians, and I knew that my host mom thought my style was improving because towards the end, when I had given up a lot of my old habits, she told me much more how “guapa” I looked.
  - **Alcohol consumption**
    Alcohol consumption is not quite as excessive as it is in the States, and especially in IV. People drink steadily over several hours instead of pounding back shot after shot in a two-hour span. Spaniards look at excessive drunkenness with disdain, but that’s not to say they don’t drink either. Botellón, or outside gatherings of people drinking (usually in parks, but can be anywhere really), are an important part of the youth culture in Spain.
  - **What culture shock did you go through?**
    Men are a lot more aggressive with approaching women and frequently catcall to them on the streets, which took some getting used to. Spaniards also comment much more frequently on appearance than Americans do. I always knew when I was having an especially good-looking day, because my host mom would tell me. I also heard about people’s host families telling them that they were getting fat and things like that.
  - **Other?**
Pretty much the only thing that I absolutely cannot stand about Spain (and Europe in general) is how acceptable it is to smoke. Cigarette smoke really bothers me, and it drove me crazy that I could walk into a bar for five minutes and come out with my hair and clothes reeking of the stuff. This is one culture difference that I never quite came to terms with.

I also found that the Spanish that is spoken in Spain (especially in Andalusia) is just so different than any other Spanish. They use a lot of different words and the accent was at times frustratingly difficult to understand. However, as my Spanish friends would tell me when I complained, “if you can understand in Andalusia, you can understand anywhere,” which I think is pretty accurate.

**Banking**
- **Were credit cards widely accepted?**
  Yes.

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?**
  No, I did not.

- **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?**
  It was incredibly easy to withdraw money from Atms. Bank of America is popular because BofA members can withdraw money from Barclay’s for free, but my credit union was pretty good about fees.

- **Were there ATMs on campus?**
  - No.