Major/Minor: Global Studies/Minor in Spanish  
Country: Spain  
Program: Language & Culture Studies in Córdoba, Immersion in Granada  
Term & Year Abroad: Fall 2008 in Córdoba, Spring 2009 in Granada

Instructors  
What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?  
Córdoba: Professors in this program were very helpful, and since they were only teaching American students I feel they were a bit more sympathetic with our language skills. They weren't as strict about checking on your progress but still expected you to study and follow lectures. Missing lots of lectures was not really tolerated, which is similar to here in the US.  
Granada: Professors here varied; I had some professors who were very strict and took attendance and others who missed quite a few lectures and never checked on attendance at all. But if you ever need help it is definitely upon the student to go ask for help. There is not usually anything more than a project and a final as far as your grade is concerned, it's up to the student to keep up.

Could you call them by their first names?  
Yes.

Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?  
No, it seemed more informal.

Were they available for help during office hours?  
Yes, they all held regular office hours.

Courses  
Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?  
UCSB courses are different because many times professors here tell you what reading assignments to complete for the following class; there are homework assignments, etc. In Spain the professors gave you reading material but there was no real enforcement as far as getting assignments done were concerned. If you're used to a teacher always telling you what to do, classes in Spain can seem surprising. Finals tended to be a bit difficult because the teachers are a bit vague about what you actually need to study.

Was the grading system similar to UCSB?  
Grades were made depending on a factor of things that counted a different amount towards your grade (attendance, participation, project, etc.), but they grade on a scale of 1-10, not A-F.

How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?  
In all of my classes I had one big project due near the end of the term. I had midterms in Cordoba, but not in Granada. Finals have a big impact on your grade.
Did you have oral and/or written exams?
I did oral presentations and written exams for almost all of my classes.

What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
Office hours were available. If there were a lot of Americans in one class together, sometimes the professor would offer a separate tutorial specifically for the Americans to answer questions about material covered in class.

Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
Yes. Personally I learned to ask questions whenever I didn't understand something (which sometimes can be intimidating when there is a language barrier). Generally people are receptive and helpful. I also needed to take initiative as far as traveling is concerned, because sometimes you will be traveling alone. If you want to maximize your experience abroad, you need to initiate interest in activities and people -- they will not always present themselves to you easily.

Was classroom participation expected?
Always encouraged, but not always mandatory.

How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
More responsibility is placed on the student... professors aren't always after students to make sure they're keeping up with their work. Studying and reading all required materials takes initiative of the student.

Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?
No, I feel like the days and times of classes were random.

What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?
Class culture was very lenient. Even the professor normally showed up about 10 to 15 minutes late, and many students were always late as well. Drinking was permitted but I never saw anyone eating.

Language

In which languages were the courses offered?
Spanish, and there were select courses in English (English literature classes, for example.)

What language did you take your courses in?
Spanish only.

If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.
Cordoba: Overall experience in Cordoba was a bit less challenging than Granada. Professors were more patient, and spoke clearer and made sure all students understood,
so taking notes and understanding the professor was less frustrating. I felt that I learned a lot from my classes in Cordoba; I feel the class topics and the professors were very engaging and encouraging.

Granada: Some professors here were more sympathetic than others. Some professors could care less if you are a foreigner or not, and others are more sympathetic and might give you an optional assignment separate from what the other students have. I had a bit of difficulty understanding professors because of the accent and they (of course) tend to talk a bit fast. But overall understanding my classes was not too difficult, although I don't feel that I benefited from them as much as I did from my classes in Cordoba.

**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?

In Cordoba we had a specific building where all the American students went to, so we didn't have the opportunity to be directly immersed with other Spanish students. In Granada I honestly don't know the approximate number of students but the different majors had their own buildings that were throughout the city.

Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?

It varies. There are dorms in the city that house students, and some students live at home.

If not located in the city center, How far or close is it to the city?

Within 20 or 30 minutes walking distance.

What type of public transportation could you take – cost?

Bus was very easy. 1.10 or 1.20 per trip, but you can buy bus cards and recharge them.

Could students take cabs -cost?

Yes cabs were available. About the same cost as a cab ride here in the states.

How long would it take to get to the city center?

I lived in the city center both in Cordoba and Granada, and the cities themselves were not all that big. Most places were walking distance.

Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?

I didn't personally look into any clubs on campus.

Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?

In Cordoba I didn't have to buy any books. In Granada there was a bookstore down the street from my school. However, many teachers put reading material in the photocopy room on campus (instead of required books).

Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?

Students should bring laptops!!! There are computer labs available on campus but if a student plans on skype-ing with family and friends, sending email, chatting, etc. on a
regular basis, it is much easier to have your own laptop.

**What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)**

 Mostly everything is available. Cafes, stores, super markets, farmers markets (fruits and vegetables), internet cafe. One of the stores that students tend to like is Corte Ingles, which can be a little pricey but has everything, and also has a lot of things that are less common in Spain (i.e. certain foods for cooking).

**Housing**

**What types of accommodations are available to UC students?**

In Cordoba I was in a home stay. In Granada students have to find their own housing.

**How close are they to campus?**

It varies. However, because the cities themselves are rather small (neither Cordoba or Granada have metros), everything is pretty much close to everything else.

**How did you find your housing?**

In Cordoba I was placed with a home stay, so I didn't have to look for housing. In Granada there are generally bulletins of people looking for housing throughout the city. I found my apartment on loquo.com, which is very similar to craigslist. I also tried using easypiso.com but I found loquo to be more efficient and more helpful.

**Where did you live and with whom?**

In Granada I lived in the city center with 4 other Spanish roommates, 3 girls and 1 boy.

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

Because Granada has such a high student population, it was not hard to find housing. There are always people looking for roommates. You just have to find the location best suitable for you.

**Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?**

It depends, there were a huge range as far as quality is concerned. However, generally the more rent you paid, the nicer your apartment was. Also, location of the apartment had an impact on rent. However almost all students had their own room.

**Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?**

It was much cheaper, especially when you don't have to share a room. Rent ranged from 150 euro to 300 euro a month. Which is anywhere from 200 to 400 dollars a month.

**How/who did you pay for housing?**

My roommates and I generally went to the landlord together to pay each month. However, I never signed a contract.
**Food**

What was the food like?
I really enjoyed Spanish food. Lots of fish, tuna, olive oil, fruits, vegetables... although compared to American food, Spanish food may seem a bit bland (for those who like spicy food.)

Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
Cafeterias. I also ate a lot of shawarma kebab (they're everywhere!). In Granada I also went out to tapas (ordering a drink and you get a free small portion of food). It was a fun way to socialize and it's also very cheap!

How much was an average meal?
Anywhere between 4 to 8 euros.

What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
Lunch is between 2 to 4, dinner starting around 9 and going as late as midnight.

Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
No.

**Travel/Safety**

If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?
Public transportation was very easy and accessible. There were bus stops everywhere throughout the city and bus fare was cheap. There was no metro in Cordoba nor Granada.

Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
Yes I always felt very safe -- but of course every student should take normal precautions. If a student goes out to a club they should not walk home alone past the hours of 3 or 4am -- normally between 11pm and 1am the streets are well populated. However, when it is late it is always safer and smarter to stay in the city center or on bigger streets, especially if you are a girl. But overall, I never felt unsafe or nervous walking alone.

Describe the public transportation in your host country?
Public transportation in Spain is overall very efficient. Trains, buses (public buses and buses in-between cities), metros - all are easy to figure out and can get you pretty much any place you want.

Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
Cordoba does not have an airport and Granada has a very small airport. Traveling within Spain was easy, but flying to other countries normally required flying through Madrid or buying a flight from Madrid and taking the overnight bus there to catch your morning flight. Flights directly from Granada are generally more expensive; buying a flight from Madrid is cheaper, although more time consuming (because you have to get to Madrid
Host City/Country
What was the weather like?
Very pronounced seasons. The hottest is during July and August, but is still very warm during September. Winter can be very cold with lots of rain and even sometimes snow in Granada. Bring clothing for all seasons!

Describe your host city...which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?
I'm not sure that I would relate the Spanish cities that I was in to any Californian city. Cordoba was more spread out, quieter, and not as much of a student city. Granada was much more student oriented and had a more "happening" city center. It was fun being able to walk everywhere (bars, discotecas, cafes, stores, super markets). There are lots of bars in Granada, as well as tapas bars, and lots of cafes. It was also fun to go sit out in the park and people watch, read, and relax. Southern spain is a lot more relaxed and slow-going than we are used to here in California.

What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?
In Granada it was always fun to go get tapas with friends. I loved getting coffee with friends and people watching. Going to the bars to watch soccer games (because it gets crazy!). Hanging out in the parks during dusk (when it was cool out.) Even just walking around the city and window shopping was entertaining and fun. Going to movies, concerts.

How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
Cordoba and Granada weren't particularly touristy - at least when in comparison with cities like Madrid or Barcelona.

Culture
Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
Time & punctuality
Spaniards are normally always late. Even in professional settings (and at school) professors and other students are late, so punctuality is not taken very seriously. Plans are made loosely and also often change at the last minute -- spaniards tend to be more spontaneous. It is not to be taken personally, because it's a cultural thing and something I just adapted to.

Eye contact & staring
Eye contact is pretty much the same as here in the US - you make eye contact when you're talking with someone. Although I would say that people stare more openly there than they do here.

Relationships
I feel that your relationships in Spain are what you make of them. In Granada I lived with 4 other Spanish roommates and we all became very good friends. I feel that Spaniards in general are more straightforward about how they feel, which can sometimes come off as abrasive (people here are normally less prone to initiating confrontation), but at least make for very honest relationships. Also, most people are patient in helping you with your Spanish, so take advantage of it! And as I said before, Spaniards like to make plans right before they're about to happen - I learned after a few times of my roommates making plans with me and either forgetting or bailing on me to realize that's how they function. Something else to adapt to. Spontaneity isn't necessarily bad, it's just different.

**More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
Overall people dress nicer. They very much dress the season... it won't be until the dead heat of summer that you will see most Spaniards in sandals, shorts, or tank tops. But personally I don't think this should discourage you from wearing what you normally wear (although I never went out in public looking sloppy/wearing sweats). Casual wear is just as acceptable.

**Alcohol consumption**
Young Spaniards like to go out and drink with friends just like American students do. I wouldn't say they drink excessively or less than average in comparison to how we drink here.

**What culture shock did you go through?**
I think the hardest culture shock was the first 2 or 3 days that I was in Cordoba. I was with a homestay, and at this point my I really had not developed my Spanish speaking skills at ALL. Speaking with my host mom at first was a bit difficult, and it was frustrating not being able to express myself, my thanks, etc. That and having to say goodbye to my family made the beginning a little rough, but it really didn't last long for me. Your Spanish skills progress and improve dramatically... and you don't even realize it until the end, looking back.

**Other?**

**Banking**
**Were credit cards widely accepted?**
Yes, paying for groceries and bigger payments. However, it was much easier to pay with cash if I was just going to a cafe for a coffee or a tapa. I never used my credit card to pay for tapas.

**Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?**
No I didn't do this because originally I wasn't sure if I was going to stay in Spain an entire year.

**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?**
I had Bank of America here in the states, and was able to get free transactions with Barclays (which most European cities have). Other students I know used any bank available (ATMs are everywhere), and just took out larger amounts of money so they wouldn't have to pay the transaction fee as often.

**Were there ATMs on campus?**
I never used ATMs on campus.