

**Majors, minors and degree: Philosophy and Biology, non-degree-seeking / Host country: Canada / Start and end date of the stay abroad: 15.08.2018 - 29.07.2018 / Host University: University of Guelph / Identification code: CA-2017-10318-m**

Canada has been of particular interest to me because of its richness in diverse eco systems and enormous untouched land masses. Culturally Canada was also interesting for me as they differ greatly from their neighbors, politically and also mentality wise.

I prepared for Canada via reading more English books, and generally consuming more media in English. Concerning the health insurance, I went with APRIL International as I couldn't take an insurance from a German provider as I had no residence in Germany. Booking the flight was easy, I only booked it a bit too late which meant higher costs. As I arrived at the Toronto airport in August, I took a GO bus, which frequent a lot of cities in Ontario, to Guelph. I stayed in Guelph for a little more than a week to look for an accommodation and to familiarize myself with the city. Getting a place to stay was relatively easy, I used Kijiji and thecannon.ca. I made the experience that thecannon worked best.

I'd recommend living off-campus, as it's cheaper than the residence, and offers a much more autonomous living experience. The residences are nice to socialize, but they are heavily restrictive concerning things like, having an RA check on you every day, sometimes not being able to invite people who don't live on campus, alcohol bans in the common room... Rental prices in Guelph off-campus range from 300\$-600\$, depending on location and house size. Living off-campus with Canadian students has immensely enriched my stay by letting me immerse myself in Canadian culture.

Information is readily available in the university as well as on the internet. The University of Guelph has beautiful buildings with a nice mixture of old brick buildings and more modern buildings. The school system greatly differs from the European one, there is a lot of homework and a lot of books to be read outside of the classes. The final grade is also made up of several parts which are graded, which can be presentations, exams, homework... I personally prefer the European system, as you have more freedom to split up learning which means you gain autonomy, whereas in Canada I felt at times you're constantly guided through the course to ensure that you pass. The transportation system in Guelph and Ontario is generally good. Culturally and mentality wise, Canadians are relatively comparable to Europeans.

Guelph itself is a nice small town with an oversee able downtown. There are some nice bars downtown and interesting places to visit like a board game café and a farmer's market which is open Wednesdays and Saturdays in the morning. Outside of downtown there's also the stone road mall, which has a wide variety of shops and two grocery shops in the vicinity.

- a) **General Impressions of the host university:** The university of Guelph offers a wide variety of courses and interdisciplinary services. The professors are engaged and are easily reachable if there are additional questions or concerns. Administratively everything works simple enough, the only thing is, that it's hard for exchange students to attend certain courses, if they are restricted. Socially, I made the experience that forming friendships in class isn't as normal than back home. Most social contacts I formed with Canadians were in extracurricular activities or in residence. There are a lot of extracurricular clubs ranging from circus to environmental groups.
- b) **Content and purpose of the exchange:** Academically, I mainly attended philosophical courses and some courses in Biology. The change from Biology in my regular studies to Philosophy was relatively seamless. Concerning the workload, I'd say that in Canada there's more constant

workload than in Germany, at times the workload was too big to conscientiously do everything for every single course, which was unfortunate because I found myself spending a lot of time flipping through books just to get by with all my homework, which in turn didn't allow for an in-depth reflection of the material. Studying philosophy helped me develop some skills which are also important for my studies in Biology, such as the systematic way in which arguments can be analyzed and challenged. Language-wise, Philosophy courses were an excellent help as they required us to write a lot of essays.

- c) **Criticism and recommendations:** Experiencing another culture and school system was extremely enriching in so many ways, I met a lot of interesting people that helped me understand the Canadian culture better and better. Especially seeing the north-American study system was enriching as it's a much more guided way of studying which helped me particularly in the beginning to get into the English language. On an academic level, I did learn about a whole new direction of science and now know about the philosophy of mind, political philosophy and lots of philosophical topics, which have a lot of similarities with my studies in Biology. I'd definitely recommend staying abroad as it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I especially recommend staying for some months after studying to visit other parts of Canada. Concerns were more of the kind of a general insecurity mixed with anticipation, which proved to be unjustified.