STUDYING IN THE UNITED STATES WITH ISEP

BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY

HOW TO ENGLISH WEEK WS 2019/2020

HOW TO GO ABROAD WORKSHOP

PRESENTATION BY ADRIAN STOCK
EXAMPLE:
EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
GENERAL DIFFERENCES

• Classroom Sizes
In general, classes tend to be smaller than in Germany. Especially in the English, History, and Social Sciences departments, courses are taught as seminars, oftentimes hosting a maximum of 25 students each. Therefore, the student-to-lecturer ratio is also lower than at most German universities, allowing lecturers to give more detailed responses to students’ questions.

• Classroom Activity
With smaller classroom sizes, many college lecturers tend to structure their classes more in a discursive format based on the frequently assigned readings than as a classic lecture. Students are expected to prepare the reading assignments before class, so that they can engage in a vivid and productive classroom discussion about the various aspects of the assigned texts. Hence, lecturers might call upon random students without a necessity of them raising their hands.

• Classroom Attendance
Whereas there is no mandatory attendance at Bielefeld University, most college lecturers in the U.S. expect their students to frequently attend classes, which has to be taken seriously: unless a legitimate excuse is provided (e.g. sickness) or an exemption from class previously requested (e.g. an overlapping curricular activity), missing more than a total of two weeks of class can result in failing the whole class.
STUDYING IN THE U.S.

GENERAL DIFFERENCES

• **Coursework Expectations**

  The expected coursework for college courses in the U.S. differs from what is common at German universities. Lecturers expect their students to do the assigned readings for each class and not seldom write reading responses or answer graded quizzes before class. Also, writing short essays or out-of-class journals can be demanded every now and then. Apart from that, there might be multiple tests during the semester and of course the prominent midterm exams and final exams. Courses declared as “writing intensive” will most likely come with short research projects (2-3 pages) and extensive research papers (10-12 pages).

• **Class Schedule**

  During a stay at a U.S. college with ISEP, you will have to enroll in courses worth at least 12 credit hours in order to retain a full-time student status. In general, this means you will have to take at least four courses, since most of the college classes are worth 3 credit hours (counting the in-class contact time with the lecturer). Therefore, classes will most likely times two (1:15 each) or three (0:50 each) times a week.

  This is an exemplary weekly schedule (12 credits):
• Grading

In difference to the German module system, consisting of several classes (completed by a Studienleistung) and a graded module exam, every college course in the U.S. will be graded on a letter grade scale ranging from A (1.0) to D (4.0), which is 60%. Scoring below 60% results in failing the class and the letter grade F (5.0). However, each course grade consists of more than just a single final exam:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGL-3570</th>
<th>BATE 01001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kirkland, James W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Folklore</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Amber Flora Thomas reading her own poetry from *Red Channel in the Rupture*
- Wiley Cash reading out of his own award-winning novel *The Last Ballad*
- Anita Hill giving a speech on *Putting an End to Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*
- Dr. Michael Kazin giving a speech on *The Enduring Power of Populism in America*

- Extra Credit Opportunities

Many lecturers offer extra credit options for their students, which can help compensating a bad test score or a missed quiz, and often, they will encourage students to take part in activities beyond the regular coursework, such as theater plays, speeches and debates, or readings of poetry and novels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGL-2230</th>
<th>BATE 01021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bauer, Margaret D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 16 online quizzes 25%
- exam I 25%
- exam II 25%
- exam III 25%
- Exam 1-2 Revision EXC
- Exam 1-3 Revision EXC

Richard Wright's and Paul Green's theater play *Native*

Wiley Cash reading out of his own award-winning novel *The Last Ballad*
STUDYING IN THE U.S.

• Campus Culture

College campuses are more than just the institutional spaces for higher education. During the day, copious amounts of people wander the areas on and around campus and various student organizations and interest groups advertise their projects and address important topics. Since lots of students live on-campus, many of them populate the campus areas after class as well by engaging in leisure activities and sports, meeting friends and colleagues, and even enjoying the sun with a picnic.
Housing
As an ISEP exchange student, you will be living on-campus in one of the residence halls with other fellow international and American students. Most of the residence halls are mixed, with separate floors for male and female students. As an important part of the college experience, rooms are shared with another student. Honest and friendly communication is the key to a successful roommate relationship. And if you ever feel like you need a bigger space and more productive environment to focus, you can always use the study rooms and lounges, or even consider going to the library.

Dining
Most of the colleges have multiple dining halls around campus, providing a huge variety of culinary choices for all students with a meal plan (which is part of an exchange with ISEP). While the details may vary for each college, you will mostly have unlimited access to the dining halls, and probably a budget to spend in other food places or grocery stores around campus.
Campus Sports

Both student activity and sports opportunities are part of the U.S. college DNA. Most of the colleges have large sports facilities and recreation centers both on- and off-campus, which ISEP students can attend as part of their exchange program, too. Indoor and outdoor pools for swimming and water polo, multiple courts for team sports such as basketball and volleyball, and grass courts for soccer and (flag) football are very common. Also, students might join so-called intramural sports teams during their stay and compete with other student teams. For students interested rather in individual workouts, generous weight-lifting areas and cardiovascular training devices such as treadmills and pedometers can be expected. There might be a variety of trainer-guided courses such as boxing, pilates, and yoga, and even a climbing wall for rock climbing and bouldering as well.
• College Sports

Due to the huge importance of college sports in the U.S., most of the schools compete with their athletic programs in a variety of sports such as American football, basketball, baseball, volleyball, lacrosse, and ice hockey. Although ISEP exchange students most likely will not be able to take part in one of the athletic programs, attending these events should be on the to-do list. Especially the football games are a representative part of the U.S. American college culture. On game day, not only students, but also locals and alumni will gather hours before the game to meet up at the parking lots in front of the stadium. The so-called tailgating is a constitutive part of a college football game, including drinks, food, and games such as corn hole and the hammer and nail game.
About ISEP

We’re a non-profit educational community dedicated to helping students overcome the financial and academic barriers to study abroad.

OUR STORY

Founded in 1979 at Georgetown University, we became an independent non-profit organization in 1997 and are now one of the largest study abroad membership networks in the world.

As a trusted educational community, we are committed to helping students overcome the financial and academic barriers to study abroad. In partnership with our member institutions, we're able to connect students to high-quality, academic programs at more than 300 universities in over 50 countries.

Regardless of academic major, socio-economic status and geographic location, we believe no one should be held back from being able to study abroad. Since our foundation, we have sent over 56,000 students abroad.

We directly enroll our students into classes at our member institutions because we value the full immersion that can only come from living and learning alongside locals. Our direct enrollment model broadens academic understanding as students engage in a curriculum presented through perspectives different from their home country.

Furthermore, by utilizing existing academic resources at our member universities, we provide students access to affordable, high-quality programs that in return, help develop culturally sensitive skill sets needed for today’s global workforce.

source: https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/about-isep
• Eligible Students
At Bielefeld University, all students currently enrolled in the British and American Studies program who have finished at least two semesters (and therefore would go abroad in their third semester earliest), are personally interested in the United States and show “good” academic standing, are eligible for studying abroad with ISEP. This includes every possible program variation (fachwissenschaftlich, Lehramt, Hauptfach, Nebenfach, etc.) and unfortunately excludes all students not enrolled in British and American Studies at the moment (sorry!).

• Bachelor vs. Master
Mainly, students will go abroad and enroll in an undergraduate program (Bachelor-Level) at a U.S. American college, but some institutions might be offering graduate programs for ISEP exchange students as well. For detailed information, check the ISEP website and talk to your ISEP home coordinators at Bielefeld University, Dr. Julia Andres of the British and American Studies Department and Ms. Karin Kruse of the International Office (for contact information see last slide).

• Internationalization
Since studying abroad in the U.S. with ISEP will take up more than four months, this way of going abroad will count for the Internationalization module requirement of your studies (after writing and submitting a proper report about your stay).
ISEP APPLICATION

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

• How does ISEP work?

With ISEP Exchange, you will be studying in the U.S. with a J1-Visa, and without the necessity of a direct exchange partner coming to Bielefeld at the same time. During the five months of your stay (fall term only; August to December), you will have to pay a monthly fee to Bielefeld University, which basically covers the costs of hosting an in-coming exchange student from the U.S. in Bielefeld. In analogy, the monthly payment will cover your study fees (except for lab fees etc.), accommodation costs, and a meal plan (or money for food) in the U.S. In addition, you will have to purchase health insurance through ISEP for the time of your stay (see following slides for details).

• How do I apply?

• Go to the ISEP website (https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/planning/how-to-apply/) and create an account. Create a new ISEP Exchange application (not ISEP Direct!). The platform provides all the detailed information about the process and required documents.

• Pick ten colleges in the U.S. that would all work for you. Later in the process, ISEP will assign one of them to you which cannot be changed (see further slides for details). Research the colleges in terms of academics (course offerings), special requirements, and whether they will work for your studies at home in terms of credit recognition (Leistungsanerkennung). Make an appointment with your academic advisor (for Bachelor’s: Dr. Brian Rozema) to create and sign a learning agreement prior to your departure.

• Deadline: You must submit the completed application by December 15th for the following fall term (starting in August).

• For further questions about the application process, talk to your home coordinators, Dr. Julia Andres and Ms. Karin Kruse.
**ISEP APPLICATION**

- **Included Colleges**

  At Bielefeld University, students of the British and American Studies program can apply for a study abroad in the United States. Currently (for fall term 2020), you can choose from a total of 124 colleges all over the country (including one school in Alaska):

- **Which school should I choose?**

  For your ISEP application, you must pick a total of ten institutions which should all be places you would love to go to since ISEP will later assign one of them. Apart from academics, and depending on your personal preference, you could consider circumstantial factors such as:
  - east vs. west coast / north vs. south
  - coastal vs. interior regions
  - private vs. public institutions
  - metropolitan vs. small-town vs. rural areas

source: [https://search.isepstudyabroad.org/FindAProgram/Map/](https://search.isepstudyabroad.org/FindAProgram/Map/)
**ISEP APPLICATION**

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

- **before the application:** gather all necessary paperwork, TOEFL results, vaccinations (mandatory by state law for most colleges)
- **December 15th:** submission deadline for your application (internal stage at Bielefeld University)
  - your home coordinators will review your application and notify you if nominated
- **February 15th:** final submission deadline for your application (to ISEP) and application fee payment deadline
- **end of March/early April:** college placement notification and acceptance fee payment
  - name the twelve potential courses which you would like to take at your host university (this can be changed later at the college if necessary)
- **end of May:** arrival of your DS-2019 (the most important document you will get for your study abroad!)
  - pick up your DS-2019 at the International Office of Bielefeld University
  - make an appointment for your J1-VISA interview and pay all the necessary fees
- **around June:** J1-Visa at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin or a responsible General Consulate (e.g. Frankfurt am Main, recommended)
  - don’t forget to follow the regulations and bring all the necessary documents (and please don’t stress about what rumors go around the web ;)
- **book your flight(s)** (you can book these earlier in advance, however, remember that you need the J1-Visa and have no guarantee you can actually enter the U.S. until after your visa has been successfully granted)
  - you can enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the start and stay in the country up to 30 days after the end of your program (see DS-2019)
ISEP APPLICATION

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES

• **Start as early as possible:** Don’t underestimate the amount of work you will have to put in your application! Even though December 15th for the following year’s fall term in August sounds like a lot of time, keep in mind that you will have to conduct detailed research on more than just ten universities since you have to check whether they will offer the courses you need. Also, you need to gather all the required paperwork such as your official transcript, a letter of recommendation by a faculty member (they all love to help you out, but it might be a matter of time!), and a one-page motivational letter describing why you would like to go abroad. Beyond that, you can only take the TOEFL test on specific dates and might want to prepare yourself for it. The closest test center to Bielefeld – which I can personally recommend for its small size and calm ambience – is in Bünde. Also important: scholarship deadlines might be much earlier than the application deadline!

• **Pick the ten colleges that will work for you:** Remember that ISEP will assign one of the ten schools you will submit in your application. Make sure you are happy with any one of them in terms of academics and personal preference! You can view the *Chances of Placement* for each school. (also see [https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/planning/how-to-apply/chances-of-placement](https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/planning/how-to-apply/chances-of-placement))

• **Be specific about your motivation and region of choice:** Express your concrete ambitions and curiosity for the American culture and how you would like to emerge in the local community. Show proof of how you thought all of this through and know what you want. Also, try to narrow down a specific region of your interest, which will serve as a beneficiary argument for why you have picked these particular ones.

• **Be patient and wait once you have applied:** Don’t check your mail account’s inbox all the time. Focus on your coursework at home. Browsing for traveling ideas and planning your flights or the visa application might help you to relax during the waiting period.
These are the costs of my stay at East Carolina University during fall term 2018 to serve as an example and give you an idea of the estimated expenses. Some of them are fixed or mandatory (red), some are flexible but inevitable for me (blue), and others rather flexible and optional (yellow). Depending on your personal preferences, these numbers might differ. However, note that some of the fees might have slightly changed since that application period (December 2017).

### General Costs (ISEP, Visa, Monthly Payments)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL iBT (Dec 2017)</td>
<td>215.14€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISEP Application Fee (Feb 2018)</td>
<td>83.17€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISEP Acceptance Fee (Mar 2018)</td>
<td>268.78€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISEP Insurance Fee (for 5 months, Apr 2018)</td>
<td>358.71€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEVIS I-905 Fee (May 2018)</td>
<td>159.16€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRV Appointment Fee (Jun 2018)</td>
<td>136.00€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly payments to Bielefeld University</td>
<td>700.00€</td>
<td>x5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>4720.96€</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Getting There/Coming Back

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flight to the U.S. (DUS-JFK-RDU, Apr 2018)</td>
<td>621.00€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIC internat. student ID (Apr 2018)</td>
<td>19.50€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New suitcase (80 liters) (Jun 2018)</td>
<td>82.99€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internat. driver’s licence (Jun 2018)</td>
<td>15.00€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. mobile SIM card (for 5 months, Jul 2018)</td>
<td>124.27€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money in cash (Jul 2018)</td>
<td>200.00€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight back to Germany (MIA-DUS, Oct 2018)</td>
<td>595.00€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1657.76€</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### During My Stay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class-related literature (6 books, 4 courses)</td>
<td>136.83€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Pirate Club (college sports membership)</td>
<td>52.80€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office material</td>
<td>80.00€</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>269.63€</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ISEP APPLICATION**

- **save money:** buy less stuff and spend your funds on amazing experiences that might change your life – it’s worth it!

- **work prior to your departure:**
  - e.g. on a 450€-basis, as a working student (20 weekly hours), freelancing, summer and promotion jobs

- **work during your stay in the U.S.:**
  - in general: only allowed on-campus, with a maximum of 20 weekly hours, and approved by ISEP

- **ask for help**
  - reach out to parents, relatives, and friends – or find somebody or an organization willing to sponsor you (e.g. gofundme.com)

- **build up an online presence**
  - create a blog about your stay, an Instagram profile, a YouTube channel and talk about your experience

- **Auslands-BAföG**
  - definitely look into this, even if you are not granted *Inlands-BAföG*, the rates for studying abroad are much higher!

- **student loans:** KfW-Studienkredit, Stiftung Deutsche Bildung, etc.

- **scholarships:** DAAD, Fulbright Kommission, PROMOS-Reisestipendium, mystipendium.de (scholarship search engine)
**USEFUL RESOURCES**

- **ISEP Exchange**: [https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/programs/program-types-and-deadlines/isep-exchange](https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/programs/program-types-and-deadlines/isep-exchange)
- **Steps to Get Started**: [https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/steps-to-get-started/](https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/steps-to-get-started/)
- **How to Apply**: [https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/planning/how-to-apply](https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/planning/how-to-apply)
- **Find a College Program**: [https://search.isepstudyabroad.org/FindAProgram/Map/](https://search.isepstudyabroad.org/FindAProgram/Map/)
- **ISEP Health Insurance**: [https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/before-you-go-abroad/student-health-insurance](https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/before-you-go-abroad/student-health-insurance)
- **ISEP Catalog for Non-U.S. Students**: [https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/catalogs](https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/catalogs)
- **TOEFL iBT Test**: [https://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about](https://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about)
- **J1-Visa Application**: [https://j1visa.state.gov/](https://j1visa.state.gov/)
- **U.S. Embassy/Consulates in Germany**: [https://www.usembassy.gov/germany/](https://www.usembassy.gov/germany/)
- **cheap flight deals for students only**: [https://www.studentuniverse.com/](https://www.studentuniverse.com/)
- **International Office at Bielefeld University**: [https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/einrichtungen/international-office/](https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/einrichtungen/international-office/)
GOING ABROAD

A FEW LAST WORDS...

• When going abroad, force yourself out of your comfort zone and try new experiences! Do not hesitate and feel ashamed for nothing. Show initiative and fully emerge in your host environment – this is a chance of a lifetime!

• Always remember that you are a guest in the U.S. – respect the laws and rules, even if it might differ to what you know from Germany. Adjust to a different way of studying at a U.S. college and collect many refreshing experiences for your own studies at home!

• Be nice and friendly to strangers – they might become your friends for life! Anyone you will meet will most likely have a different cultural background and varying definition of humor or the “right” political opinion. Be polite and respectful in discussions.

• Do not stress too much about over people’s judgement! Even though you will enroll in a native speaking environment of English, most of the U.S. American people value foreigners willing to put in effort to learn their language. They will most likely not feel offended, if you make a mistake or two, or have a slight German accent – in contrary, they think it is interesting and unique!

• An application for a study abroad takes time and a lot of work – but it is definitely worth it! Do not be afraid of applying since there usually are more spaces open than you might expect! Also, do not hesitate to apply for a scholarship – most of them do not get enough applications because people are scared that they might not have the grades or social engagement!

• What could possibly go wrong? You will never find out what is waiting out there for you, unless you try!
ISEP CONTACTS
AT BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY

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