

Erasmus+ Erfahrungsbericht

Persönliche Angaben			
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Gastland	Northern Ireland		
Gasthochschule	University of Ulster, Coleraine		
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Bericht (bitte mind. 1 Seite):

As a student of the English and American Studies program at TU Chemnitz, I chose to spend my mandatory fifth semester abroad in Northern Ireland. The decision did not only depend on academic factors for me, but also on my interest in the culture and history of the country.

I arrived in Northern Ireland at Belfast International Airport on September 7th, several days before orientation began. This gave me time to explore the town I was staying in – instead of opting for accommodation offered by Ulster University, I chose to stay at a house I shared with four other international students in Portstewart. I would highly recommend finding accommodation in Portstewart to anyone who has decided to study abroad at Ulster University. Portstewart is outfitted with a Tesco for grocery shopping and has good bus connections to the university, Coleraine (a small town with a few discount and charity shops), and Portrush (another small town with quite a few shops and old-fashioned buildings). Although public transportation is an added weekly cost, it is advantageous to have a grocery shop nearby. Staying at university accommodation would have required trips to Coleraine or Portstewart to do proper grocery shopping (the university features a Spar, but its inventory is limited).

Orientation began on the 13th of September. The international department at Ulster University put together a team of students who called themselves the “lime-green army” – and they were absolutely wonderful! They helped international students with registration, gave tours of the university, and planned several welcoming activities for us. Most of these included free lunches and informational events. Several members of this team also helped organize iCafe every Monday at the Rock Café in Portstewart – I encourage everyone who studies abroad at Ulster University in Coleraine to attend every week. It’s a great way to socialize with international and local students. The chaplaincy also organized exceptional trips, such as the one to Glenariff Forest Park. Furthermore, the head of the international department hosted a Coffee & Chat every Wednesday afternoon so students could take a break from working/researching in the library – it was another great way to get to know the local students, address problems we had regarding our studies, and socialize with other internationals. Another wonderful aspect offered by the locals of the surrounding areas was the International Friends program. When international students sign up for it, they are assigned a host family who takes them on trips and generally spends time with them. I made so many new friends and contacts through these events/activities and would greatly encourage everyone to participate actively in each one of them!

Regarding academic aspects, Ulster University exceeded my expectations in every possible way. I took three modules: Writing & Publishing, Adaptation and Historical Fiction, and 20th Century Irish Writers. All the teachers were forthcoming and welcomed the international students warmly, and were always willing to help with any confusion. Writing & Publishing is an ideal course for anyone intending to go into any aspect of writing, ranging from poetry to journalism to stage writing. This course definitely helped expand my knowledge of how to go about publishing various genres, and the feedback I received from the teacher on my portfolio (consisting of several writing assignments) improved my writing skills. Adaptation and Historical Fiction was possibly my favorite module. The teacher presented adaptations of various works of historical fiction, and managed to associate these adaptations and works of literature with culture and politics of the past and present. I learned how to critically regard works of historical fiction and their adaptations while also improving my presentation and writing skills. This course was interesting and informative, and I

would recommend it to anyone interested in historical fiction and adaptations stemming from works of literature. 20th Century Irish Writers was a course that enriched my cultural knowledge of Ireland immensely. The teacher was passionate about the subject, and extensively discussed works by W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett. Before this class, I was unaware of the turmoil and anguish each of these authors felt because of the country's history; it was an enlightening experience regarding history and culture. Anyone interested in Irish culture and how literature has played a part in it should attend this course. Another attractive aspect of Ulster University is the library. It features two big rooms that offer books and journals to check out, and a huge IT room that offers computers for anyone wanting to research or do coursework. An alternative option (one that I often took advantage of because I work better in quiet areas) is to borrow a laptop from the main desk. These can be taken into the main library rooms and returned in the evenings.

Northern Ireland offers a gigantic amount of opportunities to learn about its culture, along with beautiful landscapes that are definitely worth exploring. For example, on my first day after arrival, I walked along the Causeway Coastal Route from Portstewart to Portrush. This trail extends along the coastal cliffs and features several plaques that describe historical locations (such as the Ballyreagh Castle Viewpoint). Dunluce Castle and Town, located near Portrush, are ruins that are informative regarding the cultural history of the area. Belfast City Hall features an exhibition that covers the major points of Northern Irish history, and Derry/Londonderry (or the old walled city) is representative of the clashes that took place in the country during the 17th century between Irish citizens and English settlers. In addition to these explorations, local pubs are worth visiting, especially to socialize and listen to Irish music (international students should check with the schedules of pubs - the Springhill bar in Portrush, for example, features traditional Irish music every Thursday evening).

Overall, I'm beyond thrilled with my experiences in Northern Ireland and at Ulster University. I immediately felt at home and comfortable with the people that surrounded me. The coastal landscapes were a welcome escape from the city bustle of Chemnitz, and public transportation made it easy to get from one place to another (a trip from Coleraine to Belfast took approximately an hour and a half). The weather was mostly rainy and windy, but that was something I knew I should expect; I got used to it rather quickly and eventually it became a wondrous part of the experience and made the few sunny days even more enjoyable. The staff and local students at Ulster University were such caring people and they impacted just how much I enjoyed my time in Northern Ireland. I am immensely grateful for having been given this opportunity through the Erasmus+ Mobility program, and I hope that others enjoy their time at Ulster University as much as I did!