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Study Abroad for Free, Like Me.

Posted April 29, 2013 at 9:05 am by [Alicia Gangi '14](#)



Oxford School of Law | Photo: Alicia Gangi '14

The 2012 school year was probably my most memorable year in college and I never stepped a foot on campus.

Last summer, I did a month-long study abroad trip in Salamanca, Spain. I had such a genuinely good experience I applied for another study abroad program the following semester.

I spent over three months in Oxford, England and received full credit for courses at USF St. Pete.

The best part of my experience was that I probably spent less money taking a full semester's worth of credit hours in two different countries than other students did taking regular classes on the St. Petersburg campus.

The idea of participating in study abroad seems impossible unless you have the money to fund it.

Truth be told, the majority of the students who did study abroad with me had financial help from their parents. I did not have that luxury, but I still did two study abroad trips back to back and didn't spend any of my own money. Here's how.

Expenses for a study abroad experience are comprised of the fee of the trip, which includes tuition, airfare, room and board and personal expenses while abroad. I went to Oxford Brookes University in Oxford, England for the 2012 fall semester and was given an estimated expenditure sheet of approximately \$11,000.

I was one of only three students to be selected for the experience so I did not want that large sum of money to stop me from experiencing such a rare opportunity. I wasn't working because I was only home for one month from the time I returned from Salamanca before I had to leave for Oxford. So, I turned to scholarships.

The Education Abroad Website has an informative easy to follow scholarship and funding page that includes most of the opportunities to receive aid. Scholarships and grants I've seen range from as large as \$15,000 to as small as \$500.

When applying for these grants/scholarships you have two options: apply for as many small opportunities as possible or apply for one that pays more and focus all of your energy on it. I decided to do quantity over quality and ended up not winning any of the large grants or awards. I relied on FAFSA, Florida Prepaid and other small scholarships and grants to fund both of my study abroad trips.

Applying for all of these scholarships is the same responsibility as taking an online class. I put more effort into writing essays and cover letters for awards than I did studying for exams. If you want to study abroad, start funding it before you even get accepted. Apply for scholarships through the USF Foundation Scholarship list as well as the USFSP Privately Funded Scholarships website during the spring semester and then study abroad in the Fall. Study abroad seems expensive but it saved me tuition money in the long run.

In Oxford I had to find courses that would be considered appropriate substitutes for classes required to complete for my majors at USF.

I'm a Political Science and a Mass Communications major so I'm always trying to earn as many credit hours as possible in the least amount of time. Sometimes there are courses that actually fulfill the requirements for more than one class.

In my case, I took two classes in Oxford that gave me credit hours for four classes I needed to complete for my degrees. These courses would have never been offered at USFSP and I would have ended up taking extra classes and spending more money if I didn't study abroad.

- In Oxford I lived in a dorm room with four girls from Poland, Germany, Austria and China.
- I took a bus or walked to class instead of driving my car.
- I wore scarves and jackets instead of shorts and flip-flops.

- I studied politics and foreign affairs from a European perspective.
- I lived outside of London instead of outside of Tampa.
- I traveled to cities in France, and visited Rome and Vienna on the weekends instead of going to the beach.

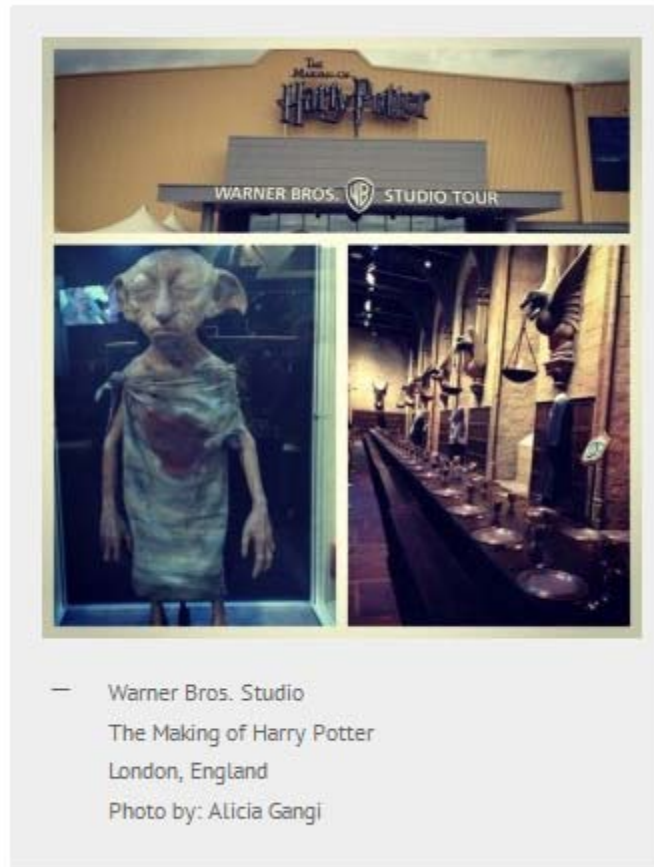
I lived a life completely different from my own for two semesters. I'm not saying that it's worth \$11,000, but I am saying it's possible to do it for free!



Radcliffe Bodleian Library University of Oxford
Photo by: Alicia Gangi



London Bridge Photo by: Alicia Gangi



About the blogger



I'm a senior at USFSP, but I won't be graduating for another year. That is because I'm majoring in both Mass Communications and Political Science. I love to travel. I spend my summers and winters backpacking through different countries.