

Exchange Abroad Report

Winter Semester (2017-2018)

Host University-University of Cergy-Pontoise, France

From September 2017 to January 2018, I went on an Erasmus exchange semester in France, at the University of Cergy-Pontoise. Below is my experience at the host university and some information that could be useful for those who are considering going on exchange in France.

First, University of Cergy-Pontoise (UCP) is located 1-hour train ride away from Paris. This was my main criteria for choosing to go on exchange at UCP. It is possible to live in Paris and go to UCP, which was what I did. However, before doing so, you should consider whether you could handle 2 hours or more of transport each day to go to school. If you go to Cergy from Paris, you have to take RER A, which is notorious for not being reliable. I remember that on a few occasions, they asked people to leave the train in mid-journey and you will be obliged to take other trains or bus, which is not very pleasant if you are in a hurry to be on time to class. The fare of the transport card (Pass-Navigo) for within Paris and the surrounding five zones, which includes Cergy-Pontoise is 75 euros, valid for a month and you can make as many trips as you want. Without this pass, it is not feasible financially to get around. The university will provide you with all the documents necessary to make this pass in your welcoming package.

I fortunately did not have to deal with French bureaucratic procedures for housing rental because I was hosted by a friend. However, you should note that it is not very easy to rent a room on your own because the landlords will ask you to have a French guarantor. This guarantor should also have the required income level and some other criteria that I am glad to not have dealt with. Therefore, I suggest you to arrange your housing with the university if possible.

In terms of classes, I only chose courses taught in English. More specifically, I took Business Law USA, Comparative International Law, Criminal Law England and Wales, Contract Law (LLM) and Introduction to French Law (LLM). The first three courses are from third year Anglo-American Law Program. They were held in amphitheatres- French term for huge lectures rooms. Personally, I liked the content of Business Law USA and Comparative International Law. The exams were in writing for Business Law and Criminal Law but oral for Comparative International Law. All the exams were straightforward.

For the LLM courses, it is different because the classes are held in small groups. The teachers are practicing lawyers. I enjoyed both LLM courses that I took. One thing I can complain about LLM courses is that there were mainly international students in the course who had various levels of legal knowledge, and consequently, I had impression that the class do not go as far as it could. I nevertheless recommend taking LLM courses because they are more interactive. The content of the LLM courses I took were quite basic but they were nevertheless interesting.

The staff at the university were very nice and warm towards exchange students and you can go to them for any problems that you may have. The incoming mobility office and ELSA Cergy organized several social events during my stay. ELSA Cergy also organized a few interesting institutional visits. Cergy is a student city with four or five universities so you will definitely meet many people. There is not many places to hang out in Cergy but usually, every student goes to Paris to party.

In terms of everyday life, the French people do not speak English so you need to brush up your language skills before going there. The university offers French courses but I did not take them. France, especially Paris is generally a bit more expensive than Netherlands but with Erasmus aid, you will manage just fine.

I can conclude that I had a good time at UCP and especially in Paris and recommend going on exchange there.