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Degree Program at TAU: Sofaer GMBA

Host University: George Washington University, USA

Exchange term (including the duration): Fall 2020

Exchange Experience

About the country and city

Washington, DC is the capitol of the United States and as such is filled with politics, international NGOs, historical landmarks, and museums. The city is made up of different neighborhoods, each with a different feel. The National Mall is where you can find the Capitol Building and Washington Monument. Georgetown has great shopping, and China Town has many great restaurants and bars.

About the Host University

The George Washington University campus is located in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood of DC, which has restaurants and parks, not as many coffee shops as I would have liked and is a close walk to many museums. Given that all classes were remote, I did not spend much time on campus though. GWU has a career center that you can use with staff that can help you with your resume and offers a service called Handshake that seeks to provide networking opportunities with their alumni.

Courses and professors

Global Perspectives, Professor Bonnie Pierce – This class looks at the differences in management styles throughout international organizations. The professor is very knowledgeable and is able to bring in a lot of her own personal experiences.

There is generally one main case study that is assigned to read for each class. There was one individual assignment called a "lighting talk" which is a three minute presentation on a topic of your choosing and two group assignments, a case study analysis and a final presentation which involved researching an international organization and providing a recommendation for a way to improve their business. We were also graded on class participation and a peer evaluation.

International Business Strategy, Professor Anupama Phene – Professor Phene is an amazing prof. and I would recommend taking a class with her if you have the opportunity. She always tries to relate the course material to things that are happening in the news. The class focuses on how to manage an international expansion. We have one case study and two or three other articles to read for class each week.

The coursework consists of three group assignments that need to be completed, two short case study analyses and a final report on a company of our choosing, a final exam, and class participation.

Cyberthreats, Policy, and Strategy, Professor Al Lewis – This course examines policies surrounding cybersecurity and forces you to think like a policymaker when looking into topics such as cyberwars, the role of the government, the private sector, and non-state actors. The class has about 150 pages of readings to do each week and the class is largely discussion based. Professor Lewis has been working in this field for many years and is very knowledgeable on the subject matter.

We were required to complete posts in the online discussion board each week and this made up our participation mark, there was one case study assignment where we had to research a cyberattack, a debate, and a policy memorandum.

Accommodation

Dorms were closed this year because of Covid, but there is plenty of off-campus housing. Rent prices in DC can be very high, if you are looking for a one bedroom apartment, you can expect rent to be above \$2000 US per month. Some neighborhoods in DC that I would recommend are Dupont Circle, Adams Morgan, and Georgetown. I lived in Arlington, Virginia, which is just across the bridge from DC and a 45 minute walk to campus. There were some hotels that were using some of their suites as student housing. The cost was similar to renting an apartment, but had all the amenities of a hotel, such as a gym, restaurant, daily free breakfast, and housekeeping multiple times per week. I used this Facebook group to find my accommodations:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/770438619740282>

Visa

All exchange students require a J-1 Visa, which GWU will send you. The Visa process to travel to the US for me was very simple, because I'm Canadian and the US doesn't require that Canadians need a Visa. Check with the US consulate from your home country for more details.

Transportation

DC has busses and subways that make it easy to get around the city, there are also Bird/Lime scooters and Capitol Bike Share if you want to bike, you can get a student discount for an annual membership that is worth it if you are going to bike.

Insurance and Health Services

You are required to have health insurance when you are studying in the US and you will be automatically enrolled with Aetna Insurance through George Washington University. You can choose to opt out and purchase other insurance, but the student plan that we were provided covered anything that might have been necessary.

Living expenses

The biggest expense is rent, which can be \$2000+ if you are living alone, although you can find cheaper places with roommates (\$1000-1500), groceries, transportation and entertainment. In total, the costs tend to be about \$2500 per month.

Food

DC is very culturally diverse and you can find great restaurants for any type of cuisine that you are looking for. The weather is very warm in the summer and there are a lot of nice patios to go to, a few that I would recommend are Oyamel and the Crimson Diner which has a rooftop patio.

Tips

There are some nice hikes that you can do such as, Rockcreek Park, the Mt. Vernon Trail or just walking along the waterfront of the Potomac River. Most of the museums are free.

General experience

Being abroad during Covid definitely changed the type of experience that one would normally get since things weren't as opened as they normally are. However, I still enjoyed my time there and it was especially fun because I was there during the US election. I volunteered on some political campaigns and it was exciting to be on the ground when major events were taking place. Given that classes were all done remotely, I didn't have as much of a social experience as I would have liked because I didn't have the opportunity to meet my class mates in person.

If you are interested in international affairs or politics or looking to build a network in the US, GWU is a great school to attend. The professors are all very knowledgeable and they offer a large array of classes for you to choose from, so you will be able to find something that suits your interests. Washington, DC is also a historic city with a lot to explore and I would recommend considering GWU as an option for your study abroad semester.