

Study Abroad Reflection – Fall 2013

Overall I had an incredible time studying abroad and I'm very happy that I made the decision to go.

I found CEU's program to be of a comparable rigor to UC Hastings. Most classes assigned a similar amount of reading and tried to facilitate discussion in the classroom. I did notice that most of my fellow students were already lawyers in their respective studies, since many European countries don't require three extra years for law school. This meant that a lot of students had already started their own firms, or otherwise had a practical background before starting the masters program at CEU. That being said, I still felt very prepared and able to participate in class and follow along, and I never felt disadvantaged or unprepared.

CEU has two main tracks within its legal studies program. One focuses on international human rights and the other focuses on international business. Most of the students take classes in only one track or the other, but I had the opportunity to mix and match classes as I saw fit. Both tracks lasted for a month before finals, so I participated in two sets of classes (Modules) and took eight classes total, with two sets of finals. Both types of classes functioned similarly to classes at Hastings, except that no professor relied on cold calling. Many of the professors were from Hungary or other nearby Eastern European countries, but I did have one professor (Richard Buxbaum) who taught at UC Berkeley and knew many UC Hastings faculty personally.

I really enjoyed the opportunity to meet other students from such diverse backgrounds and talk to them about their experiences. CEU's student body is as

about as diverse as one could imagine. I met many people from Eastern Europe, but also students from Africa, South America, China/Southeast Asia, and other American exchange students. I think at least half of what I learned came from talking and drinking with classmates after class as opposed to class itself. Some of the human rights students stayed more to themselves, but most of the business students were very social and easy to talk to.

The city of Budapest is incredible, and it is probably one of my favorite cities of Europe. It is split in half by the Danube river, and I lived on the Pest side, right by the Hungarian Parliament building near the bank of the river. In a single weekend I could tour the Parliament building, unwind at the Turkish baths, go out to the ruin bars in the Jewish Quarter, and hike up Gellert hill to see panoramic views of the entire city. One of the highlights were the spectacular Christmas that popped up in December and sold mulled wine, apple ciders, all sorts of sausages and chicken, and Christmas gifts.

Attendance at CEU is mandatory, but I had many three-day weekends and still managed to travel quite a bit. Before returning to San Francisco, I managed to visit Rome, Amsterdam, Berlin, Milan, Munich, Vienna, Istanbul, and Prague. While I may have missed out on some classes and some networking opportunities here in San Francisco, I absolutely think I made the right decision by seizing a once in a lifetime opportunity to study abroad and travel through Europe. My only regret is that I didn't really start to make friends at CEU until the second Module, but I hope I will stay in contact with many of the people whom I met for some time.

Study Abroad Assessment – CEU Fall 2013

I chose the Central European University (CEU) Budapest program. Overall, it was a positive experience and I would recommend CEU to other students. I will assess the classes, living experience, and support students receive. The Hastings materials on CEU stress the human rights courses but the school actually has a few different study tracks. For exchange students human rights or international business law would be best. The schedule is designed for students to choose one track so it can be hard to take classes from others. Instead of a semester system CEU uses modules where each class lasts about a month. The first module has introductory classes and the next modules have more advanced classes about each subject. Hastings students only need to complete two modules so I would advise them to attend the second and third modules. The first module has a lot of classes like legal terminology or introduction to the US constitution which a Hastings student has either already taken or cannot get credit for. I was able to get enough credits in the first module by taking classes from human rights and business law but this was not ideal as sometimes they overlapped so you would have to be absent in one class to go to another. I had also not taken any classes in either subject area at Hastings; if I had I would probably not been able to get enough credits. CEU sent out a class schedule during the summer but they changed it for fall so there were fewer classes to choose from that I thought would be available. I really wanted to learn more about Hungary but classes always focused on the EU or the international level. Business law classes used the UK, France, and Germany as the main models and only gave a few examples from other countries. Hungary and the region in general has a fascinating history so I was disappointed I could not learn more about the country I had chosen to

study in. It would have been really interesting to learn about how Hungary had modernized their economic law after communism and how EU integration was affected the country. There are so many emerging markets in the area so learning more about it would have been great for careers too. If someone is interested in EU economic law this would be a great program; they offer classes on many different subject areas of EU law. The module system is a little difficult to get used to at first. Since the classes are only a month the introductory ones do not go into much detail. You are expected to take the next level up in the subject to get a good understanding of it. This limits your class choice if you want more than a brief overview of a subject. The module system can be stressful because you do not have very much time to prepare for the final exams. I expected there to be a small break in between when each new module starts but CEU does not give one. The daily amount of time you are in class is longer than at Hastings since they need more hours to finish a class in one month. You still have a lot of reading to do on top of this. There are some writing assignments and small presentations but no very long papers because CEU students are supposed to be working on a thesis throughout the year. You also cannot really choose a schedule as you choose a track and have the same classes each week but each week they meet at different times. There is always class five days a week too. If someone wants more time to travel I would advise them to spend some time in Budapest before the program starts and plan very carefully. I really liked the classes because they were all smaller and students were expected to participate. This was interesting since the student body is very diverse and everyone would share their different countries' laws or perspective on a subject. There are only a few students from Hungary. Most of the students are from Eastern Europe and the Balkans but I also met a few from

Asia. The human rights track has a lot of African students. There will be a few other American students as well. Since almost everyone is an international student there is an extensive orientation before module one. I am not sure what they do for students starting with the other modules but there were quite a few exchange students who began with module two. Most of the orientation is not really relevant for exchange students. The CEU staff were all very helpful and friendly. I had one issue where I was not on the class email list since I was an exchange student. There is also a lot of bureaucracy at the start and end of the program but they give you clear instructions on what to do. For housing there is a very cheap CEU residence that even has a cafeteria but it's located far from the campus. CEU did not want to notify me on if I would receive housing or not until very soon before classes started so I just found my own apartment online. I was worried about housing but there is a CEU office to help you find an apartment and there are a lot of bulletin boards at school with people trying to rent their flats to students. I think it would be easiest to book a hotel for when you first arrive and then try to find housing with the CEU resources if you don't get student housing. Hungary is also much more affordable than some of the other European exchange programs and they do not use the Euro yet. CEU is English-speaking and located in a very touristy area so there are a lot of places surrounding it where you will be fine with English. Outside the tourist spots Budapest might be a little more difficult than other programs just because of the language. CEU does offer Hungarian classes but it might be hard to fit into your schedule. If students want to travel around Europe Budapest does not really have a high-speed train like other cities so it's more difficult; especially because you will be in class so much. There are a few places you can reach easily in Hungary or you can take the train to Vienna in three

hours. If you want to go to places that seem close like Munich or Prague you will have at least a six-hour train ride or you will have to take a flight. You can still see some nice places but you have to plan ahead and take advantage of any early releases or days off. Even if you do not go anywhere else you can do a lot of different things in Budapest.

Post-travel Report: Central European University, Budapest Fall 2006

I was a 3L and went on the exchange because it's a great opportunity to take advantage of in law school before you start working for the next 40 years.

Travel & visas - Student visa was more hassle than helpful. Probably don't even need it. Hungarian border guards are confused by the student visa, and you get 90 days every time you leave the country. Travel is just like travel in Western Europe, until you venture to Eastern Europe, which is poorer, not so efficient, etc. Get an international students card if you are under 26 for travel discounts.

Financial details - If you are on financial aid, you'll be short towards the end of the semester, because you lose your Perkins Loan for the semester and the estimated costs don't take into account your expensive flights to and from Europe.

Arrival and orientation - CEU has a seemingly decent orientation process, but they're really unorganized so stuff will come up during your time there that you had no idea about.

Accommodation & living - Cheaper than S.F. Cost is similar to living in Missouri or elsewhere in the midwest. You can find an apartment when you get there - lots of vacancy. There's a housing office at CEU that is somewhat helpful.

Academic details - Some interesting classes, but the scheduling sucks (you can't plan it - you'll have class anywhere from 9am - 6pm, Monday through Friday, with random breaks during those days. They give you your finals schedule less than a week before finals, so you can't plan travel at the end of the modules (two per semester) at all. Also, one Hastings unit per CEU unit, so you end up taking 10-12 classes for 12 Hastings units as most CEU classes are one unit. Some of the CEU professors also don't know how to teach. One guy literally read his outline without stopping for a solid hour every class period - you have to learn it yourself. Also, quite a few of the professors are rude and mean; they make every Hastings professor I've ever had seem like the friendliest and most polite people on Earth.

Country information (culture, weather, places to visit, etc.) - Nice until mid-late October, when it drops below freezing. Budapest is a fun city though, and puts you right in the middle of Europe for traveling. Not much else in Hungary though - wine country (Eger) is worth a visit.

Social and extra-curricular activities - Most other students are pretty hard core students - they are ESL and having a rough time, so not too social. There are events though, if you care to spend more time at CEU. I didn't do any of them.

What I've learned & the challenges I faced - Dealing with Hastings inflexibility regarding the unit transfer was the biggest challenge, hands down. Faced with the requirement of taking

more classes than CEU students in order to attempt getting 12 Hastings units is impossible, and we were supposed to deal with it. 10 units at CEU is doable and is what most CEU students actually take during two modules. However, be aware that you will be putting in lots of time and energy - it's definitely the hardest study abroad program by far, even if you only take 10 units. Obviously you learn stuff in your classes and from your international classmates.

What you wish you knew before you left - That CEU was a poor choice. I should have picked a different program.

Words of wisdom for other students - Don't go to CEU. By all means, visit Budapest because it's one of the great European capitals, but study abroad somewhere else.

Post-Travel Report: CEU Fall 2006

I spent the Fall 2006 semester studying at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. I studied abroad because it was something I always wanted to do (I missed out on it in college) and I liked the thought of seeing a different side of the law than I would have if I came back to Hastings for another semester.

Travel & visas – Travel from Budapest is really easy. It is right in the heart of Central Europe, so it is close to a lot of sights and the airport is fairly well served by low-cost airlines. CEU will insist that you get a student visa, but it's not only unnecessary, it can be a real hassle. With an American Passport you get a 90-day visa every time you enter the country, regardless of how many times you've crossed the border. If you travel a lot, these 90-day visas will cover you the whole time you are there. Hungarian border guards seemed really confused by the student visa, and having it ended up causing a lot of delay.

Financial details & Accommodation & living – Budapest is an inexpensive city, especially compared to San Francisco. Prices for food and drinks are maybe 50 % of what they would be here. Rent is very affordable. Along with another Hastings student, I rented a huge two-bedroom apartment downtown, with a balcony and a modern kitchen and bathroom for around \$600 per month total. Don't live at the CEU dorm. It is way out of town and hard to get to at night.

Arrival and orientation – Dealing with CEU is kind of a bureaucratic nightmare – leave yourself plenty of time to take care of things in advance.

Academic details – CEU offers one unit per class (or two units for a couple of intensive classes such as Comparative Freedom of Speech). This means that you will have to take between 10-12 classes if you want 12 units. All of these classes have finals, so you will also have to take 10-12 finals while you're there. CEU class hours per unit earned are equivalent to Hastings, but CEU's semester is a month shorter, which means there will be several weeks where you have 25 hours of class. Classes are also mandatory – if you miss more than one class they are allowed to fail you – which means that you will have to actually attend all 25 hours of class. Several other law schools that had exchange students at CEU, including Cornell and BYU, have recognized these discrepancies and award their students 12 units for every 10 CEU unit; Hastings, however, does not. Further, many of the professors at CEU are shockingly rude and insulting to the students.

Country information (culture, weather, places to visit, etc.) - Budapest is an awesome city and a great place to live – at least until December when the weather drops below freezing. I didn't really visit many other places in Hungary – it's kind of like the Midwest, flat and cold. It helps if you can learn a few words of Hungarian, but in downtown Budapest people speak English in most shops and restaurants. This is nice, since learning Hungarian is nearly impossible.

Social and extra-curricular activities – There's plenty of nightlife in Budapest. You will meet a lot of interesting people at CEU. The student body is made up of kids from all over the

world. There's always a group of kids that want to go out, but there are rarely school-sponsored events.

What I've learned & the challenges I faced – Dealing with CEU in general was a disaster, and trying to get Hastings to help with anything was also pointless. For example, CEU gave me a tuition break because of a deal it had worked out with Hastings. However, neither CEU nor Hastings told me that the tuition deal was dependent on me taking 12 units. A week before the end of the semester, when it was far too late to add units, CEU informed me that because I took less than the required amount of units, I would have to pay by the unit, which would have increased my tuition by over \$3,000. Another student in the same situation informed Hastings of the problem and asked for help in resolving it. No one from Hastings bothered to respond.

What I wish I knew before I left – I wish I had known about the units. I am currently taking 15 units in my last semester because I could only get 10 units from CEU, despite the fact that I put in a ton of hours there. I feel like CEU was far more difficult than any other exchange program Hastings has, yet I got less units than anyone else. Based on this, and the fact that I had constant problems with the CEU administration and professors, I would not recommend CEU. If I knew then what I know now, I would have studied somewhere else and just visited Budapest.

Travel Report - Central European University Fall 2006

My name is Krishnan Padmanabhan. I am a 3L at Hastings. I decided to study abroad because it would give me an opportunity to take courses in international law and meet a diverse body of students.

I studied at Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Hungary. I found it easy to obtain accommodations there, since the school had an office devoted to student housing. Prior to leaving I obtained a visa from the Hungarian Consulate in Los Angeles.

Upon arrival in Hungary, I stayed at CEU's dormitory for 1 week (approximately 40 minutes away from the university in a residential section of Budapest). This allowed me sufficient time to find housing closer to the university. The school is located in the heart of Budapest, and finding housing close by made it easier to take advantage of academic and cultural life.

My fellow students at CEU were awesome. They came from across the globe, including students from Central Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Northern Africa and Central and Southeast Asia. This made socializing interesting, since school parties included music and food from all sorts of interesting locales.

Overall my experience at CEU was great. The only difficulties I faced were in CEU's class attendance requirement. Unlike Hastings, they require that you attend all of your classes. This made scheduling trips (since travel is an essential component of study abroad) a bit difficult.

Central European University – Fall 2006

I think your ideal study abroad program depends on whether you are a Western European person or an Eastern European person. For example, if you think studying abroad in a place where everyone speaks English is a good thing, then Western Europe is definitely the place for you (and you should probably stop reading this right now). Everyday life in college towns in Western Europe is not dramatically different from life in college towns in the U.S.—and if you're looking for a comfortable jaunt through Europe, that may be really appealing. Personally, I like the fact that Eastern Europe lacks the comforts and conveniences of home. I think it ultimately makes for a more memorable experience. And I get a lot more pleasure out of telling my friends and family about my trips to places like Bosnia and Transylvania than all of my trips through Western Europe combined. Everyone has an Eiffel Tower or Coliseum story, but how many can rave about the mosques in Sarajevo? The fact is, everyone goes to Western Europe, and if you're like me, that's a great reason to go somewhere else.

If you go to Budapest in the fall, you will have at least a 6 week gap between the end of your summer job and the beginning of classes at CEU. I was able to get a lot of traveling done during this period, and I supplemented it with weekend and break trips throughout the semester. Overall, in a four month period I took trips to Ireland, England, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia, Germany, Denmark, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, and of course Hungary. I was satisfied.

As far as academics goes, the CEU curriculum is cake, at least if you take Human Rights classes. Everything is taught in English, and you will be one of a handful of people who speak English as a first language. It is a distinct (and unfair) advantage. We did no reading, took no notes, studied an outline for an average of 2 hours per class, regurgitated it onto a computer screen for an hour, and walked out with a good grade. The subject matter was abstract and amenable to B.S. I even learned a few things by accident. To be honest, I have no idea why people go abroad and study business law; even aspiring business lawyers are allowed to go abroad and pretend they care about human beings for a semester. It's a nice break.

I love Budapest. Some don't. It's going to be challenging; most people do not speak English and they're not particularly eager to make things easy for you. But the city is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen; everything is dirt cheap (the Hungarian economy is in the toilet); I lived two blocks from the Danube; most bars and clubs are open until dawn; and unlike in Western Europe, I had every tourist attraction all to myself. Even better, there was some serious political unrest in Budapest at the time and I got to partake in an honest-to-god riot where I was tear-gassed and beaten with a Billy club.

And the student body at CEU is unlike anything you will encounter at the other schools that have relationships with Hastings. In a single 25-person classroom you will have students from places like Romania, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Russia, Sudan, Hungary, Nepal, India, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Brazil, Slovakia, and more, and all of these people will speak English. I feel like I made real friends there and learned a lot about what it's like to live in places many people in the U.S. would struggle to place on a map.

I should note that some of my satisfaction with my experience is due to the fact that I didn't have to pay Hastings tuition—my semester cost about 3 grand. That was a one-time deal, and if you go to Budapest now you'll have to pay Hastings for the privilege.