Erfahrungsbericht Auslandsstudium

„My Semester Abroad at the GJU in Jordan“

One of the reasons why I chose to study the Master of International Social Work with Refugees and Migrants was because of the recommended semester abroad in Jordan. I prepared with absolving an Arabic language course (Fusha) in advance and researching about the unique situation in Jordan regarding refugees. I expected from the semester many formal and informal experiences that will influence my professionalisation process.

The application at the GJU was guided by the FHWS and with that very simple. After I received my admission letter, I looked the website expatries.com up and found very fast a room in a shared house in Jabal Amman. It was close to the SABE campus where the classes are held. I did not sign any renting contract there, just payed around 250€ per month and a deposit of 125€. My six roommates were all European students. We had much fun cooking together, watching movies or teaching each other Arabic words we learned in our everyday life.

Additionally, downtown and some local markets were close to my house. It was a very important part of my intercultural experience to buy all my goods and groceries there. I improved my Ammiya Arabic, learned some local practices and ate Falafel, Kanafe, Mansaf, Haloum, Fathe and so on.

The Social Work Diploma: Refugees and Migrants is different structured than university programmes I have experienced before. It is a four months long degree programme. There were mandatory classes from Sunday to Wednesday, sometimes also on Thursday. All of them were from 5pm to 8pm, normally 15 minutes break.

The classes were about mental health, research, humanitarian systems, social work with minors and woman and an arranged internship. All of them required several individual assignments, group assignments and self-planned projects as exam. I learned much in the humanitarian systems class. We got insights in related basic knowledge, definitions, project planning and attended presentations of local UN staff. The lecturers teaching in the ‘Diploma’ have many job connections and they could link me to an internship at UNRWA which I attended one to two times a week. They also offered to contact the International Red Cross, Help Age and other NGOs and INGOs regarding possible internships. Moreover, many of my classmates studied the “Network of Humanitarian Aid” master and we had a good informal exchange of knowledge. However, many classes were confusing. The class content/structure, exam requirements and deadlines were often not clear, even though students asked for it several times. One lecturer asked us to conduct a project day with woman or minors that took refuge. It was of high importance for her that the project should be sustainable. I had difficulties to see any aspect of sustainability when foreign students that do not speak Arabic well and do not know the cultural practices are for some ours in contact with vulnerable people.

With ongoing time all lecturers demanded many submissions. The workload between November and the Christmas break was very high. Particularly the six different group assignments/projects demanded a very good time planning.
Finally, I would say that my experience in Jordan including learning the local language, getting to know the culture and insights in humanitarian aid was very valuable. Several times I struggled because the intensive effort I spent for the University was not congruent to the learning outcome of most of the courses.

One point I do not want to forget in this report is, that my experience in Jordan was strongly shaped by me being male. Many female students told me that they often felt uncomfortable on the streets. Catcalling, honking cars and other harassment were unfortunately normal for them.

As last point I want to say that I am glad that I took the opportunity to live in Amman and that I would recommend everyone to also do so. Also, I am very thankful for the Erasmus + stipend, that ensured me living and studying in Jordan without financial difficulties.