

University: Bishop's University, Sherbrooke, QC, Canada

Fall 2023

Degree Program in Freiburg: Psychology (Bachelor)

Classes taken during the exchange: Psychology, Sociology, Politics

After starting my studies in Freiburg during the Pandemic, I decided to apply to the Global Exchange Program of the University of Freiburg because I had always wanted to study abroad and wanted to prolong my bachelor a little bit. I choose to apply to the Canadian partner Universities only, because I had always wanted to travel to Canada and was really interested in spending more than just a vacation there. I also wanted to study in English. I looked at all the possibilities and based my decision on a mix of the courses offered by the universities and the geographic location. I ended up going to my 2<sup>nd</sup> choice, Bishop's University in the heart of Quebec. After my exchange I can say I am super happy I ended up there and not at my first choice, because I had a really good time at Bishops and got to know a beautiful region I previously had known not much about.

Fall semester at Bishops kicked off with three days of international orientation at the end of august. This was a very cool opportunity to get know other internationals (exchange and full-time students), we got know the campus a little, we got a lot of information and there were fun activities too. I did not attend any pre online welcome session. O-week is the general orientation week, which is for freshmen/first-year students, but exchange students can also participate, but you do have to pay for it (around 95 \$). O-week is mostly about partying and games, you should definitely bring a pair of clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. It is definitely a crazy experience and was pretty fun. People join teams and then you can do challenges to win coins, that can be anything from duct-taping yourself to one of your teammates for 30 minutes, drawing on yourself with sharpie, getting dusted with baby powder or maple syrup, singing at karaoke or a push up contest. You can always say no to a challenge and you are never forced to do one and at the end of the week the team with the most coins wins eternal bragging rights. There is also a party on most nights. During O-week there is also some information sessions, but I felt like most of that was already covered during the

international orientation. Once you are at Bishops, it is also pretty easy to drop by the international office if you have any questions.

During my time at Bishop's, I lived off campus. I missed the deadline to apply for on campus housing so that is why I lived off campus. The part of Sherbrooke that Bishop's is in is called Lenoxville. I didn't start looking for a place until quite late and I think I just got really lucky that I found something quickly through the Facebook group (Bishop's Off Campus Housing Lenoxville [unofficial]). I heard from others that getting something for just one semester can apparently be tricky, sometimes they might not rent for only one semester. The Bishops Website does also have some listing for off campus housing.

Cost of living in general is higher in Canada than Germany. I think it was a little cheaper to stay off campus, because I paid less in rent than the people in the dorms and the meal plan for the dining hall is more than I spend on groceries in a regular month but it was still more expensive than in Germany. There is one residence on campus where you can cook for yourself and don't need the meal plan (Patterson). My friends told me the dining hall food can get a little repetitive, but it was okay. I had saved up some money by working before my semester abroad, which helped me finance the trips I took and the higher living costs. I think in general when you are abroad, no matter where, you spend more money than at home because you want to go on trips and buy souvenirs etc.

I managed to get into all of the classes that I wanted to. I had set out to do five classes but upon arrival reduced it to four, because the way I planned it I was only going to get credit for one of them in Germany anyways and I wanted have a little more time besides studying. I took two psychology classes, one sociology class and a politics class. It was super cool to get an insight into other areas, I really liked those two classes. Some of my smaller classes were very different from the lectures I'm used to in Germany, professors knew my name and it was much more interactive, even though it was not a seminar. The one bigger class I had was pretty similar to a lecture in Freiburg, where the professor spent most of the time talking about his slides. In general, there was more interaction with the students and a little more discussion. There are also assignments like papers, presentations or mid-terms that are spread throughout the semester rather than just the standard final here in Germany. There is still a final exam though. I personally did not find the classes more challenging than in Germany, I think it was pretty similar. I would recommend branching out into different areas if you have the chance

because Bishop's offers some cool classes, some friends of mine took drawing or photography classes, I know someone who did acting for non-actors.

Regarding social/ campus life, partying is a pretty big thing at Bishops, but like my roommate said: every school is a party school. You can also have a good time here if partying isn't your favorite thing to do. Certainly, during O-week and international orientation there was a lot of partying, which was fun and well organized and if you really like partying there is plenty of opportunity during the semester as well. For me, as someone who doesn't drink and doesn't need to party every weekend, I could still enjoy all of these events and still had a good time at Bishops. There are also a lot of cool clubs, everything from tennis, figure skating, skiing and knitting and they are super open to internationals. I did a bunch of cool trips with the outdoors club as well, mostly little hikes in the region. A lot of the clubs are really active on Instagram, so that's where you can get a feel for it and a lot of information. Bishops is a relatively small school, with somewhere between 2000-3000 students and that was a really cool experience. While the word community was mentioned during orientation what felt like 10000 times, I feel like there is truth to that, Bishops did really feel like a community, which was cool. Almost all of my friends were also doing exchange too and there were quite a few exchange students at Bishops from all around the world.

Within Sherbrooke, you can get around with the bus. It might take a little time, but it does exist which is nice. In general, public transport in North America is more limited than in Germany/Europe. So for anything that is not Montreal or Quebec City, you need a car, which you can rent if you are 21 or older. Getting to Montreal from Sherbrooke is pretty easy by bus, the bus company is called Limocar and there are a lot of trips everyday. The only thing is, on their website if you look up the schedule very far in advance there won't be any information, but that is totally normal. The bus to Quebec City leaves once or twice a day. I took some trips during my time there, I went to Montreal a few times, to Quebec City and there was a week off at the end of October where me and a few friends went down to New York City with the bus from Montreal.

Sherbrooke in general does have everything you need. There is a cinema and a mall and plenty of shops and in Lenoxville there are also two very cute coffee shops. I know French and I think it's definitely helpful to know, in Lenoxville you can easily get by with English because Bishop's is there, everyone is very willing to speak English. In Sherbrooke and in Quebec in general,

people prefer to speak French, I had friends who did not know French and got by but I do think it helps to know French.

I think the hardest aspect was that the semester went by pretty fast, but I also did a lot of cool things so overall I had a great time. I think what I liked the best was I met some very cool people, who all also wanted to explore and enjoy their time abroad. What I liked the least is that public transport in North America is just limited, I actually missed the German train (no that is not a joke).

General advice I would offer is to read the exchange reports. I found them to be very helpful, I actually did not read them before after submitting my application, but I found helpful tips in there and I felt like I could get a bit of a feel for the universities. So I would recommend reading them before submitting your application ;).

I wanted to end this by offering a few tips and tricks I would have loved to know before hand: About getting a sim / phone plan in Canada, if you don't have a study permit, you will only be able to get a prepaid sim card, which is a little more expensive. Phone plans and sim cards in Canada (and the USA too in my experience) are generally more expensive than in Germany. For me it was cheaper to book my flight to Canada and back to Germany together, I booked around 2 months prior and it was almost the same to book a one-way to Montreal than to book both the trip there and back. You can look up online till when the exam period is and you need to be available for the whole time. I actually had to rebook my flight because I had a final on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, so maybe keep that in mind.