

# **UNIVERSITY OF FREIBURG GLOBAL EXCHANGE**

## **EXCHANGE REPORT**

**February 2023**

### **INTERIM REPORT**

My first semester at Université de Montréal (UdeM) went really well overall. While it was difficult at first to adapt to the French study environment, I quickly developed some helpful strategies. During the first week, there was a welcome week organized by students for the first semesters. I participated in a guided tour of the campus, which turned out to be really useful to get an overview of the oblique structure of the buildings and also took part in other gatherings, which were helpful to make new friends. Unfortunately, there was no event that aimed specifically at the program that I signed up for (Feminist studies) and so I did not really get an introduction into who is responsible for the program, what I should expect and who else is part of it. This made it difficult for me to connect with other students of the same program, because the cohort is rather small and its courses are dispersed all over the different faculties. However, I could compensate for this lack of guidance with my extroverted and rather sociable character.

In general, I was able to get into the classes I wanted, and even make modifications during the first weeks of the semester. Here, once again, it was not really clear whom to address for this matter and what other options were available. It was by hear-say that I found out about a class that interested me more than others, and it was a little bit complicated to sign up for it, because all communication with the TGDEs (Student Records Management Technicians), took place via mail. Finally, the changes were made and I was quite happy about the diverse choice of classes I could make in different disciplines: art history & cinema, criminology, feminist theory.

All of my classes were in person and I did not have the impression that any pandemic-related regulations impact my studies significantly. I found housing before I left and it did go well, because I had acquaintances who connected me with a friend of theirs. When I arrived in Montreal, it was really helpful at the border control to already have an

address where I would stay but also made it more comfortable to get set up before the semester started. I would definitely recommend looking for housing beforehand. As I was not quite happy with the place that I lived in when I arrived, I looked for another shared apartment during the winter break. It was easier than expected to find affordable housing in conditions that are more suited to my needs.

In retrospect I would say that the hardest aspect of university life was the lack of guidance and access to peers in my program. As there was no event that would have put a face to the names of the people in charge, my experience of the first weeks here was kind of anonymous. However, the teachers are very approachable and the atmosphere in class is convivial and welcoming. What I like especially about studying here at UdeM is that the Feminist studies minor brings together a community of open, interested and critical students who share, while coming from different (academic) backgrounds, similar values and communication modes. The structure of the program reminds me a lot of my experience in the Culture & History Major and I think that I would like to continue my academic path in this direction. Studying in an international community and specializing in Gender studies sounds like a good idea for a potential masters degree.