What it was like to study at Parsons

Before going to Parsons I had heard much of the design school and its traditions. Being an actual part of the university met my expectations with perfection. As a design school, Parsons includes both traditional clothing and fashion design for which it is probably most known, but also illustrations, film art, photography and graphic design, which I attended.

While the focus is on design, the school buzzes with creativity, and this was indeed a motivational factor while studying. As for the social life, the creativity and ‘hard working atmosphere’ definitely also characterized it. It was not unusual to meet student on campus late at night, because they simply where in a good flow and wanted to do their assignments with perfectionism. Of course this spirit shaped my time at Parsons as well.

The course, Graphic Design I, was super demanding both timewise and mentalwise. We arrived at campus for the first class at 9 and until 12. Then we had one hour of lunch before the afternoon class at 13 to 16. This was the intended schedule for the course, but with additional homework.

The homework was very time demanding, and most days we spend out lunch hour finishing up work from the morning class and the evening preparing for the next day. We even spend most of our weekends preparing homework. The assignments, though, were very interesting, fun and useful, and therefore the workload seemed easier to embrace. Also the fact that we were doing the homework with other students as a social thing made it much easier as well as the buzzing atmosphere of creativity as mentioned before, which made me aim for perfection as well.

The course was very intense, but the way of working with one assignment at a time and really getting to dig into it piqued my curiosity to learn more and more and more. The way the course was structured was very motivational for me.
Motivation and expectations for going abroad
My motivation for studying at Parsons was to both have the time to focus on one course at a time and to enrich my study with a more hands on and visual way of thinking design.

I did the course as a summer course after finishing 22,5 ects points at ITU int he spring. This allowed me to really dig deep into graphic design and to learn as much as I possibly could on three weeks. As mentioned above the school, Parsons, made this possible in a very intensive and useful way by offering a creative and inspiring environment.

The things I have learnt at Parsons has definitely been useful already. All the skills I have acquired makes me think of design even more now as not only a skeleton and a proces, but also something that may be visualized and presented in the end.

The process of arranging my stay:
Before arriving in New York I had to prepare for my stay and make sure all formalities and requirements were met. First of all Parsons does not have a partnership agreement with ITU concerning exchange students and single course students. Therefore I had to apply for a pre-approval of the course before signing up at Parsons and before considering the arrangement of the stay. After receiving the pre-approval, I was able to simple book a seat at the course and slowly start planning the stay with all it concerns: flight tickets, accommodation and visa.

The visa application part was especially demanding, but fortunately for me this process was made a whole lot easier because I had 6 fellow students as support. We were all going to study at Parsons for the summer and were all more or less at the same place of the planning proces.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?

I found my fellow students extremely helpful during the planning of the stay. One of them had a friend who had earlier been at Parsons and this information was very valuable to us. Also I used the official website of the Danish embassy in the US and the US embassy in Denmark quite a lot while applying for the student visa.
Accommodation
Parsons actually do provide accommodation at campus, but because we were 7 students from DDK at ITU traveling together, we tried to find an apartment in New York to rent together as well. We succeeded in finding an apartment on the Upper West side of Manhattan. A 4 bedroom apartment with two single rooms, a double room and a triple room. Even though it was quite expensive (Around 5000 dkk per person), it was worth it. By living with classmates during the intensive course with a lot of homework, I managed to stay motivated and focused even when doing assignments in the evening or weekends.
Though the apartment was situated at Manhattan, we had a 30-40 min ride with the subway everyday to reach Parsons. Though this was sometimes a nice break, I would maybe have wished that we were even nearer the school, simply because of practicalities such as access to printers and scanners etc.

Expenses and Financing
The tuition fee for the course at Parsons was probably the biggest entry on my expenses list, but luckily I had almost 2 thirds covered by applying for the SU-scholarship. The next biggest entries must have been accommodation, flight tickets and visa. Living expenses were pretty high and most of the time it was actually cheaper to eat out or catch some take out instead of cooking meals at home. Also transportation was an expense. I bought a 30-day subway card with access to all subway lines in New York City. Even though it was almost 800 dkk to pay at once, it was definitely worth it, both while traveling to and from school but also to go on smaller trips around the city after finishing the course.

Scholarships
I applied for the SU-scholarship which all students, who are traveling abroad as a part of their studies can apply for. I got funding for almost 2 thirds of the tuition fee.