IT University Travel Report

Host University: Parsons – The New School for Design
Study programme at IT University: Digital Design and Communication
Courses studied abroad: Graphic Design 1
Exchange period: July 2016, three weeks intensive study

Your stay abroad

What was it like to study at Parsons (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

The three weeks intensive course in graphic design at Parsons was challenging and rewarding both academically and personally. The course focused on teaching the basic techniques in Photoshop, InDesign and Illustrator, however, the class did not only take place in front of a computer. In the afternoons the class was taught in a studio and focused on working with different physical materials such as textiles, paint and linocut. Both classes were creatively challenging, as you after an introduction had to work individually with the given assignment and often present the outcome the following day. The pace of the course was rather high, and you had to work a couple of hours each day after class to reach the continuous deadlines.

Regarding the professors, two professors were teaching the course. They were both competent and dedicated, and you never doubted that they would provide extra guidance if requested.

The campus was divided in several buildings with just a few blocks parting them, and it was always easy to find a suitable working space whether you had to work digitally or with physical materials.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

My initial motivation was to engage in a course with a more ‘hands on’ approach to graphic design, and the course at Parsons certainly fulfilled my expectations. The fact that the course was recommended to me by ITU students who had participated in the course themselves was also an important factor for my choice. Furthermore, I find the art experiences in New York very exciting as well, and the chance to
Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?

The course in graphic design taught me to be more open and playful in the concept development process. As the course had a ‘learning by doing’ approach for the most part, you were forced to try out your ideas in order to assess them. This approach forced me to forget my analytical mindset for a while and ‘just do it’. Learning to cope with being in the creative and uncontrollable state is something I definitely will find useful in future projects at ITU.
Arranging your stay

Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:

The arrangements I had to take care of before being able to participate in the course at Parsons were very comprehensive. At first I applied for a pre-approval at ITU and after receiving a confirmation, I signed up for the course and paid the fee. After receiving a confirmation letter from Parsons I applied for my student visa. The visa process is time consuming, entails several steps and costs approximately 3000 DKK altogether.

Meanwhile, I arranged plane tickets, a place to stay together with three other ITU students and applied for several grants. I started planning my trip nine month in advance, and it was definitely not too soon.

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

The administration at ITU seemed familiar with Parsons and the course because ITU students have attended the course earlier. This made the process easier. As I travelled with fellow students from DDK, we were able to help each other through the administrative tasks the trip required.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

As stated above, I travelled with three fellow students and we arranged a stay in an AirBnB apartment and purchased plane tickets together as well.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

My stay abroad was expensive even though it only was a three-week course. Besides from paying a high tuition fee, the student visa is expensive and so is staying in New York. However, I applied for grants and was lucky to receive a few. I was granted support from Augustinus Fonden, Oticon Fonden, SU Udlandsstipendium and ITU Travelpool. I would really encourage future students to give it a chance even though it is time-consuming as it really can pay off and make the financial situation a bit more manageable.
Recommendations for other students:

The best advice must be to begin the application process early! Especially regarding the student visa, you have a large administrative adventure in front of you and in order to get through in time without too much stress, you have to start early. On that note, I can really recommend the course in graphic design and I encourage students with an interest in graphic work to dedicate three weeks to an educational and exciting stay in New York.