

DETAILS ON CLASSES AT UCD

I have followed two courses and one seminar at UCD.

The **courses** were: 'Nineteenth Century Literature' and 'Culture and Irish Literature'. Both courses were accompanied by a **tutorial**, a small discussion group (approx. 10 people) where the reading for lectures is considered more in detail. The mark for the courses was composed of an essay (20%) and a 3-hour exam (80%). Courses last 50 minutes and take place twice a week, and are accompanied by a tutorial of 50 minutes once a week.

The **seminar** I took was on *Gulliver's Travels*. Seminars in the English department at UCD only last 50 minutes and take place once a week, which unfortunately does not always allow enough time for discussion. The seminar mark was based on a 3000-word essay.

The UCD English courses are generally structured in a way to give a good overview of a literary period (other courses available for 2006 were e. g. American Modernism and Twentieth Century Literature). Seminars can vary very much as to the content. To get a better idea, you might like to have a look at this year's courses and seminars on <http://www.ucd.ie/englishanddrama>.

As an Erasmus student, you are normally allowed to take both second year and third year classes, according to your interests and the number of credits needed. However, it is important to make *really* sure that your choices are accepted both by UCD and Geneva University before submitting your schedule to the UCD International Office, as both universities have recently undergone significant changes. No need to panic, keep in mind that the system changes are as new for the teaching staff as for the students. A few teachers in UCD did not know the answer to some of my administrative questions at first, but were always ready to find the necessary information.

IMPORTANT PROCEDURES UPON ARRIVAL

At University

I found the **International Office** at UCD very helpful, especially Ms. Niamh O'Loughlin with whom I have been regularly in touch about administrative matters (e. g. registration and accommodation) before and after my arrival. Ms. O'Loughlin also e-mails information about on-campus activities to foreign students on a regular basis.

I arrived to Dublin only a few days prior to the beginning of classes, which was fine even though I missed the official registration date. The International Office staff was really friendly and ready to answer all kinds of questions on UCD and life in Dublin, which made orientation much easier. After contacting the Office everything went fast according to their clear instructions.

As for the **course schedule**, there is enough time to organize it according to the credit requirements in Geneva. The course details for the second semester were to be submitted to the International Office about two weeks after the beginning of classes, which was long enough to get in touch with the English department coordinators both at UCD and in Geneva.

During the second week of classes, you might need to sign up for **tutorials** (this depends on your choice of classes). Information on this was given repeatedly during the lectures.

Accommodation

I stayed at a family friend's place until I found an **accommodation**, which was of course a great solution. In any case I would recommend looking for a short-term accommodation before the arrival to Dublin, considering that the flat-hunting can take up to two weeks. There are several ways of searching and the International Office provides useful details both about on-campus and off-campus accommodation. I personally found the website www.daft.ie very well organized, since it allows you to set up e-mail alerts according to your criteria. It takes up quite a lot of time because you need to check your e-mails very frequently and be ready to call people immediately to arrange an appointment. The rule is: the quicker you reply to an advertisement the better, resolutely but at the same time it takes a lot of patience. Do take your time; avoid rushing and accepting the first possibility. Although Dublin is a really expensive city, it is quite easy to find a nice house or flat to share with other students for some 300-400 Euros/month.

LIFE IN DUBLIN

Campus life

The social life on the UCD campus is so rich that it might seem overwhelming at first, especially if you are not used to a university campus. However, it provides many opportunities of getting in touch with other students. A very large number of student associations are always open to new members. Moreover, there are many events every week, e. g. concerts, balls etc. Information on this is found on the innumerable notice boards on campus, and often also in the International Office's e-mails.

Dublin city

Although Dublin is not entirely new to me, living here for a longer time is yet another experience. I find it is a pleasant city which maintains a cozy atmosphere, with its green areas and the colorful Georgian doors. The people are mostly very welcoming and ready to help, especially if they find out that you are from abroad. Take your time to stroll through the city centre and explore everything from museums and parks to shops and pubs. I found that it is very easy to end up having a nice chat with people, e. g. on a bus stop or in a café; this can be an interesting way of getting to know something new about Dublin life.

The cultural life in Dublin is also very rich, and it is worth keeping an eye out for concerts and theatre venues. There is also a large newspaper culture in Dublin, and newspapers such as the Irish Independent and the Irish Times can be a good way of improving your English while keeping up to date on current events.

One very annoying thing about Dublin is definitely the bus network. Other means of public transport, e. g. the DART, are rather reliable, but Dublin buses will most probably drive you mad, especially if you don't have much time. Unless you are on a terminus stop, it is quite useless to try to figure out when a bus will come. Just be very, very patient, and take it easy!

A few traveling tips

If you plan to travel in Ireland during an Erasmus stay, consider buying a Student Travel Card. This card is available in all Dublin universities (you will probably see advertisements about it as soon as you arrive on campus) and it allows to cut down the traveling costs considerably. Usually, Student Travel Cards information desks are set up on campus.

Most parts of Ireland are within a few hours' distance by bus from Dublin. I found that Bus Eireann prices are very reasonable (check out www.buseireann.ie for more details).

As a final point, I am attaching a picture I have taken at the Irish West Coast – be sure to include the Connemara into your travel itinerary, it is a most charming region, especially in late spring and summertime!

