

Appendix: Content of classes, Alexander Spohn Scholarship of the DAAD Stiftung

My two semesters abroad, which I spent at Valparaiso University in Indiana in the United States of America were an opportunity to learn a lot, as well as an exciting experience. I took four classes in my first semester: Cross-Cultural Management, International Marketing, Buyer Behavior and Financial Management. In my second semester I took the classes Financial Markets and Institutions, Economics of Financial Markets, Topics in Finance and Management and Organizational Behavior.

In the class Cross-Cultural Management I learned a lot about the ways in which employees are treated in different countries and cultures, and how a manager should act in a particular country. We were divided into different groups, and each group looked at one country as a case study. My group focused on Nigeria, and I therefore had the chance to learn a lot about Nigeria and the local approach to negotiations.

The students in the Financial Management class were a little more quiet and reserved than in my other classes. Nevertheless, the professor was a great help, because he was so good at explaining complex issues very simply. After each lesson I was able to see him and ask questions about things discussed in the lecture. He was always happy to help and even suggested finance classes I should choose for my second semester at Valparaiso University.

The International Marketing class was extremely insightful, as it made me realise how hard it is for companies to realise good and successful global marketing. What I liked best about this class was the fact that we cooperated with a real company. We were divided into groups and were asked to prepare a detailed marketing plan for a Turkish company that plans to sell its tents in the US, as well as a presentation of our results. This was the biggest project I was involved in in my first semester. My group and I encountered many obstacles, as it was very hard to find certain information on the internet. However, we helped and supported each other and were able to present a great presentation and plan. The fact that we were working for a real-life company created enormous pressure on my group and myself, as we wanted to show an outstanding performance and not make fools of ourselves.

Buyer Behavior was among my favourite classes, as I was able to establish a very personal link with the professor. In this class I learned how particular forms of consumer behaviour are created and influenced. My group and myself were tasked to prepare advertising for a brand of our choice, and we first did a number of surveys to gather suitable data. The professor from this class was even happy to meet me for coffee in my free time, and she gave me many useful tips for my future career and a suitable topic for my bachelor's thesis. This professor likes to talk to many students outside the lectures, so I was not the only one who enjoyed her special attention. However, it was not part of her usual work scope, as these talks and meetings took place on a voluntary basis.

In my second semester I took the class Financial Markets and Institutions, where I learned a lot about these markets and institutions. The focus of the class was on American institutions, but we also spoke about international markets and institutions. There were also many guest speakers from the financial world, such as the CEO of a bank or a staff member of the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street, the professor knew from his own time as a banker. We also had to work on a number of case studies on interesting events in the financial world, such as the London Whale Case, and had to write a multi-page paper on each.

In the class Economics of Financial Markets I learned a lot about the economic aspects of financial markets. The topics covered in this class included American financial markets and institutions such as the Federal Reserve System, the European Central Bank, currency exchange calculations, the financial crisis and its impact. In this class, we had to do no group work but only exams, homework and tests.

Topics in Finance was by far my favourite class. The whole class jointly managed a diversified investment fund of the university, a so-called Student Managed Investment Fund. We took care of reviewing risk-based security and portfolio performance metrics for possible investments. Another very important issue was to determine suitability of individual stocks for sale or inclusion in the fund. This class allowed me to obtain plenty of practical experience in the area of investment banking. The reason I liked this class so much was the fact that I can use everything I learned in real life, when making personal investments.

In the class Management and Organizational Behavior I learned how I should act as a staff member of a company with regard to various aspects including other staff members, diversity, equal opportunities, sustainability, communication and so on. In a group project we had to write an essay and prepare an analysis of a company and its CEO. My group chose Tesla and Elon Musk. At the end of the project, my group gave a 30-minute presentation in front of the class about the results of our analysis.