Montreal: A Lesson is Culture

Jessi Ettelson

As the world grows smaller and more connected, it becomes important for students to continually work to expand their cultural knowledge and experience international interactions. Students who wish to travel abroad but need baby steps to ease into studying in foreign environments should enroll in INTB-214H: Cultural Competency. This course is available for all freshman Kolodzik Business Scholars and counts as an International Business credit. The class encompasses the 10 week Spring quarter and the accompanying trip to Montreal, Canada occurs during Memorial Day break.

Enrolling in INTB-214H registers students for a three credit hour course and a five day study abroad in Montreal. During the quarter, students will read articles about culture, meet with business professionals working in large multinational corporations, and discuss personal insights into attaining greater cultural competency. While studying in Montreal, students are given the opportunity for hands-on interactions with a culture different from their own. Traveling students are able to try foreign cuisine, attempt to speak French, and learn from French-Canadian natives. On our second day in Montreal, the group I travelled with took a walking tour of Montreal. We were given inside looks at the various cultural neighborhoods, including Chinatown, Little Italy, the Hassidic Jewish neighborhood, and the Latin Quarter. Our tour guide was knowledgeable, personal, and gave us a detailed account of the region's recent political turmoil. At the end of our city tour the group stopped at a local market to buy bread, cheese, and produce for a picnic in Parc du Mont-Royal. While buying fresh cheese for our picnic, another student and I broke language boundaries. Neither of us knew much French and we struggled to ask for suggestions and recommendations from the woman behind the counter who only spoke French. In the end we were able to work around our language limitations to buy the best cheese possible. The combination of theoretical class work and practical real-life applications made the course optimally enjoyable and educational.

As a student who has taken INTB-214H and travelled to Montreal, I have a few suggestions for students. For those of you who are unsure if you want to enroll in the course, I encourage you to do so. Studying abroad looks great on a resume, lasting friendships will be created, and you will have more fun learning while in a foreign environment than you would ever have learning in a lecture hall. For those of you that already know that you want to enroll I have three suggestions.. One: Try poutine. Poutine is a dish native to Montreal; it is a concoction of French fries, gravy, and cheese curds. TO some it may sound good, to others not so much. No matter what you think, try it, you WILL like it! Two: Talk to natives! The best way to find out about local hot spots, restaurants, and entertainment is to talk to the people that live in the area. Find a shop, a pub, or a restaurant and talk to the hostess, the shop owner, or other customers to find the best places to visit, eat, and shop. And three: don't be the "Ugly American." Keep an open mind in everything that you do abroad. Say "bonjour" instead of "hello," try food without making goofy faces, and remember that the point of travelling is to expand your cultural horizons.

For more information visit: http://www.business.uc.edu/global/undergrad/montreal