

Boston University School of Law

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Boston University School of Law

Study Abroad Final Reports



Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv, Israel

FINAL STUDY ABROAD REPORT

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Please provide a written assessment of your experience abroad this past term in light of your academic and educational objectives. In particular, please touch on the following: your overall experience at the foreign institution, the quality of the faculty and the quality and availability of courses offered. Please also comment on other topics you feel might be helpful to future students, such as quality of life, financial, housing, social or other considerations that had an impact on your experience. Your report need not be longer than two pages.
- 2) Please indicate whether we can share your information with current BU Law students interested in participating in our study abroad programs.
 - a) Will you share your personal email address with students who request to contact former program participants?
YES ☒
NO ☐
 - b) Will you share your final study abroad report (with any identifying information redacted) in a binder housed in the OGIP?
YES ☒
NO ☐

Please write your Final Study Abroad Report below.

Name:

Semester/Institution: Spring 2021, Tel Aviv University – Buchmann Faculty of Law

REPORT:

Overall Experience: The experience studying abroad was a worthwhile endeavor, though I believe it would have been significantly enhanced had I been able to be in Tel Aviv, and participate fully in campus life. The communication between the faculty responsible for students

studying abroad is very helpful, informative, and responsive. Because I could not be abroad, these email communications were crucial. Being an exchange student also comes with the unique opportunity to navigate a new institution in a foreign country, and learn to advocate for oneself. TAU enabled me to practice these skills, but made it easy to work/navigate.

Unique Challenges: Having to take 6, 2 credit classes to achieve 12 credits was challenging. Though it is not nearly as much as many 2 credit classes at BU, it is very difficult to “only prepare” for a 2 credit class. Balancing 6 topics at once was challenging. The class schedule/calendar also presented a unique challenge. Whereas at BU, you could expect to see something like this class meets “Mondays and Thursdays, from noon to 2,” classes at TAU are totally random. You can meet with a class at 8am on Monday for an hour, at 4pm on Tuesday and Wednesday for 2.5 hours each, and then not at all the following week. It made creating a routine difficult, even impossible. The students advocate strongly for themselves, and the professors are responsive to that advocacy, which is great. However, at times it posed on challenge: For example, students succeeded in having one class one morning begin 15 minutes earlier because of a particular event happening that day. I was 15 minutes late that class, because I wasn’t prepared to check my inbox for a message about class starting 15 minutes early (the day OF class). This happened not every day, but more than just once.

The Professors: I thoroughly enjoyed the fact that 3/6 of my professors were themselves visiting professors from other institutions around the world. All the professors were dynamic, and the work assignments were reasonable. I knew that I was learning from the top scholars/professors in their field, from all over the world. Participation was almost entirely optional, though it was rather uncomfortable/boring when students were obviously unprepared—in the US, students would be yelled at/lectured if they were so unprepared. Nobody was, in any of my classes, called

on without volunteering. The professors were always available outside of class, and often utilized presentation tools/powerpoints, which made learning easier, specially through ZOOM.

The Classes: Though they offered fewer classes than I expected (may be due to COVID), I was able to take classes from each area of law I hoped to. I wanted to take classes that highlighted the tension between civil law and religious law; a class about the unique legal challenges in the region; a class that could enhance my practical corporate law skills. I feel very confident that I was able to learn in all three areas, and then some. I believe I had classes that I wouldn't have had, had I not taken the semester abroad at TAU.

Every class felt unique. I was surprised to look back on the semester and realize that I read only a handful of cases, which is very different from what I had been used to. Instead the readings, pulled from a much broader array of sources—scholarly articles, book, statutes, philosophy, contracts etc. This was new to me, and having to learn to analyze these types of works in a legal context was a new challenge.

The Students: The mentality of the students at TAU was also very different, and took some time to get used to. I had become accustom to the hyper-competitive nature of BU students. At TAU, students freely share their notes after each class, and request (and sometimes demand) support from each other more freely. I cannot say I developed relationships outside of class, I wish I had—but that can be attributed to the fact that everything was virtual.

Campus Life: There is a dynamic and engaged student body, as evident from the volume of emails about lectures/event/gatherings, etc. The school clearly seeks to highlight a wide array of perspectives and topics. I am sure I would have much more to say about this if I was actually in Israel.

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NO ☐

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Name:

Semester/Institution: Tel Aviv University 2019

REPORT: I thoroughly enjoyed my study abroad experience at Tel Aviv University. The quality of the professors was an extremely high caliber, exactly what I am used to from BU. Many of the professors actually collaborate with some of the staff at BU, like Pnina Lahav.

We took classes with students in many different programs (not just law, but also in masters programs) of many different backgrounds, although the overwhelming majority is from Europe (I was one of three Americans in a program of over 30 people). In terms of academic vigor, there is a lot of assigned reading and the reading is at a very high academic level. There is also a huge variety of courses to choose from - I mostly chose classes within the international law and human rights framework, but TAU also has a big focus in corporate, IP and tax classes. Many of the classes have reaction papers that are meant to help you engage with the material, and with the professor if you are more hesitant to speak up in class. Cold calling does not exist here - you will not have to talk unless you volunteer, but class size is small and active participation is encouraged. The exam format is generally 24 hour take home exams, but usually I would work on mine for about 6 hours max. The essay questions for exams tend to tease out larger themes from the course, rather than any specifics from the readings. The University (for an extra fee) also has Hebrew and Arabic classes if you are interested in learning either of the two dominant local languages. In terms of housing - avoid the dorms. There is limited availability to begin with and you can find much better housing for the same or even a better price by looking at facebook pages. Also keep in mind that there is no public transportation on Shabbat (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown), so if you are living far from the city center, it will be inconvenient to go out on the weekends. Lime is super popular here (the electric scooters), as well as bikes, so that can help you get around on Shabbat. Tel Aviv is expensive - definitely comparable to a big city in the US, like Boston. Buying groceries in the shuk (outdoor markets) is the best way to cut costs on food. Don't pay more than 4000 NIS in rent each month, unless

you're really looking for luxury. My recommendations for places you have to go to while you're here:

- **Restaurants:** Shlomo and Doron (get the hamshuka), Vitrina (burgers), Sabich Tchernikhovski (sabich, Israeli street food), Ha'Achim (lunch specials), Arais in Sarona (the BEST arais).
- **Bars:** Teder.fm (outdoors, amazing live music and dancing), Kuli Alma (hipster dive), Dizzy Frishdon (wine wristbands on Sundays), Concierge (amazing happy hour deals).

Tel Aviv is also one of the most vegetarian/vegan friendly cities in the world. Every single restaurant I've been to has a plethora of veggie/vegan options. I had the most amazing semester in Israel, and also learned a lot about the law, myself and other countries. It is eye-opening to see how many things we are fighting for in the US right now are expected and seen as obligatory human rights that the government must provide in other countries. I cannot recommend studying here highly enough!

Semester at TAU

When I decided to spend a semester at Tel-Aviv University in Israel, I imagined it would be a worthwhile experience that would be enjoyable and beneficial. I also hoped it would be great. However, I did not expect it to be as great as it was- not because I did not think it had the potential to be a great experience, but simply because it exceeded all of my expectations.

Four of the classes I took were taught in Hebrew, which meant I was able to learn alongside “regular” Israeli students, not foreign exchange students. That is not to say there is something wrong with taking classes with other foreign students- the fifth class I took was taught in English, and it, too, was a good experience. However, I felt that, in my case, since I am fluent in Hebrew, I should take advantage of the opportunity to interact in a true TAU environment.

It was very challenging for me to take classes in Hebrew, despite the fact that I am fluent. This is because I have never studied at such a high academic level in Hebrew, and I am not used to such a task. However, I soon learned that the best way to deal with this is to try to do the best I can- attend every class, do my best to take notes (in Hebrew), then add to my notes using the notes of other students who graciously offered their notes to assist me. Also, there is nothing wrong with asking questions when the need to do so arises.

I found my classes very interesting. They were a diverse combination, which I think was nice, because it allowed me to try out various fields of law during my time at TAU. One course was “Raising Capital for Companies” (with a focus on High-Tech companies). The professor who taught this class was a corporate attorney, who actually

practiced in the field of IPOs, Mergers & Acquisitions, etc. As a student, I was able to benefit from her real-life examples, and I found this more useful than learning theories on this specific subject. Another class I took was "Psychiatry and the Law." Here, too, the class was very practical- the professor was a Psychiatrist, with vast knowledge on the relationship between law and psychiatry. He told true stories of actual cases, and made the class extremely interesting.

A third class I took was "Psychological Reality versus Legal Reality." This class, which was not similar to the one on psychiatry, was taught by an attorney who also studied psychology, conducted psychological studies, and served as a legal arbitrator. He had unique ways of discussing psychological aspects as they relate to the law. The fourth class I took was "Free Speech in a Liberal Democracy." This class was a unique experience, as it was taught by a big Israeli celebrity named Dr. Ilana Dayan. The best American analogy to Dayan is Barbara Walters. Both are smart, educated women who have achieved a high status in broadcast journalism, media, and investigatory reporting. Dayan has a weekly T.V. show, similar to 20/20 and Dateline, in which she does in-depth reports on various topics. What better way to learn about freedom of speech than from a woman who has studied the topic, both in Israel and the U.S.A., and actually is an icon in the Israeli media, and clearly knows all about the biggest issues related to the subject! Even though she is a big celebrity, Dayan is extremely down to earth, friendly, and approachable. Her class was quite interesting, and I especially enjoyed the stories she told about her various on-the-job experiences, as they relate to freedom of speech dilemmas.

The last class I took, the one taught in English, was "Comparative Family Law." This class was taught by two visiting professors from Europe. It was a different experience, obviously, as the class was not taught by Israelis and also included foreign students. I felt the professors had a thorough syllabus, using case studies from Israel, European countries, the Far East, and the U.S.A.

The toughest part of the academic experience, of course, was studying for and taking final exams- four of which were in Hebrew. There was a large amount of information to process, and it was not an easy task. Overall, though, this was a worthwhile challenge to have faced.

Lastly, I found the students at TAU very friendly and willing to help. Many students offered me their notes, so that I could add them to my own. They answered questions about course materials when I approached them in class or via e-mail. They explained things to me regarding exams and other administrative procedures. They willingly shared their outlines and study aides with me, often without my even having to ask. My experience at TAU was eye-opening and very valuable.