

My fall '14 semester at the University of Arizona by Heather Sibbersen

When I thought about leaving for Arizona last July it never really seemed to be real until I actually sat in the plane. I was so excited for my new adventure and couldn't wait for what was to come. Laura's amazing friend Christina picked me up at the airport and helped me settle in during the first couple days. I also met Kendall from the VDAC, who took me out for my first Mexican dinner and made sure I had everything I needed. The first couple weeks went by very quickly with international and departmental orientations, acquisition of an Arizona ID and a social security number. I picked out my courses with the help of my adviser from the German department from the whole range of the course catalog.

I took 4 classes this semester: Spanish 101, Educational Psychology Child and Adolescent Development, 19th century British Literature: Romanticism, and Issues and Methods in Post-Secondary Foreign Language Teaching. These classes turned out to be the right amount of challenging and fun. Especially in my Educational psychology class, I learned many things that helped me in refining my teaching approaches and ideas. In addition, to taking classes I was given the opportunity to teach German 101 for the UofA. This turned out to be very fulfilling and helped me develop my teaching skills beyond what is usually possible in the university internship setting I am used to from back home. The students I taught were between the ages 18-22. It being a 101 course, the students had no prior knowledge and I got to teach them German from scratch. It was so much fun to motivate the students, see them succeed, and slowly build a love and passion for a language most of them had originally only enrolled in because it was a gen. Ed. requirement to take a foreign language for 2 years. Furthermore, I found two very good friends through my job: Martin from Leipzig and Nick from Tucson. They are my coworkers and through the weekly meetings and preparations for our German classes we became very close friends.

The UofA offers so many great professional and recreational opportunities that it was hard to decide on what things I wanted to focus on in the beginning. I made friends with a group of other international students and we started an intramural indoor soccer team and competed with other teams. This was a good workout and an opportunity to make friends. We also went to almost every football game as part of the student section, the Zonazoo. The school spirit here is incredible

and it was great to be part of that and cheer with everyone else.

Some of my favorite experiences this semester were pumpkin carving, dressing up for Halloween (I went as a sailor, because I sail at home), and going to a haunted house. The haunted house included volunteer actors that took their jobs of scaring very seriously. I also loved my trip to the Grand Canyon and the different cultural events in Tucson; such as a the Tucson Meet Yourself festival where locals show of crafts, arts, and culinary goods; or the Day of the Death parade where people dressed up and painted their faces to honor the dead. For Thanksgiving I met up with my old host family from Michigan in Las Vegas. It was great seeing them again after almost 7 years.

The semester ended with lots of studying and homework. Finals were an intense and interesting experience and I still cannot believe that I finished all my papers on time and did well on all my tests. Overall, I had an amazing semester meeting great people and making amazing experiences. I am so grateful that I got this opportunity. I want to thank the VDAC, Barbara from Hamburg and Kendall from Tucson for making this possible. I'm having a great time and I am so happy to have another semester to go.



The picture on the left shows Monument Valley, which I visited over winter break on my road trip. We got to see this amazing place with fresh snow and it just seems like a very good analogy to the vastness and grandeur America offers. There are so many places that feel magical and almost undiscovered. The picture on the right shows my friends Sara, Taz, Sheila, Lulli, and me before a football game in the stadium. This was one of my favorite activities last semester. :)