



VICTORIA HARBOUR AND WATER TAXI

My Semester at University of Victoria (Canada)

My Semester at UVic

by Paul Hackett

For the first semester of my third and final year at Canterbury Christ Church University, I decided to study abroad at the University of Victoria (or UVic as it is known by the local students). The University is based on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, on the Pacific Northwest coast.

Prior to my time in Canada, both Canterbury and Victoria universities were extremely helpful in getting all of the relevant documentation and required forms to me as soon as possible – particularly the help given to me by Doug MacMillan (Study Abroad Coordinator) in Canterbury, and Sherri Williams (Student Advisor) in Victoria. This took all of the stress out of the application process, and enabled me to spend my time planning things to do and places to visit as well as choosing my potential classes of course!

I had been working in the U.S. over the summer, prior to starting my semester at UVic, so decided to spend the final 2 weeks before university started in Seattle, which is just south of Victoria. Seattle is a short ferry ride away from Victoria – a ferry ride which

provides incredible scenery and mountain views of both the U.S. and Canada. On arrival in Victoria, customs was a breeze. I pretty much just showed them my passport and the necessary study permit documents (most of which had been sorted and given to me by Doug in Canterbury), and I was officially in Canada.

I arrived at UVic fairly early so was one of only a handful of people on campus, which made moving in a lot less stressful. UVic campus is a short distance from the main harbour and downtown area with the campus being every bit as picturesque as the journey to get to it. Campus life is very social with plenty of friends to be made both in your accommodation (either on or off campus), classes, and fellow study abroad students. The International office plans several fun and exciting events for the first few weeks (and throughout the year) to give people a chance to meet and get to know one another; events such as whale watching, city tours, nights out, and photo contests amongst other things.



Grouse Mountain

From left to right: Andy Walker, Holly Jukes, Paul Hackett.



Pacific Northwest Art

Totem Poles are dotted around Victoria including the University's campus.

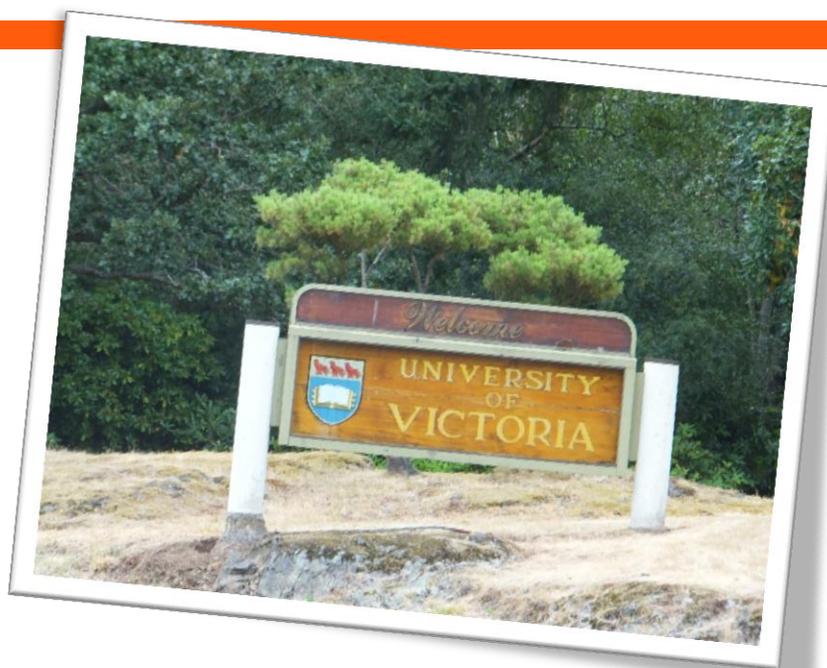
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The lectures and classes at UVic are very “Americanized” in the sense that the Professors, lecture halls, and class structure are all noticeably different. One piece of advice I would give is do not feel overwhelmed if the first few lectures go over your head before you have even had the chance to take decent notes – you will soon adapt to the university culture and academic system (something which you can touch on and use to your benefit in future CV writing).

With the American Studies single honours course at Canterbury and not having exams during my 3 years, it was a shock to the system to realise that there would be midterm exams, pop quizzes, and finals in December. These exams, although tough, are nothing to fear so long as you attend classes and take well-informed notes. UVic Professors often said that you do not have to attend every class, but it will only serve to harm you in your exams if you choose to miss any classes – so I suggest attending class on a regular basis. I was extremely happy with the classes I took at UVic, as they were classes I would not have been able to take at Canterbury, for example History 316: United States and Vietnam. The classes I took at UVic were relevant to my course back home and related to my overall studies towards my American Studies degree.

Studying in Canada enabled me to experience, first-hand, the interesting relationship dynamic between Canadians and their neighbours to the south. There were many Americans attending UVic, which created a diverse campus, which ultimately gave me a unique study abroad experience. My time in Victoria also allowed me to visit Seattle and other U.S. cities with ease, as well as trips to mainland Canada such as Vancouver,



which is a short ferry or sea-plane ride away.

I initially decided to study abroad because I thought it would look good on my CV to potential employers – as well as having the chance to study in a new and exciting environment. However, after my time at UVic I discovered many more benefits such as having the chance to adapt to completely new surroundings and educational systems, new cultures and peoples, and making friends from all over the globe – not just North America.

If you are considering studying abroad, or are tempted but unsure, I urge you to DO IT. If not for the fun and chance to witness new places, but for the opportunity to grow as a person and add valuable experiences to your personal life and your professional future.



British Columbia

This crest symbolizes the founding of British Columbia (1871).

SINCE UVIC...

Paul successfully graduated from Canterbury with an American Studies degree in 2013. He spent the remainder of the summer living and working in Boston.