



SciencesPo.

Sciences Po Paris is one of the most important political institutes in the world, with more than 8500 students, including almost 3000 international students from all over the world. The exchange program is an exceptionally stimulating and dynamic experience for anyone ready for a challenge.

If your main goals are improving your French, learning about French culture, or spending a lot of time travelling during your time abroad, Sciences Po probably isn't the right place for you. As an exchange student you are fully integrated into the school, and the workload is quite demanding. Grading is very tough, and if you decide to take courses in French, you need to have a fairly high language level; be ready to write 15 page papers or give precise oral presentations on technical subjects. But don't let language concerns dissuade you from coming, following its international vision, Sciences Po offers as many courses in English as it does in French. The pedagogical method is very different than Oberlin's and can be challenging and frustrating at times, and professors, who are generally internationally recognized researchers, diplomats, and politicians, have varying teaching skills. True to the French system, there are no office hours and the administration is about as accessible as the CIA, but if you're independent, organized, hard-working and willing to live with confusion, (Bienvenue en France!) you can learn an incredible amount about international politics, economics and sociology.

While the academics at Sciences Po can be somewhat intimidating, social life is dynamic, exciting and unforgettable. Your classmates will be top politics students from France and all over the world. While there are hundreds of Americans, there are also students from literally every corner of the world, particularly the UK, Ireland, Canada, Brazil, Germany, Australia, China and Japan, making for an incredibly diverse student body. Everyone I met was smart, interesting and fun. From hours of political discussions in bars to all-night parties by the Seine to the most extravagant gala I've ever been to (in a four-star hotel and sponsored by Sciences Po's student union), I had really excellent times with excellent people all year. Paris is a beautiful, cosmopolitan, safe and diverse (but pricey!) city with infinite possibilities for fun, and I can't imagine better people to experience it with than the friends I made at Sciences Po.

The year I spent there was the most challenging and the most fun of my life. If you're self-motivated, not easily intimidated and willing to deal with some inevitable academic difficulties, then you will love spending a year (or just one semester) at one of the world's top political centers. Sciences Po may not be for everybody, but it is a highly international, dynamic institute in the center of Paris, and I could not have had a more rewarding, unforgettable year. Bon courage!

(Emily Ringler, 2008-09)

