

2020

How I Quarterbacked and Studied Geography in Great Britain

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Recommended Citation

Garrido, Tyrone (2020) "How I Quarterbacked and Studied Geography in Great Britain," *Humboldt Geographic*: Vol. 1 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/humboldtgeographic/vol1/iss1/9>

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Study and Play Abroad

How I Quarterbacked and Studied Geography in Great Britain

tyrone garrido



At quarterback for Canterbury Chargers, playing American football while studying abroad last year, the author tucks the pigskin for a run (photo by Ken Matcham).

For the 2018-19 academic year, I studied in the United Kingdom on a bilateral exchange program: It was one of the best things I could have ever done. Originally applying for only one semester abroad, I found that period of time permitted me to barely scratch the surface. So over the course of two semesters, I studied Geography and Geospatial Science at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), two and a half hours east of London. The courses I took included titles such as Europe: Cultures, Identity, and Landscape and Regions of Risk: Human and Environmental Security, classes that helped me decide my future graduate studies.

The Uni, as I learned to call it, was the center of the city because, just like Arcata, the students are the beating heart of the city. I lived in student accommodation, Rigby Court, where I was surrounded by people from all over the world. I never thought that I would forge lasting friendships with people

from countries like the Netherlands, Malta, Spain, Germany, and many more. The best part about living with these various Europeans was creating unforgettable memories, sharing our traditions, languages, opinions, and, especially, our food! Of course, I cannot forget my British friends, trying legit English breakfast with tea and biscuits. Also, I was introduced to the world-famous Canterbury Tales and a historical pilgrimage (“Pilgrims’ Way”), which for centuries people have taken to visit the Canterbury Cathedral, St. Augustine’s Abbey, and St. Martin’s Church in the city center.

Not only did I gain so much insight into British lifestyles, I also learned a ton about American Football. American football is really popular in the United Kingdom, so much so that I even felt like I was not able to hold my part in a

conversation with British about the National Football League (NFL) or fantasy leagues. It was almost as though I was failing as an American. Then I joined a college-level American football team, the C4 Canterbury Chargers, and the amount of respect and happiness I received was astounding. I played two positions, both quarterback and receiver. But when I took over as quarterback, my coach was so excited because he had an American calling the plays. As he put it, which I will never forget, “It feels good to hear that American accent in the huddle.”

The fun experiences did not stop there. The team was also a sports club, part of the Uni’s social clubs. These clubs are not focused primarily on creating athletes; they are meant for students to join and create social bonds among themselves. For instance, every Wednesday was Social Night, an evening when sports clubs gathered in the student union to compete or collaborate with each other. Basically, a fun night

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of drinking, gaming, socializing, and finishing the night at Club Chemistry. A good distraction from the academic stresses of the Uni. Also, every Sunday pubs like the Penny Theatre offered Quiz Night, another social gathering of drinking and competing with students and other folks.

My exploration went well beyond Canterbury. Accompanied by my girlfriend, Lena Huseman, along with my roommate-friends Tyler James Robinson and Cherisse Figueroa, I traveled through the United

and methodological debates in geography to better understand the complex emergence of environmental risks and natural hazards and their implications for human-nature relations (vulnerability, resilience, adaptation) and how to deal with them in practice.”

My excitement to begin graduate study in Europe is underpinned by a confidence I gained through my coursework as a Geography major at HSU. Among the highlights are Dr. Laura Johnson’s Global Awareness (GEOG 300) and International Environmental



Left: The author (far right) outside Wembley Stadium with travel buddies Tyler and Cherisse. Middle: Gazing over rooftops of Lüneburg, Germany. Right: In Morocco, with girlfriend Lena, outside the Hassan II Mosque (photos courtesy of author).

Kingdom, visiting places from Herne Bay to London and all the way up to Scotland. We also traveled outside the island. Using affordable means of travel, such as FlixBuses, RyanAir, and train systems, we backpacked through France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Czech Republic, Denmark, Sweden, and Morocco. Great opportunities, lasting friendships... time very well spent.

Now, with my time at Humboldt State coming to an end, a new chapter in my life begins. Starting in October, I will begin graduate studies in Germany, part of the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and the Department of Geography of the University of Bonn’s International Joint master’s of science programme titled Geography of Environmental Risks and Human Security. The program’s overview “addresses theoretical

Issues and Globalization (GEOG 301), which helped me explore the social and environmental issues surrounding political economy and risks and hazards, environmental justice and climate change, place and sustainability; and Geographic Research and Writing (GEOG 311), jointly taught by Dr. Rosemary Sherriff and Nicholas Perdue, which helped me develop a critical lense to analyze the interdependence and interaction between humans and the environment. Furthermore, geospatial courses in remote sensing and geospatial programming prepared me with tools to record and analyze field data.

Thank you to Dr. Matthew Derrick, Dr. Sherriff, and everyone at GESA. Without their guidance and support, I would not have achieved my goal of continuing on to pursue a Geography-based graduate education in continental Europe.