

American Studies Direct Exchange Program General Information & Required Forms

This document contains all the information you will need to apply for the Direct Exchange program at the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies. In particular, these are (in order of their chronological importance):

1. **Interview Template** for the initial interviews with Ms. Heydt/Ms. Velten or Ms. Bull/Ms. Meerwein respectively (including personal details and course lists for either Bachelor OR Bachelor + Master courses)

You must bring a copy of this document (filled in as appropriate) to your interview!

2. **Checklist** for application documents
3. **Guidelines** for Cover Letters, CVs, and Personal Statements
4. **Contact Information** of partner universities

Interview Template

Persönliche Daten

Name:

Vorname:

Geburtsdatum:

Ständige Anschrift:

Semesteranschrift:

Telefonnummer:

E-Mail:

Studium

Matrikelnummer:

Studienfächer und Studienziel:

Fachsemester:

Studienfachwechsel:

Besuchte Universitäten (von ... bis ...):

Andere laufende oder geplante Bewerbungen:

Warten Sie auf eine Zulassung in einem NC-Fach (z.B. Medizin)?

Finanzierung des Studiums:

Berufserfahrung

Schuldienst, Praktika oder sonstige Lehrtätigkeit:

Berufsausbildung, freiwilliges soziales Jahr, Wehrdienst:

Ferienjobs, berufliche Tätigkeit vor und während des Studiums:

Sonstiges

Auslandsaufenthalte (wo? wann? welcher Art?):

In welchen studentischen oder außeruniversitären Vereinen/Clubs/sozialen Einrichtungen arbeiten Sie aktiv mit?:

Neusprachliche Kenntnisse:

Checklist

American Studies Direct Exchange Program

For the interview:

- Interview template, filled in
- Photo

For the application:

- Cover letter
- CV
- Personal statement
- Academic records

Guidelines

Writing a Cover Letter

There is only one purpose to the cover letter: to inform the recipient of your application that it is an application in a courteous and concise fashion. Therefore, keep your cover letter tight as you say more about yourself in the personal statement. Put the usual items of a letter on the top (your address, their address), and briefly address the matter at hand:

Dear Dr./Ms./Mr./Mx. ____:

[Short note on the purpose of your writing, a brief thank you for their time, express your hope that you might be a suitable candidate...]

With best regards/sincerely/...,
Your name

This suffices. Your cover letter should not exceed a page, and should be formatted in the style of your CV and personal statement (your “corporate identity”).

Writing a CV

Please do some research on the internet on structural requirements of an American-style CV. You should feel free to present yourself as best you can in your choice of what goes on your CV.

Do not leave out significant foreign experiences, work and educational experiences, of course, but also think about what people should know about you: extracurricular activities, long-time engagement in a sports club, the Scouts, or for a non-profit organization obviously go on the CV; short-term employment might not be needed, unless the number or frequency of these employments say something significant about your personal ability to cope with shifting job situations.

Your CV complements your personal statement. It allows you to portray briefly how you have spent your life so far, while your personal statement can narrativize this information.

Writing a Personal Statement

For an anthropologist studying American culture, the personal essay would be an interesting, highly formalized ritual of self-development, self-organization, and self-promotion. Such essays are extremely difficult to write, even for Americans. The best way to approach the personal essay is to take it as an opportunity to reflect upon yourself, your past, and your future—and then to write up those more serious reflections into the most flattering presentation you can come up with.

General Recommendations

It is very important to have a good first draft at least a week—if not two weeks—before the due date. You should think very carefully about what you are going to write. You may want to discuss your ideas with a (very candid) friend before you sit down.

Remember that admissions committees will read many of those essays, so choose your material carefully. Avoid overly sentimental anecdotes and clichéd phrases. Try to come up with vivid details.

Your essay should be read by a competent second reader in order to ensure:

- 1) a clear, logical structure,
- 2) tightly structured paragraphs, and
- 3) formal and absolutely correct prose.

You should consider asking an instructor to read your statement, but if you have trouble with your written English, you should also consider finding a tutor or an editor. It is wise to have your essay read by a number of people before you submit it.

Different Types of Personal Statements

American students write personal statements when they apply for entrance into undergraduate study, for graduate study, and for grants and fellowships. These personal statements have different forms, as the committees reading these essays will be evaluating candidates on different criteria.

A personal statement for undergraduate study (B.A./B.Ed.) tends to tell anecdotes in order to illustrate strength of character and personal transformation. The reason these statements are more anecdotal is that, usually, American high school graduates have only a vague idea of what they want to do with themselves, and so undergraduate admissions committees are often looking only for a well-written essay that expresses some sense of personal character and identity.

A personal statement for graduate study (M.A./M.Ed., PhD) tends to be much more business-like, detailing previous projects and plans for further research projects, and explaining how the chosen university provides appropriate opportunities for these projects. These statements are evaluated by admissions

committees, who are looking for promising scholars to whom they can offer a good “fit”. They will refuse admission to an excellent prospective student if they cannot imagine a potential mentor for the student on the current faculty or if they think the student’s project requires a different facility.

A personal statement for a fellowship or grant tends to combine elements from the more personal and the more professional models. In these personal statements, the student explains something about his or her character and past but also proposes how the specific opportunity given by the grant or fellowship will enable the student to pursue his or her projects.

The third category seems to be the most appropriate for students applying to a foreign exchange program.

Personal Statements for Foreign Exchanges

More mature than a high school graduate, less scholarly than a doctoral candidate, a prospective exchange student should be able to demonstrate both strength of character and seriousness of purpose. An admissions committee evaluating potential foreign exchange students will likely ask themselves two basic questions:

- 1) Will this student be able to cope with the stress of living in a foreign culture?
- 2) Will this student take advantage of the opportunity to come to our university?

1)

The first question addresses your character. The university officials want to know that you will not arrive in the United States and become so depressed that you have to go home. An anecdote might help you to make the point that you are a self-reliant, capable person.

- Have you faced challenging situations before?
- Have you ever lived in a foreign country, and for how long?
- Did you ever manage to accomplish something that you had thought impossible or difficult?
- What kinds of experiences have given you a strong sense of identity?

This part of the personal statement also allows you to tell a good story so that the admissions committee has a better sense of what kind of person you are. Any specific detail that can make your application memorable will work in your advantage.

2)

The second question addresses your sense of purpose. The university officials will want you to demonstrate somehow that you will not arrive in the United States and spend all of your time at nightclubs. They would like to believe that by allowing you to attend their university, you will make some progress towards an interesting future. So, if you have a clear sense of what you will be doing in five years, you should mention this future goal in your personal statement and explain

how spending a year at an American university would help you to accomplish this goal.

- Why are you interested in American Studies? Is it the literature, the history, the language, or the culture that triggers your interest?
- Why would living in America help you make progress toward your goals?
- What classes would you take at the host university?
- Why have you chosen to apply for this specific host university (as opposed to another)?

This part of the essay should show that you are a serious student, that you have thought about your future, and that you have done some research to plan your time abroad. Mention the name of the university to which you are applying and state your reasons for choosing this institution. From the committee's perspective, you are asking to attend that specific university, not to experience American culture in general.

GOOD LUCK!

Contact Information

Direct Exchange Universities

Please verify that addresses are up to date before including them in your letters!

Prof. Scheiding/Fr. Bull, M.A./Fr. Meerwein, M.A.

Hood College

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Associate Professor of German
401 Rosemont Avenue Frederick, MD 21701

Washington College

Prof. Rebeca Moreno
Nicole Grewling, PhD
Chair, Department of World Languages & Cultures
Director, Humanities Major & European Studies Minor
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21620

Middlebury College

Prof. Florence Feiereisen
Chair of German Department
Prof. Roman Graf
Professor of German; Head, Brainerd Commons
FIC Cook 14
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California State University, Chico

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