

## **Semester as a Special Auditor at Kyoto University**

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I have to admit that I was a bit disappointed when I first arrived in Kyoto and started choosing my classes for the semester I would spend here. In order to graduate in a timely manner I needed to take a certain amount of classes. Unfortunately there were not as many classes taught in English as I had expected – and some classes I had planned to take when I was still in Germany turned out to be mainly taught in Japanese. Though I do have a certain level Japanese language skills I did not feel confident to take classes and write papers in Japanese. I was a bit discouraged because I was worried that I might not be able to gain new information that was relevant for my master program and my master thesis. However, this worry soon turned out to be unnecessary. The seminars I attended, even though they did not focus on my main research topics, gave me a lot new impulses for my studies and also a lot of framework-information relevant to my further research. My academic supervisor also gave me some impulses to think in different directions and engage with certain aspects of the media.

During my time in Kyoto I gathered information on my main research interest – transnational media flows – but maybe even more importantly I gained a new and more realistic perspective on my own research. Through actually being in the region and experiencing Japanese media culture I could get a better idea of how I could approach my research. This enabled me to adjust the planned scope of my thesis, a very important step in the conception of the paper.

Additionally I was able to improve my Japanese level through several Japanese classes and overcame my shyness to actually have conversations in Japanese. This was a very important achievement for me. While my Japanese is far from being perfect, I am not scared to use it anymore.

I still have to say that my experiences at Kyoto University would have probably been even more positive if my Japanese language level would have been higher. It would have been easier to come in contact with more Japanese students and professors in general and maybe even students who were interested in the same topics and research as I am.

In my classes, both seminars and Japanese courses, I was able to meet people from many different countries, make new friends and improve my intercultural understanding. I have learnt a lot for myself and for my studies through socializing with interesting and inspiring people here at Kyoto University.

Furthermore my time at Kyoto University has encouraged me to further pursue my studies and apply for a PhD program after finishing my Master degree. Even though I had considered this option for several years, I had been insecure about it and often doubted if it was the right decision for me. My semester abroad has given me new motivation and also new confidence to pursue a PhD.

All in all my time at Kyoto University was a great experience. Although or maybe especially because I sometimes struggled with the language barrier and with not being used to the Japanese University system the experience of studying abroad at Kyoto University made me grow as a student as well as a person. I am very thankful that I had the opportunity to study at Kyoto University.