



Exchange with the University of Leipzig

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG



Info for MHC Students

APPLYING: So you're thinking about applying for the exchange to Leipzig? We hope you will find this information booklet helpful with insider tips from the students who have already studied there. Beyond reading this, you should talk to the professors in the German Studies Department to get more information about being qualified to study abroad, and in particular for applying to one of the exchanges Mount Holyoke College has with three German Universities. Leipzig is one of these three exchanges. You should be prepared to be very self sufficient since you are not going with a program! This should not deter you from going. On the contrary! This means you have more opportunities to come in contact with German people, become immersed in the culture, and learn how to ask for help. It is a very encouraging experience, and the great thing about Leipzig is that there are many people who are excited about helping MHC students and make sure they are finding what they need. And in the Orientation Course, which we will talk about later, you will get a lot of support from the other international students. So, if you are ready for an all expense paid, unforgettable, character-building year in Leipzig, read on!

BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES

IMPORTANT NOTE: Because you are going abroad independently (i.e., not attached to a particular program), you must take care of many things yourself. However, the Auslandsamt and the orientation course staff will give you many valuable pointers and maps, etc. It is a good experience and gives you a huge feeling of accomplishment when it is all done. It is a good way to learn your way around the city as you are going to and from offices. Keep in mind the Öffnungszeiten of the different offices when planning your day. Not all office hours are the same, and they are often rather short and infrequent. Most people in these offices do not speak English, but they are patient and will help you. Be patient, too! Long lines await.

PASSPORT: Most U.S. post offices carry information as well as the form you need to apply for a passport. Follow the directions carefully. You need a validated (stamped with a raised seal) copy of your birth certificate, two passport-size photos, and another form of identification. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO APPLY FOR A PASSPORT!** It could take up to several months to receive a new or renewed passport!

INSURANCE: All students at a German university are required to have health insurance. Ask at the Auslandsamt (foreign student office, Goethestr. 6, 4th floor) and they will explain to you how and when it needs to be done. If your current insurance covers you while you are abroad, then you are insured and do not need to purchase other health insurance! Make sure you contact your insurance company and understand the policy. Also, if you are using your current insurance while abroad, you must have an insurance card with the pertinent info on it (i.e.. policy number, etc). **YOU MUST SHOW PROOF OF INSURANCE BEFORE YOU CAN MATRICULATE** and you need to be matriculated before you can apply for a German visa. Also note that according to some insurance policies (ex. AOK Sachsen), you will have to make payments until the summer semester is officially over, which may be long after you have left the country. Be aware of duration of the insurance and plan accordingly.

MATRICULATION: Information about this process should be mailed to you prior to your arrival. Go to the Auslandsamt upon your designated arrival. They will walk you through the steps you need to take in order to be a registered student and give you a list of all of the places you need to go within to Leipzig to register in the city and live in Germany. You will need to bring 4 passport pictures with you. If you don't have them already, there are photo booths in the Hauptbahnhof that do this.

VISA: To stay in Germany longer than three months, you will need a visa or *Aufenthaltserlaubnis*. This must be done in Leipzig. Ask the Auslandsamt for directions. You will need the following paperwork to obtain a visa: letter informing you of your stipend, a copy of your *Mietvertrag* (your lease), an official *Anmeldung* (you should obtain this registration from the *Bürgeramt* before going to the *Ausländerbehörde*) and your passport. The *Ausländerbehördeamt* is on Seeburgerstraße 51 (opening hours Mon/Tues/Fri: 9 am; Tue/Thu: 1-6 pm). Be prepared to wait and make sure you are carrying all the documents they require. It is recommendable that you go to the *Ausländerbehördeamt* as soon as possible because the issuing of a visa can take up to 6 weeks.

STIPEND: The student who receives the annual *Austauschstipendium* or Exchange Fellowship (to finance a year's study in Leipzig) will receive around 350 Euro a month in Leipzig. Recently it has been the case that during the winter semester, students receive 400 Euro, which is due to changes in expected matriculations. However, you will receive only 350 Euro during the spring semester. This amount is generally enough to pay rent for a decent apartment, food, insurance and transportation. You might want to plan on saving extra money for travel, extra personal needs, or for a nicer apartment if you want one. You will receive the stipend every month, and it's deposited directly to your bank account, although sometimes a bit late. Sometime toward the end of the *Wintersemester* talk to Frau Jane Moros and ask her when you should expect the first stipend for the *Sommersemester*. It might not arrive by the beginning of the month, so be prepared for that. Talk to the *Auslandsamt* (Frau Jane Moros) if you have a problem; she will help you out. You do not ordinarily receive a stipend during the semester break, so make sure to plan for that as well. **Even if you don't receive the Exchange Fellowship, it is possible to study in Leipzig for the year (or for spring semester) and receive a Laurel Fellowship to finance your stay.**

BANKING: Opening a bank account in Germany is necessary. Many payments can be made via a direct withdrawal from your bank account (the German word for this is "überweisen" or a "Überweisung"), for example, rent, student fees and insurance. The Deutsche Bank 24, Dresdner Bank, and possibly others as well, offer a card that can act as a debit card. Simply pick a bank and let them know your situation. You may encounter problems at some banks which require a minimum two year contract, but there are plenty of banks, and you will find one that allows you to open an account. **Deutsche Bank has a free account option for students for one year. It is important to note that at the end of your year abroad, you must cancel your account with the bank otherwise you will be charged a fee.** Make sure you bring your passport and your proof of matriculation. The main Deutsche Bank building is across from Wilhelm-Leuschner-Platz. If it is possible to obtain an EC card with your account, it is worth it. It is accepted all over Europe as a debit card, and it can cut down on a lot of transaction fees.

AMERICAN CONSULATE: If you are an American citizen, check in with the U.S. Consulate right down the street from the university library. If you register with them, they can help in case of emergency. You can register at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>. The Consulate will also invite you to fun events which they host. **AN ADDED BONUS:** several of our previous Foreign Fellows from Leipzig still live in the city. Beate Renker (RenkerB@state.gov), who studied at MHC in 1993-1994, works at U.S. Consulate in Leipzig. She and the others will make sure that you are well taken care of.

HOUSING: Once you know you are going to Leipzig, you will receive some paperwork from the university to fill out. Part of this application will be an application for university housing. You should return this and secure yourself a place, but our strong recommendation is that you spend your first month in Leipzig finding a WG (Wohngemeinschaft) while going to your orientation course. You will have three choices on the housing form: to be placed in a dorm, have the university help place you in a WG, or look for housing independently. It was my experience the year I was there, that the university didn't actually have WGs available to place you in, and you still had to search on your own. A great website to look for finding WGs is www.wg-gesucht.de, as well as <http://dsb.uni-leipzig.de>. On these websites you can search by price and location and you can also see how many people are living in the apartment and whether they are male or female. Some apartments are looking specifically for a male or female roommates, so be sure to pay attention to this. You may also notice that some WGs are labeled as "Zwischenmieter" which means that one of the roommates may be abroad for a few months and then returning, so the other roommates are simply searching for someone to fill this gap. When choosing to live in a WG, it is important to note that once you arrive in Germany you will need to either stay in a hotel or hostel while you check out the possible WG options. Applying to live in a WG is sometimes like an interview process for a job- often the roommates will ask you over for a drink and sit and chat with you about yourself and your hobbies to see if you will be a good fit for their apartment. It is a good idea to bring a friend along for these events just to be on the safe side.

DORMS (Studentenwohnheime)

There are many dorms throughout Leipzig, some closer to the city center and classes than others. Dorm life in Germany universities is very different from that at Mount Holyoke: usually you don't know the other people living in the same building as you, and, depending on your relationship, you may not even interact too much with your roommate (this is more personal, however). Dorms in Leipzig are all set up like suites, in which you and your roommate have your own rooms but share a private bathroom and kitchenette (which includes a stovetop, sink, refrigerator, cupboards, and small countertop – they are usually tucked away in a very tiny corner). You will also have free, fast internet, which is sometimes rather difficult to find in Leipzig. When trying to pick a dorm, pay attention to the location. It is definitely more convenient and time-saving to live somewhere near the city center. Also, have a close look at the floor plans to have a better understanding of the size of the suite. For example, some suites have a small kitchenette, others have a big cozy kitchen. You can find a complete list of the dorms, information about the rent rates for the different dorms and floor plans on the website of the Studentenwerk: <http://www.studentenwerk-leipzig.de/>.

WG (Wohngemeinschaft)

Living in a WG was one of the best parts of our experience in Leipzig. A WG is an apartment that students rent together. Sometimes there are as many as 5 students together, or there can be as few as 2. They do not necessarily know each other before moving in together. Everybody has a single room and all share the kitchen, bathroom and the housework. It is a great experience! If you have never had the chance to live with a German family, it is an amazing opportunity to meet Germans in a domestic setting (and learn all those great household words)! It is the best way to meet German students in general, because you will get to know your roommates and their friends as well. This does not happen in the dorms. And the most exciting part is that there are hundreds of inexpensive WGs to choose from in Leipzig (housing in Leipzig is very affordable).

WHERE TO FIND HOUSING

People post notices at the university on the bulletin boards in the various academic building (check out the Seminargebäude and Hörsaalgebäude in particular), at the “Mitwohnzentrale” on Goethestraße (kind of like a free real estate agency) and in the Kreuzer (a magazine). A great place to look for housing (or furniture) is online at the Schwarzes Brett (<<http://dsb.uni-leipzig.de/>>). Another helpful site is <http://www.wg-gesucht.de/>. Looking for a WG gives you a great chance to discover the city, meet people and improve your phone skills. When visiting a possible WG, make sure that the people already residing in the apartment are people you could potentially live with! Connewitz or generally south of the city center (Südvorstadt) is a popular place for students. A reasonable price is about 200 Euro/month for approx 18 square meters. Look early for the best deals, but don't stress. There is never a lack of affordable housing in Leipzig.

EINFÜHRUNGSKURS/ORIENTIERUNGSKURS: You will be taking an introductory course to help you adjust to speaking German on a daily basis, to improve your language skills and to prepare you to begin studying in Germany. Placement in this course is easy and painless. You will be given a written *Sprachprüfung*. Do your best and then go with the group to which you are designated. There are 12 levels, so there will be a level for you! It is a worthwhile course with language instruction, talks and discussions on German and other European cultures/history, as well as several field trips (Weimar and Dresden). It is a great opportunity to explore and get to know your way around Leipzig, and it allows you to meet other international students and make some contacts before regular university students arrive. The introductory course begins in September, so it is best to arrive a bit beforehand on the date designated by the *Auslandsamt* for the arrival of foreign students. There is a fee for this course (about 100 Euro). Although you will not receive credit from MHC, it is a must!

CHOOSING COURSES: The *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*, or course catalogue, (fun to say!) is available on the internet. Courses specific to a particular *Fakultät* or department are also online on the specific department's website. Once you know which departments you want to be taking courses in, go to the department yourself and buy a small department booklet for 1 Euro. You can also buy these booklets from PRINTY, a small copy shop in Ritterstraße 5. It will give you the most up-to-date information about the courses offered within the department, a class description, the professor's name, meeting time and place. This information will also be posted online and on the bulletin boards of that department. The department websites are listed under the Universität Leipzig homepage.

The address for Uni-Leipzig homepage is <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/>

Before you arrive in Leipzig, you can look up courses you might want to take. In deciding to apply to go to Leipzig, you might also find the web page a helpful resource. Check and see if the courses you need are offered there.

To look at the course catalogue, go to the university website. Under *Studium* choose *Studienorganisation* and under that on the left menu click on *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*. Then you have to click again on *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* at the top right of the page to which you're brought. The next page will be a list of the various *Fakultäten*. If you're looking for *Germanistik* (German studies), for instance, that's under under the *Philologische Fakultät*.

FIRST WEEK(S) OF CLASSES

Do not be discouraged if there are twice as many students the first day as will actually fit in the room. Often students will ransack nearby classrooms for chairs. But by the end of the semester many will no longer be around. The first two weeks are all about checking out a lot of courses and deciding which ones sound best. So naturally there will be a lot of people there. Do your best to get there early (even earlier than you think might be necessary) if you want to get a seat in the classroom. The first days are also when they assign dates/topics for *Referate*, the required oral presentations in seminars. When they hand out the syllabi, immediately pick a few topics that you would be willing to present on and sign up for them as soon as the professor starts asking. The good ones go quick! Some classes do require registering- there are many different forms of registration ranging from emailing the professor, to registering online, to going to a certain building and simply putting your name on a sheet of paper. Make sure to look for information on registration for the class so that you do not miss out on a course that you really want to take.

Some courses are really crowded, so it might be difficult to find a place (or even get in the door). Don't be scared, just keep that in mind. And do visit more courses at the beginning of the semester than you plan to actually take—this way you can see which ones you like best and take them for credit the first semester it is not a bad idea to take courses through the *Studienkolleg Sachsen*. You'll hear more about these courses at your orientation course. The courses are designed for international students to improve their grammar, speaking, and writing skills. Unfortunately, their courses tend not to be too rigorous. More challenging and rewarding courses are taught by *Übersetzung* (translation), and although they are designed for students looking to work professionally as translators, they will improve your German more than the courses with the Studienkolleg.

You can also take classes at the Herder-Institut . These are courses for students wanting to teach German as a foreign language, though there are also many other international students in the course. They are, however, not intended to teach the grammar itself, but rather, provide more insight into the mechanics of the language. When looking for courses in the Germanistik department look for courses taught by either **Professor Ilse Nagelschmidt** or **Professor Ludwig Stockinger**. Both are excellent professors, very supportive of international students, teach very interesting courses AND KNOW MHC! Professor Nagelschmidt is also a good name to keep in mind if you need any extra help. She has also visited MHC in the past! Another very helpful and welcoming professor is **Christa Grimm**.

TYPES OF COURSES

Before you come to Leipzig, it is important to find out about the classes on offer. The classes, e.g. lectures or seminars, are organized in modules. Modules are thematical clusters of classes. In one semester you will be able to study modules comprising 30 ECTS credits. Most of the modules at the Universität Leipzig cover 10 ECTS credits, some cover only 5 credits.

There are different types of courses in the German university system. There are Vorlesungen and Seminare. NOTE: For any course, you must earn a Leistungsschein (NOT just a Teilnehmerschein). You must also get a GRADE for the course.

A Vorlesung is a lecture. You will not have an exam, usually, and will merely be expected to show up for the lecture and take notes. If you want to get credit for a Vorlesung you will need to make arrangements with the professor to either take a written exam or write a paper at the end of the course. You will also have to check with the German Studies Department at Mount Holyoke

to make sure you can get credit for the course back at Mount Holyoke. If you are taking a seminar, please see *Learning Abroad for German Studies Majors and Minors* at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/global/18652.shtml> for more information. Also, you should always consult the German Studies Department's *Study Abroad Guidelines* at http://www.mtholyoke.edu/global/assets/CGI/study_abroad_guidelines_2009.pdf for information on credit transfer.

A special note on “Sport” (physical education) classes: the Uni Leipzig offers a whole variety of them. There is usually a fee (10-20 Euro per semester), but taking one of these courses is a great way to stay in shape and meet students. Sign up is online—keep in mind that popular classes fill up quickly and, unlike regular classes, “Sport” classes have a limited number of participants. Make sure to sign up as early as you can on the day of registration (many people wake up early just to get into the courses they want). If the course you want is already full, put your name on the waiting list – often they free up! Note also where the class meets. Here is the website where the classes are listed at <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~sport/>

Whichever courses you take, keep in close contact with your MHC German studies adviser to make sure you can get credit for what you are taking.

INTERNET: Once your orientation course begins, you will be given a temporary login and password for the computer labs. Eventually, once your university card is ready, you’ll be able to look up your real login and password on machines in the *Hauptgebäude* using your university ID.

To get an Uni email account go to the *Rechenzentrum* which is located at the bottom of the Hörsaal building. You need a user name and password for both PCs and MACs. This will be on your Studentenausweis printout. You can set up an account through the Uni Leipzig, or continue to use telnet or a free e-mail service like “Hotmail” or “Yahoo.” We suggest using a free email service. Your MHC account can be forwarded to it easily. Be advised that the computer lab can be crowded, but there are usually enough computers to go around. Early (before 10 a.m.) and later (after 4 p.m.) are the best times to beat the crowds. There are also Internet hookups in most dorms, so bring your laptop!

The Rechenzentrum (URZ) is temporarily located about 5 min from Augustusplatz on Johannisplatz 5. The computers are reliable and fast. The Albertina, the university library on Beethovenstrasse, also has computers where you can access the internet. You can print there, but on the photocopying machines with the UniCard. There are also a few scattered places for wireless. To set up a wireless account can be a bit cumbersome, but it’s worth the convenience.

To print out you will have to put money on your account. You can do that by going to the Sekretariat on the 1 floor of the Hörsaalgebäude (only between 12-15pm) or by using your Geldkarte. You can put money on your university identification card in the main library Albertina (Beethovenstraße 6) by using a machine similar to the one in Blanchard. Ask somebody for help if you are confused. After the first time it is very simple.

LIBRARIES: Though the system will seem very overwhelming at first, it is manageable. The most inconvenient thing about the university library system is that the books are not all in one building. Every field of study has its own library, so you sometimes have to go across town to find the book you need. Plan early when you need to find a particular book. Get help with using the computers to find a book. The website of the library <http://www.ub.uni-leipzig.de/> could be a useful resource. You can look for books by using the WebOPAC link on the website. Most of the books are not on shelves that are accessible to everyone and you will have to order them by

filling out a piece of paper, or you can order books online through the WebOPAC system. It will take at least 2-3 hours before you can get your book. There is very little at the *Hauptbibliothek* that you can check out or find yourself. Do not overlook the *Deutsche Bücherei*. Every book that was ever published in German can be found there. Start going to the DB early in the year, because you can purchase a *Jahreskarte* (a year's membership) for 30 Euros. The books cannot be checked out, but it is a beautiful, quiet place to study and if you really need a certain section of a book, you can copy it there. It will take some time, but you will manage to figure out the German library system. Oh, and beware - late book charges are taken very seriously, but you can renew your books online. Go get your books early because everyone in your seminar needs the same books (which are sometimes out of print)! If the book is not available in the *Deutsche Bücherei*, check the *Stadtbibliothek* on Wilhelm-Leuschener Platz, which has an incredible collection. The *Jahreskarte* is circa 15 Euros, the *Halbjahreskarte* is circa 10 Euros.

TRANSPORTATION: After you have your *Studentenausweis* or your proof of matriculation, go to the LVB (*Leipziger Verkehrsbüro*) office on Richard-Wagner-Straße (right across from the *Hauptbahnhof*) and purchase a *Semesterticket* for 72 Euros. Semestertickets are also sold in Student Service Center on Goethestraße. This ticket should be carried with you every single time you ride the *Straßenbahn/Bus* because there are random checks and you will be charged 40 Euros if you are caught without a ticket! Public transportation runs throughout the night, but *Straßenbahn*s stop running around 1 a.m. There are night buses which leave the *Hauptbahnhof* every hour. You can pick up a schedule at the LVB office. If you live close to where you have classes, then keep in mind that you can use your *Studentenausweis* and travel with the LVB for free on weekends, and after 7pm on work days, even if you don't have a ticket.

If you are up for bike riding, it is a good way to get around the city and it is very pleasant when it is warm. Leipzig is a fairly large city and biking around it is beautiful! You will be in good company on a bike. Bikes are relatively cheap, easy to find second-hand and everyone has one! On the first Sunday of every month "Lucky Bike" (to the right of the train station and a little way up) sells used bikes for a good price. Get there early! People line up and the sale starts at 8 a.m. The bookstore across from the Nikolaiskirche (at Ritterstraße) also sells cheap second-hand bikes. There is a fabulous place next to "MS. Hippie" in Connewitz where you can fix your bike yourself. They have all the tools which you can use for 2-3 Euros. If you do plan on using a bike, you will need to pay extra for it if you bring it on the *Strassenbahn*.

LEIPZIG TO-DO LIST:

- Take advantage of the parks. Leipzig is a very green city. Clara-Zetkin-Park is especially beautiful to explore. In the summer, they hold outdoor movie screenings, rent boats, and the mini-golf course opens up. Rosental is a great park located behind the zoo. You feel like you are in a safari with the animals just on the other side of the pond!
- Take advantage of all of the famous sites- the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, the MDR tower, Auerbachs Keller and many others!
- If it is still warm in September, or once it warms up later in the spring, and you have a little time, go to the Coschudener See, or any of the other lakes. It is a pleasant shock to be lying on a "beach" after only a 15 minute tram ride from the city (*Straßenbahn* 9).

- Visit the museums at the beginning of the year while you still have time. They are all very cheap. We can especially recommend the art museum, the Zeitgenössisches Forum and Die Runde Ecke (Stasi-Museum). One night during the year, there's also a Museumsnacht, when you can go to any and all museums using just one general entrance ticket.
- Every Friday and Tuesday there is a farmer's market in the city center. Great fruit and pretty flowers.
- Visit the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* and climb to the top.
- Buy the magazine *Kreuzer* (<http://www.kreuzer-leipzig.de>). It has some good articles and lists events.
- Visit the Prager-Frühling-Cinema in Connewitz-Kreuz and the Schaubühne Lindenfels in Lindenau for great independent and foreign films shown in a great atmosphere. The NaTo on Karl-Liebknechtstr. also shows foreign films.
- Visit Fockeberg - The only mountain in Leipzig. There are great views of the city.
- Visit Berlin - it's only 1 hour away!
- Take advantage of the *Wochenendticket* - train tickets available on weekends (if traveling with 4).
- Climb to the top of the Thomaskirche's tower. You can also catch the world-renowned Thomanerchor (a boys' choir) for only 1 Euro on Fridays and Saturdays.
- Check out the *Wilma* group. They are dedicated to helping international students. It is run by a group of German students who organize a Stammtisch once a week in different bars and they also plan fun outings throughout Europe for students that are very affordable. Their website is <http://www.wilma-leipzig.de/>

Viel Glück!

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