

MOUNT HOLYOKE.

Exchange with the University of Potsdam



Universität Potsdam

Info for MHC Students

Applying: The program with the University of Potsdam is one of Mount Holyoke College's three exchanges. To apply you will need to write a short proposal in German and in English to be submitted to the German Studies Department and the Office of International Affairs. You will have an interview with the German Studies Department faculty and will be notified by the end of first semester. If you are chosen to represent Mount Holyoke College at the Universität Potsdam, you will have to fill out the required MHC forms for academic leave and an application to the University of Potsdam (just a formality, but Potsdam will need to have you officially on record).

Passport and Visa: You'll need a current passport. Apply for one early if you don't already have one. It can take several weeks for the application to be processed. You may not need to have a visa before you leave the country. U.S. citizens can stay in Germany up to 90 days without a visa. International students should apply for a visa to study in Germany as soon as possible. Talk to Jenny Medina in the Office of International Affairs about this. Once you arrive in Potsdam, you will have to go to the *Akademisches Auslandsamt* (am Neuen Palais, Haus 8) and see Frau Bachtelor or whomever is in charge of the international students. She will help you fill out all of the necessary forms to obtain a longer-term visa for Germany (U.S. citizens will need this) and will also help you register in Potsdam with the *Einwohnermeldeamt*. She will fill the forms out with you and then take your passport and actually get you your visa. However, it may happen that the person who is in charge does not have time and you may find that you have to go to the *Polizeianmeldung* at the Rathaus near Nauener Tor to do this process yourself. If that is the case, make sure you check out working hours before you head to the Rathaus. You will not have to pay for your visa or for registering with the *Einwohnermeldeamt*. Depending on the visa you receive, you may be allowed to work for a certain amount of time while you are in Germany. Some visas allow you to work for up to 90 days without special permission, others allow you to work only during school breaks. It is up to you whether you want to work or not. It will not be necessary to work if you can budget your money well, since you will receive a stipend every month for ten months while you are there. At the *Polizeianmeldung*, the officer will give you several forms to fill out and one of the forms, you will have to take it to the Studentenwerk, along with your student's *Bestätigung* (you can print this out from the PUCK machine located on campus by using your student's card) and copy of your passport. At the end of the semester, you will receive 50Euros for *Einwohnergeld* from the city of Potsdam

Arrival: Frau Romanova may be able to arrange for a student to meet you at the airport and help you through all the "Bürokratie."

Insurance: You will need to prove that you have health insurance in order to get your visa. You have a choice. You can either keep your U.S. health insurance if it covers you while you are abroad (you should look into this before you leave the country!) or buy German health insurance. In many cases, U.S. health insurance will only cover you "in emergency situations" and frequently requires that you pay the money up front for care. The insurance company then reimburses you. If you choose to buy German health insurance, the best place to go is AOK. AOK has an office located across from the Auslandsamt (Haus6) and staffs there are very helpful. AOK insurance costs about 52,11 Euro per month and is just about complete coverage: eye, dental, hospital stays. You can arrange for it to be paid monthly by direct withdrawal from your German bank account. When you go to a doctor, you need to pay a fee of 10 Euros for every four months and you will have to pay for medications, but at a discount rate.

Studienkolleg: Since Potsdam does not have an official orientation course or introductory course for exchange students, you will be asked to participate in the *Studienkolleg* which is a two-semester program for international students who want to study at the University but do not have the

equivalent of an *Abitur* from their home countries. You will not be required to spend two semesters there...don't worry! However, you will most likely be placed in the first semester of the course and be expected to participate from the beginning of the course (late August) until the beginning of the orientation program for new exchange students at the University of Potsdam (beginning of October). The *Studienkolleg* operates similarly to a U.S. high school with block scheduling. You will have different courses such as history, social studies, literature and grammar. You will not receive Mount Holyoke credit for attending the *Studienkolleg*! The *Studienkolleg* is located on Gutenbergstrasse in downtown Potsdam near the Holländisches Viertel. Depending on how you travel, it will take you a good 40 minutes to get there from your dorm. Classes begin at 8:00 a.m.

Registration: Whether/when/where one registers for a class is dependent on the department. You should ask the secretaries in each department in which you plan to take classes about whether you must register before classes start. The exception is for classes in the German studies (*Germanistik*) Department that are specifically geared towards foreign students who major in German studies. These courses are listed in the course catalogue under “*Germanistisches Teilstudium (vorwiegend für ausländische Studierende)*”. To register for these courses, you will be required to attend one of the advising sessions specifically for these courses and sign up for them then. Some politics or economic classes may require you to register online. If that is the case, it is quite likely that they use Blackboard, which can be accessed here→ <http://elearning.rz.uni-potsdam.de/webapps/login/>. Even though classes have not begun, you can already register for an account on Blackboard.

Courses: There are different types of courses offered at Potsdam. There are *Vorlesungen*, *Proseminare*, *Übungen*, and *Hauptseminare*. A *Vorlesung* is a lecture. You will not usually have a final exam. You 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 choose to take a *Proseminar* it is more like a 200-level seminar course. Depending on the workload, it can also be similar to a 300-level course. Mount Holyoke departments will give you either 200-level or 300-level credit depending on the amount of work you do in the course. You will need to check with the Department Chair before assuming you will get any kind of credit. Usually if you want 200-level credit, you will have to write at least 7 pages for your final paper. If you want 300-level credit it will have to be a 12 to 15-page paper in most circumstances. DO NOT take an oral exam and expect to get credit for the class!

A *Hauptseminar* is a graduate-level course but can also be similar to some senior or capstone seminars at MHC. You should NOT take *Hauptseminare*. However, if you find one that interests you, you may certainly try it out. In any case, you must be sure to check with the Department Chair and any relevant departments at Mount Holyoke before assuming you can receive credit for any given course. E-mail tends to be an excellent way to keep in touch with professors.

An *Übung* can have different levels of difficulty depending on what department you are taking it in and what the course is. Some professors run an *Übung* similarly to a *Proseminar*. They are generally offered in foreign languages and courses which offer a "hands-on" teaching technique. Depending on the course, it is possible to receive credit at different levels back at Mount Holyoke.

Germanistisches Teilstudium and the DSH: As a foreign exchange student you will have the option of eventually taking the *DSH (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang ausländischer Studienbewerber)*. If you pass, this exam will prove that you are proficient enough in German to study at German universities in a degree program. You are not required to pass, or even take, the exam in order to study at Potsdam for the year. But if you think you may want to return to Germany at some point to do academic work, it is highly recommended that you get the exam out of the way as early as possible. The *DSH-Prüfung* is offered in February and July at *Neues Palais*. As preparation, you may want to take courses in the *Germanistikabteilung* that are specifically geared towards exchange students majoring in German studies. These courses are listed in the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* under *Germanistisches Teilstudium (vorwiegend für ausländische Studierende)*. Courses with Frau Dr. Demjjanow and Herr Ditzel should best prepare you for the exam. However, if you can, avoid Herr Ditzel! To get MHC credit for *Germanistisches Teilstudium* courses, you must speak with the department chair and your adviser.

Selecting Courses: At the University of Potsdam course catalogues are not all free. You will need the *kommentiertes Vorlesungsverzeichnis* from the departments in which you want to take classes. You can buy the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* from the department offices. They generally cost 50 cents or 1 Euro. Several departments list their *kommentiertes Vorlesungsverzeichnis* for free on the Web. You can also purchase the *dickes Vorlesungsverzeichnis* which lists all courses being offered at the University in a given semester, but does NOT give a description of each course. This is also available online for free. The catalogues do tell you the professor, days and meeting times of all the courses. You should definitely speak with other students while trying to select courses. They can offer suggestions such as who are the good professors and which courses are best.

Ute Seidel in the *Institut für Germanistik* is an excellent professor. She teaches mostly *Sprachwissenschaft* and not literature. If you are interested in literature, you may want to consider taking the class entitled “Literarische Texte: Verstehen und Interpretieren” offered by **Ute Sändig** from *Germanistisches Teilstudium (vorwiegend für ausländische Studierende)*. This class is a great class to prepare you to study and discuss literature in German settings. **Herr Grötzinger and Frau Stephanie Oswalt** in the Jewish Studies Department are also great. **Thomas Jung** teaches courses in 20th century German literature and is interested in students from American universities (he got his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin!). He’s also familiar with MHC and the Five College area. **Detlev Zimmermann** and **Frank Göse** in the *Historisches Institut* are also good and are helpful to foreign students. If you want to improve your German accent, definitely take **Wolf-Dieter Krause’s** phonetics course. **Rüdiger Kunow** and **Mark Stein** teach *Anglistik* and *Amerikanistik*.

You should also check out several classes during the first week or two of the semester and then narrow down what you would like to do. Classes usually only meet once a week, so you can fit quite a few into one week. Perhaps try attending 7 or 8 classes the first week and then decide which 4 or so you really want to stick with. Be sure that you stay in touch with your adviser (or the department chair) while choosing classes. You should make sure that you will be able to receive credit for classes you choose. It will not be fun to take a course all semester only to find out that you can't get credit for it at Mount Holyoke.

Libraries: The University of Potsdam is less than 20 years old. Its library is terrible. You will most likely have to go to Berlin to use the libraries there. The Staatsbibliothek (Stabi) is probably the one you will be using the most, although there are several libraries in Berlin that you can use. It costs 15 Euros per year to have a library card at the Stabi. It is well worth the money! Note that in order to get this card, you will need a form (available from the *Einwohnermeldeamt*) which confirms that you are registered as a resident. You can also get library cards for free from other

university libraries in Berlin (the *Freie Universität* or *Humboldt Universität*). You must fill out a form at the library. Be sure to bring your passport and your copy of the registration form from the *Einwohnermeldeamt*.

There are also other specialty libraries in Berlin, such as the John F. Kennedy Library for American Studies, a library for Spanish and Latin American Studies, etc. Many of the libraries, including the Stabi, have closed stacks, which means you will have to wait for your books. General waiting time at the Stabi is 2-3 hours. You are allowed to either take books out for use in the library or to take home. You are not allowed to take books home that were published before 1950.

Email: You can open an E-mail account at the University of Potsdam for free. They also work on a Unix system which means you will use Pine to check your E-mail. You need to go to the secretary in ZEIK (Zentrale Einrichtung für Informatik und Kommunikation) in **Haus 9 in Golm, Neue Palais, or Griebnitzsee**. You just need to show your student ID and sign up for a login name and password. If you sign up before the semester begins, your account should be up and running within 24 hours. If you wait until the first week of the semester, it will take longer because every new student will be doing the same thing. You can have your E-mail from your MHC account forwarded to you in Germany by typing: forwarding on at your prompt. It will then ask you for an address to forward to. You will need to type in login@rz.uni-potsdam.de (login=your login name). You get to your MHC account by telnetting. At your Potsdam account prompt type: <telnet://mhc.mtholyoke.edu> and you will be connected to MHC just as if you were using a computer on MHC campus. The University of Potsdam is also on the Web at: <http://www.uni-potsdam.de>.

Internet: You can apply to have internet in your room at the *Sekretariat* in ZEIK as well. In order to apply for internet access, you will need a housing contract and a student ID. The internet costs about 30 Euros per semester and you are allowed to surf the internet and download up to 2 GB per month. To make your transition to life in Germany easier, it is good to apply for the internet right after you have everything settled.

Housing: The University of Potsdam will offer you a single room in one of the student dorms in Potsdam. You may or may not be placed in the same room as the previous MHC exchange student, depending on the circumstances. Information about the dorms can be found here → <http://www.studentenwerk-potsdam.de/wohnen.html>. Your room should come with a bed, a closet, a bookshelf and a desk. There will be a kitchen for student use. You will be sharing a bathroom with other students. You may also be able to buy a comforter and a pillow from the *Hausmeister* (the person who takes care of the physical aspects of the dorm).

When you first arrive, you will need to pay your first month's rent and your room deposit (*Kaution*). You will have to do this at the *Studentenwerk*, which is located on *Friedrich-Ebert-Straße* in downtown Potsdam. Before signing a contract, make sure that you have included the day and month when you will move out! If you want to move out before the date written on your contract, make sure you speak with the *Studentenwerk* a month prior to the day you move out. If you do not do so, it is likely that you will have to pay rent until the contract expires. If you want to stay longer than the date on the contract, again, make sure that you talk to the *Studentenwerk*. Once you have a German bank account, you can arrange to have your rent paid directly from your account each month. Before you move out of your room at the end of the exchange year, you need to make an appointment with your *Hausmeister* who will inspect your room. If everything is in order, he or she will sign a form that you must bring to the *Studentenwerk* in order to get back your

room deposit (*Kaution*). You should contact the MHC student currently studying in Potsdam to see what previous students have left behind for the next student from MHC (i.e., a telephone, bicycle, etc.).

Transportation: The University of Potsdam requires that you buy a *Semesterticket* before the beginning of each semester. It costs about 189,11 Euros and it is included with the general bill for student fees. This ticket covers all forms of public transportation in Potsdam as well as in Berlin and the rest of Brandenburg. This includes busses, trams, the S-Bahn, the U-Bahn, and regional trains. However, you will have to wait until October to get your *Semesterticket*, even though you'll be in Potsdam as of mid-August. This means you'll be responsible for paying for your own transportation until then. You may want to consider getting a daily, weekly, or monthly pass for public transportation in the interim, as it may be more economical than buying a single ticket each time you board a bus or train. Bicycling is also a popular option, especially among students. To see bus and train schedules to Golm and other university connections, visit the following website → <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/over/lageplan/busbahn.htm>

Eating: There are university dining halls in Golm, Neues Palais, Griebnitzsee and Babelsberg, as well as in the *Studentenwerk* on Friedrich-Ebert-Straße in downtown Potsdam. They all serve lunch Monday-Friday. Lunch costs 1-3 Euros, depending on which meal you choose. There are usually three or four choices, one of which is always vegetarian (but not always vegan). There is also a salad bar. The Neues Palais and Griebnitzsee *Mensen* also serve dinner on weekdays. You can check out the *Mensa* menus here → <http://www.studentenwerk-potsdam.de/mensabegleiter.html>. There are also “Cafeterias” which offer snacks and meals ala carte, usually from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the week, with shorter hours on Fridays. The *Mensen* and the “Cafeteria” are **not** open on the weekends. This means that you are responsible for your own meals on weekends. *Kaufland* is the name of a large and fairly inexpensive supermarket in the Potsdam *Hauptbahnhof* (train station). *Netto*, another supermarket chain, is cheaper, but with fewer selections; there's also a *Netto* in the *Hauptbahnhof*. *Marktcenter*, yet another supermarket, is on Breitestraße in Potsdam as well as a number of grocery stores and a small supermarket on Kaiser-Friedrich-Straße in Golm. You should ask other students for their suggestions and figure out what works best for you, depending on where you live. There are also several restaurants and cafés in Potsdam.

Telephone: The room in which you will be living has a telephone jack and a telephone, provided you are living in the same room as the current MHC exchange student. There are two possibilities for obtaining phone service: either the student in Potsdam will keep the phone line connected and will just have you transfer the name on the account, or she will terminate her service, in which case you will have to apply for new service as if there had never been service at all. If the MHC student currently in Potsdam is willing to just have the name on the account changed, she and you will have to fill out a form. She can get the form from Telekom (on Brandenburgerstrasse in Potsdam or in the Potsdam *Hauptbahnhof*) and fill out her part of it before she leaves and then leave it in the room for you to complete when you arrive. It will cost you less to have the name changed than to have the account turned back on if she terminates service! If you end up needing to activate phone service, you will need to call Telekom (ironic, I know...how can you call them if you have no telephone?!) or go to the Telekom office in person to make an appointment. They will give you a confirmation number. **KEEP THIS NUMBER.** If the Telekom technician doesn't show, or if you need to change the appointment, or if there is a problem for any reason, it will be helpful to have this number. After you have an appointment, make sure to locate the Haus technician to let him know that Telekom is coming. He is going to need to unlock the cellar for the Telekom technician otherwise your phone can't be activated. On the day that the Telekom technician comes, be sure you

are there early! Don't be surprised if things don't work out the first time. Ask a German student in the dorm to help you if you need it! Sometimes it really helps to have a native speaker as an ally.

There is what is called the *Sozialtarif*, which you may or may not be able to get. Theoretically, you should be able to get it, but sometimes the bureaucracy gets in the way. You need to go to the *Sozialamt* in Werder and fill out paperwork. You will need your passport, a copy of your registration from the *Einwohnermeldeamt*, a copy of your lease and a *Bestätigung* from the *Akademisches Auslandsamt* saying how much money you receive per month. Bring a German student with you! It will help you make your case and he or she will help you with the paperwork. If you decide that you don't want a telephone in your room at all, there are pay phones on campus. The other possibility for calling is to use a friend's phone and pay them for the calls you make. There are numbers which allow you to call the United States for about 10 cents a minute! You should also get a telephone card for making calls from phone booths. Every convenience store has them. Also, you may choose to get a cell phone, a *Handy* (cell phone) on which you can receive calls for free! With these "Handys" you can also send text messages to other cell phones (which many students have). Be aware that the cell phone you may own and use in the U.S. will likely not work in Germany. Cell phones are cheap enough so that you should plan on buying one after you arrive in Potsdam. If you buy a cell phone, it is better to get prepaid minutes. Don't sign a contract since it's normally a two-year-contract.

Calling home from Germany: If you have a telephone (Festnetz) installed in your room, you might want to check out this website <http://www.teltarif.de/festnetz/>. This website updates and gives you the number to call to get the discount rate. Do this before you make a call! If you have internet in your room, you could call home by using Skype. Yahoo and MSN talk do not work in the student dorm. Also, the internet calling program www.internetcalls.com works very well and is very cheap. You just need to install the program on your computer. Once registered, you can buy credit (a minimum of 10 Euros). These 10 Euros will expire in three months. However, during the three months, you can call to the U.S. (cell and landphone) and other destinations for FREE! You can also send text messages at 3 cents per message using this program. *Telecafe* in Potsdam's *Hauptbahnhof* is a place from which you can call home.

Stipend: You will receive your stipend just about monthly. You receive about 360 Euros per month. If you arrive in August, you will not receive your first stipend payment until October, when the semester starts. Payment is usually the second Tuesday of the month at the *Akademisches Auslandsamt* and is deposited directly into your bank account. If there is a change, they will let you know. When you pick up your money in October, they may give you back money from August and September. But don't forget that you only get 10 months of payment, whether you are there longer or not. That means if they pay you for August and September, your last payment will be in May or June (depending on January) even though summer semester won't end until July. You will most likely not receive a payment in January, but payments will start again in February. The 360 Euros cover expenses pretty well. It is helpful to have an account at a German bank. There is Sparkasse, Deutsche Bank, Volksbank, etc. Any one is fine, you can ask around to see what people suggest. People do not use checks in Germany, they do money transfers or use debit cards or cash. You can do money transfers to pay your bills or you can arrange for your debtors to withdraw the money directly from your account.

Other sources of Information:

The University of Potsdam website (see below) provides extensive information about the university, courses, organizations, departments and student life. The website for the *Studentenwerk*

Potsdam offers lots of helpful information for students studying at universities in Potsdam and other parts of Brandenburg. If you want more information about the city, check out these URLs:

Uni Potsdam Homepage → <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/>
Studentenwerk Potsdam → <http://www.studentenwerk-potsdam.de/>
Potsdamer Kulturlandschaft → <http://www.spsg.de/pkhtml.html>
Potsdam Homepage → <http://www.potsdam.de/>
Deutsche Telekom → <http://www.dtag.de/>
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin → <http://www.sbb.spk-berlin.de/>
Berlin Homepage → <http://www.berlin.de/>
Deutsche Telekom (telephone company) → <http://www.t-com.de/>
Deutsche Bahn AG → <http://www.bahn.de/>
Google Deutschland → <http://www.google.de/>
Yahoo Deutschland → <http://www.yahoo.de/>

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