

Boston University School of Law

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Study Abroad Final Reports



University of Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Goals and Expectations for Studying Law at UBA

My academic goals at the University of Buenos Aires were to 1) learn legal and business vocabulary 2) to be fluent in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in Spanish 3) to learn about the Argentinean civil law structure 4) to learn about international comparative law. 5) to learn about what the practice of law in Argentina and the Americas is really like.

My first goal is really a prerequisite to my other goals, for without knowledge of legal and business vocabulary it would be very difficult to learn the law well here. I found it necessary to put in a strong initial effort into learning these words and concepts in order to get up to speed as quickly as possible in my classes. A dictionary and a legal dictionary are both good methods towards this end. Also, trying to learn each new word from context is an important part of learning the nuances of a word. Luckily, many of the concepts in law were the same as the ones I have studied. It took about a month and a half to really become comfortable with all these new words specific to legal issues.

My second goal of becoming fluent in all areas of Spanish I fear will be a constant work in progress. It is learning process that will never end. Having said this I have made much progress in my five months here. In addition to speaking, listening, reading, and writing every day on my own I took a Spanish course offered through the University. I also hired a private tutor for two hours a week to help me with pronunciation and special areas of grammar and syntax. While I have not obtained complete fluency in my five months studying in Buenos Aires I have made significant progress toward that goal and simply having a goal of fluency has helped to push me along in my individual studies.

My third goal of learning the Argentinean civil law structure is something that I'm discovering on my own through my classes. If I really wanted to learn the civil law structure well, then taking a specific class in this subject would have been a good idea

since most professors assume the students know the structure and the Argentinean legislative system through the basic courses every student must take at UBA. Likewise, all my courses deal mostly with understanding the law on the books and its application, rather than procedure. I think a three day orientation dealing with some of these basic differences between Anglo-Saxon and European law would be an excellent supplement to studies here at UBA.

Through my course selection I have made progress towards my fourth goal of learning about international comparative law. Two of my courses deal precisely in this area. One course is a basic course on international private law. The first part of the course deals with history and theory while the second deals with specific legal issues. The historical analysis of international law is quite stimulating and valuable to understanding the underpinnings of international law. I am also taking another course on the legal challenges of globalization. Once again, it is a timely and interesting course that touches upon many facets of international business, such as oil, finance, and multinational corporations.

My fifth goal is learning about what life is actually like practicing law here. Many of my professors are currently practicing law in Buenos Aires and they often will bring anecdotes to class. Likewise, most of my fellow students also work in addition to attending class, so I sometimes hear stories from them. There seem to be many opportunities at UBA for learning about professional practice as I have seen posters around the building. I have some meetings planned later this month with individuals currently in practice and hope to ask them a little more about subject.

UBA – Final Report

I am often asked the question, “Amy, how was your time in Argentina?” I usually respond with something like “Fabulous!” or “Wonderful!”, but in reality those words do not quite express what a life-changing experience I had in during my semester at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA).

I arrived in Buenos Aires not exactly sure what to expect. The BU Study Abroad Office warned me of the size of UBA and its relative disorganization compared to American universities. During the summer I received a packet of information from UBA which listed its law school enrollment at 30,000 students. Having been born and raised in a mid-western town of 40,000, UBA sounded to me like a small city. Luckily, I had spent a year studying at the Universidad de Complutense in Madrid, with a student population around 160,000, so the idea of a large, disorganized, public institution did not sound quite as daunting.

The law school at UBA is housed in a very large building in the center of the city. Inside students find classrooms, a swimming pool, a gym, a boxing ring, multiple cafeterias, pharmacies and photocopy centers. The photocopy centers are very important because UBA does not use textbooks. Professors drop off reading materials at the various copy centers throughout the building and it is the students' responsibility to go to the copy centers and pick up the course materials. The complicated part, however, is finding which copy center to go to – the professors were not always great at making it clear or easy. In addition, the professors did not always clarify what from the reading material students were required to read for each class. At times it took a great deal of independence and self-motivation to keep up.

At UBA I took four classes, or fourteen credits: *Efficiency and Validity of Argentina Law*, *Law and Economics*, *Markets and Institutions* and *Theory of Distributive Justice*. In *Efficiency and Validity of Argentine Law* we discussed the reasons why Argentina, as a nation, has a history of disregard for the law. We read Argentine scholars as well as Argentine literary greats, such as Borges, in order to come to a conclusion of how Argentina can better foster a respect for the law and legal institutions in the country. For my final project I analyzed a recent Argentine Supreme Court decision which finally allowed class actions in the Argentine legal system.

The leading scholar of law and economics at UBA taught *Law and Economics* the semester I studied there. She had written two books on the topic, both of which were required reading material. The course was a very typical law and economics course, drawing upon Posner and Coase. We spent the second half of the semester studying how law and economics can be used in environmental policy. The final grade was determined by three exams throughout the course.

Markets and Institutions began with a general overview of the stock market, which was relatively basic and simplistic. The second half of the course focused on the Argentine markets and reasons why Brazil was so far ahead of Argentina in terms of economic growth. The course had no reading material and was based solely on lecture. The professor determined the final grade through class participation and a final exam.

One of UBA's most respected scholars taught the *Theory of Distributive Justice* course. He was an older man and really enjoyed having exchange students at UBA. The course was very heavy in required reading. We read Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Rawls, Hart, Dworkin and Bentham, to name a few. Because many of these legal philosophers

wrote in English and English is my native language, the professor brought photocopies of many of the readings to me each week in English. It was very important to him that I got the most possible out of the course and the readings, and less important to him in what language I read the texts. The final grade was calculated by combining our mid-term and final exam scores.

Although I did learn a great deal through my courses and professors, the greatest learning experiences came by way of the Argentine people. I lived in Spain for eleven months and never felt fully integrated into the culture. In Argentina, within a week, I felt as though I was one of them. The students invited me to study groups, to parties, to have dinner at their apartments, even to Sunday afternoon *asados*, barbeques, with their families.

It was very fortunate for me that the Argentine people were so welcoming, because the study abroad program in Argentina is not a typical study abroad program. Speaking to peers that studied abroad, I realized how different my experience really was. UBA does not provide any type of housing for students, so I was left to find my own apartment in the city through Craigslist. There were no weekly get-togethers for foreign exchange students and no organized group events (minus one welcome dinner that I was unable to attend). In fact, although I received a list with the contact information of the other eight American exchange students, I only actually met one of them – and that was only because he happened to be very good friends with a co-worker from my summer at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher. However, I was never lonely. I traveled with my Argentine friends, took tango lessons with my American friend, had friends and family visit from the United States, and spent hours upon hours exploring the city with my chihuahua,

Riley, who traveled with me from the United States. The museums and culture in Buenos Aires can compete with any top European city.

To sum up what it takes to succeed at UBA in one word, I would say "independence". This is not a program where the educational system is easy to figure out and friends are certainly not handed to you upon arrival. However, all of that is what makes the program so enriching. Next fall I will be starting work at Gibson Dunn in New York, working mainly in the global finance and project finance departments. Gibson Dunn does a substantial amount of work with Latin and South America and I am very excited to see what my South American experience can bring to the group. I have always hoped to work on a global scale and my time in Argentina only fueled this desire. I am very open to the possibility of someday working in a South American office of an American firm and eager to utilize the knowledge gained from UBA in my day-to-day experience as an attorney.