

Second Year Report
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Executive Summary

As I start this report, I know that I am not unique in my disbelief that my Olmsted Experience is, in fact, over. From September 2016 to late June 2017, the time period that this report will cover, I have learned so much about Europe, Germany, and the people who live there. I've made lifelong friends, challenged myself academically and linguistically, and been able to take advantage of opportunities that I never would have sought out had I not been an Olmsted Scholar.

As I have previously expounded upon, and as I will continue to do in this report, my Olmsted Experience has been unique in the sense that I have not received a Master's Degree from the Technical University of Dresden (TU Dresden). Was I disappointed? Absolutely. But I do think that I was able to make the best of the situation, attended some phenomenal classes, and pushed myself to further enhance my German skills. I will focus on University life in the first part of this report, and then proceed to my extracurricular activities and cultural and personal observations from the last year of this incredible experience.



Academic Life at the Technische Universität Dresden (Technical University of Dresden)

As described in last year's First Year Report, I was unable to formally enroll at the Technical University of Dresden. Fortunately, the university has an outstanding opportunity where one can enroll as a *Gasthörer* or a "guest listener." In short, this means that one can take up to six courses of their choice and participate fully with the exception of being graded. Most of my professors, however, were willing to grade my presentations and give me feedback as if I was a formal student.



Taking a break for some fun!

I began last year's studies as a history and as outlined in my other reports, I was unhappy with my classes as the German candidates for a Masters in History are not focusing on more modern German history. I took a language course during the summer and began my last semester as a *Gasthörer* in International Relations and Political Science. I was also able to take the language entrance exam for the University system (the TestDAF; see Registration Report for more details) and passed. As frustrating as it was to have the test under my belt and still not be a formal student, I was pleased with my language skills and began the search for the classes in which I would be enrolled my final semester.

My courses were all in German, and were as follows:

Vorlesung und Proseminar: Einführung in das Studium der politischen Systeme

Having been a history major in college, I found this course to be extremely useful. It was a Bachelor level course, and was essentially an introduction to the study of political theory within the German political system. We covered the basic concepts of analyzing and comparing political systems. What I found most helpful, however, was because the professor was much younger, we focused heavily on the influence of mass media and social media on political systems. As the US elections were imminent, much of the class focused on American politics. Once the election was over, much of our energy was focused on the results of the election and what it meant for Germany and specifically, the European Union. While, at first, I found this slightly tedious, I was able to really begin to understand how university-age Germans look at the US, our politics, and our foreign policy. This was a presentation-based class, and I found myself many times in the front of the room, talking about the American perspective with regards to the election, the EU, and NATO.

MA Proseminare: EU Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik

I loved this class, because I was able to study what I think the Olmsted experience is all about: regional and foreign security policy. This class was graded almost entirely on participation and one group presentation. My group presented for 30-45 minutes on the relationship between the EU and NATO specifically. Again, almost all commentary during this class was colored by the election results in the US. It aggressively highlighted that even though the US is not a member of the EU, very few decisions are ever made within the purview of the EU without taking the United States into account.

Seminare/Hauptseminare: Einführung in das politische System der Europäischen Union

I quickly realized that if I was going to be presenting on the EU, I was going to need a refresher/crash course in how the EU operated. While I had a fairly good general grasp on the EU as a concept, I was woefully behind my fellow students in the practical application of EU laws and enforcement. Again, current events drove the class, and one of the main themes throughout the course was Brexit and the EU's future without Britain as a contributing member. Tensions and emotions ran high, and led to incredibly interesting discussions and debates about Nationalism and Isolationism (capitalized with intent). German university

students in general despise Nationalism and made it very clear throughout the semester that the rise of Nationalism and Isolationsim within continental Europe would sound the death knell of the EU (this theory did not extend to NATO, which I found surprising). Like many other classes, the final grade was based on a 30-45 minute presentation. My partner and I presented on the European Parliament and how it functioned; we were the first presenters and my professor gave us a 1.3 (1.0 being the highest score) which I think he awarded with some leniency!

Seminare/Hauptseminare: Everything you always wanted to know about the European Union: advanced features of European Integration.

This seminar was actually taught by the same professor as the course mentioned above. It was originally supposed to be in English to allow Masters candidates to practice talking and debating in English (a cherished skill for anyone in modern German academia). However, as there was only one native English speaker in class (me), the class became 50/50 English and German. It was phenomenal practice moving quickly between the two languages and helping grade papers and presentations of students who wanted to take advantage of easy access to a native English speaker. German political science, unsurprisingly, is very thorough and relatively scientific. This course covered EU integration theories like neo-functionalism, new institutionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism. All of these –isms meant nothing to me until this seminar and presenting on new institutionalism was a challenge! Again, my same partner and I, from the seminar above, were the first presenters and were awarded a 1.3.

Quality of Instruction

In my last report, I discussed a level of apathy that I found disappointing within the student body. Many students would attend classes up to and through the day of their presentation, and then were never to be seen again. The professors never seemed to have a problem with it, and as I became more integrated in university life, I realized that many students came to class to give a presentation and check the requisite box on their requirements on the road to their Masters or Bachelors. This goes back to the personally driven education paths that many students seem to follow. Because education is so inexpensive, there seems to be a lack of urgency to complete studies and many students are willing to retake courses if they are graded too low on a presentation or cannot complete the requirements in time (professors

will often allow assignments and papers to be turned in as late as the start of the next semester!).

However, I found the general enthusiasm amongst the IB (*Internationale Beziehungen* or International Relations) and the PW (*Politikwissenschaft* or Political Science) students to be inspiring and contagious. The IB and PW *Fakultät* are generally much smaller than the History *Fakultät* and lends itself to more of a “*Kameradschaft*” amongst the students. Students would continue to attend class even after their presentations were completed, and continued to actively participate.

I will echo what I said in my last report, however, and extol the general level of knowledge amongst students. Whether about the American electoral college (a subject I can now explain very well in German!), the EU parliament, or the UN councils, German students take pride in their ability to discuss a plethora of diverse political subjects. However, and I will elaborate later, while the breadth of knowledge is incredible, I was surprised at how generally homogenous political views and opinions seemed to be amongst the student body at the University.

Medical Care/Insurance

This is a subject on which I did not think that I would have much to offer. However, I was, shall we say, afforded the opportunity, to be admitted into the *Diakonissenkrankenhaus* because of an allergic reaction to peanuts. While most American hospitals would treat this as outpatient, I was kept overnight for observation and was given a shared room with an older lady. I was admitted late at night, so we were unable to chat until later the next morning when we both had breakfast and chatted about the craziness that had ensued the night before at BRN (Buntesrepublik Neustadt – a local celebration for tolerance and a “colorful Dresden”).

I had no issue submitting a TRICARE claim, and I assume the ease in my paperwork submission was due to the fact that it was an emergency room visit and not a routine doctor’s visit. The care was exceptional and, in typical German fashion, devoid of any particularly warm bedside manner.

Cultural Observations

This section could easily become a novel; and rightly so, as it is truly the heart and soul of the Olmsted Program in my mind. But, brevity being the soul of wit, I will try and keep it short. I think, to start, it is important to distinguish between my cultural observations as Claire Clancy and my observations as a Navy Olmsted Scholar. I was surprised when I first moved to Dresden because I found myself comparing US culture with Germany's culture, and myself with my German friends; how we acted, what we said, how we spent our free time...the list goes on. Today, instead of trying to defend everything about "my culture" and "my military," I have adopted the strategy of "that's interesting...please tell me more!" This attitude has led to some incredible revelations about Germans and German culture that I would have otherwise missed.

I reflected in my last report about my views on German tolerance as a mechanism for ensuring that one does not appear nationalistic or xenophobic. With Brexit, the US election, Austria's close brush with a far-right president, and France's elections, conversations almost always turn to politics and the state of the world. I have been, and continue to be, very impressed with how clinical most of these debates remain. My friends have their personal opinions, as do I, but emotions are rarely heightened and voices are certainly never raised. However, among the culture of tolerance and academic debate, I have discovered a very tangible undercurrent of fear. Whether it's fear of a new Europe without Britain, or a fear of losing a certain way of life, there is a disconnect between the attitudes of: "I'm a European first, and a German second" and "I don't want my life as I know it to change." While I would assert that Germany is perhaps the most stable country within the EU; socially, politically, and economically, they have to face the reality of assuming the de facto yoke of leading Europe. It has been fascinating to hear that internal conflict being played out, whether we are discussing the election over beers in a bar, or whether we are presenting in a class.

Personally, I have made so many discoveries about German culture, society, and what "friendship" means. I was often frustrated living in Germany as a textbook extrovert, where my behavior could easily be interpreted as inappropriately forward. This was also difficult for me when it came to making friends. I was instructed on many occasions that the German definition of friendship is far more nuanced than ours here in the States. Germans often have the reputation as being "cold," and I think that, to a large extent, is true. However, all it takes is one good German friend and you're suddenly being invited to ski trips, traveling with them and

their group, and slowly being integrated into society. It can be a painful and sometimes isolating process (especially as a single scholar), but the struggle turned out to be worth it ten-fold! I have a few incredibly close friends that I have made over the last 2.5 years – and what I lack in quantity, they more than make up for in quality!

I had more of an opportunity over the last several months to explore different “sub-cultures” within Germany. I think it is fairly evident when one first moves to Germany that there are SEVERAL different dialects (many of which to me are still completely unintelligible), different local fare, and various assortments of unique regional social mores. I have traveled to every *Bundesstadt* within Germany and by far, my favorite is Bayern (Bavaria). I will talk more about my travels within Germany, but it serves to note that I spent enough time in Bayern, that when I spoke in Sachsen (Saxony), I had people inquiring as to my origins. Was I Bavarian or Swiss? Maybe Swedish? Suffice it to say, my love of Bavarian culture seeped into my accent; most importantly, however – I was given the blessing from some of my Bavarian friends to purchase a *Dirndl* (the traditional Bavarian dress). I was incredibly proud of this and wore it as often as I could!



Saxony in all her glory!

Security/Anti-terrorism

I experienced nothing resembling any security breaches or anti-American sentiment and have had no security related incidents in Germany.



When the Germans say “mountain run...” they literally mean run UP a mountain!

Community Involvement

I mentioned in my previous reports that I joined a couple of clubs in Dresden, and was able to be part of a community within the city. Unfortunately, many of our *Stammtisch* evenings died out as they became a haven for refugees and many of our native German speakers no longer participated. It was, as a side note, a very interesting insight into some of the impatience that many young Germans have with how the refugee “situation” is being handled. I continued to participate for a while, but the momentum for continued evenings quickly died and the group was disbanded.

I was, however, able to supplement my *Stammtisch* evenings with some great teachers (both German and non-German alike) from the Dresden International School. We would meet up weekly at a different pub or café and talk in German about everything and anything. I learned very quickly that if your organized group no longer meets, make your own! They are often more fun, and honestly, more productive for language learning.

I was also able to finish the entire *Malerweg*, and met some great hiking friends along the way. A couple invited me to the local bouldering gym and I was able to hang out there (pun intended) during the evenings. It was a phenomenal way to learn a new skill and meet some folks with similar interests. This brings me to my next point. I continued to participate in the events mentioned in my first year report (Church, music jam sessions, and running), but what became most important to me was the hiking community in Germany and Austria. I joined the DAV or the *Deutscher Alpenverein* (the German alpine mountaineering club), and they acknowledge reciprocity with Switzerland, Italy, and Austria. What does this mean? It means

that I was able to get incredibly useful publications on trail information and closures, discounted rates in the Alpine huts that are scattered around the countries, and a great community of people interested in the mountains. I summited the highest peak in Germany, Zugspitze, stayed at a hut in Austria, clambered all over Switzerland and Italy, all with information and discounts I had received through the DAV. It was a great organization and I'm thrilled I joined; I just wished I would have sooner!

Finally, one of the most incredible opportunities in which I was able to partake manifested itself as a casual invitation and ended up being a life-changing experience. I attended the George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies and took part in the Countering Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC). I chose this course instead of the longer counter-terrorism course because it fit nicely within our semester break. I could have not been more thrilled with the experience. 96 students from 52 countries, and only three Americans. What an amazing opportunity to expound on what I had learned in Germany and apply it to the rest of the world; a tall order, it would seem, but I found that so many of our struggles unite us in different way. Strategy and policy development were the core of the course, but I made friends and connections that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.



Olmsted is all about testing limits!

Overseas Travel and Travel Within Germany

Within Germany, I have traveled to all 16 states and to so many tiny towns and cities that I have actually lost count! I attended Oktoberfest 2016 in Munich and attended many Fall, Winter, and Spring festivals. I was also able to visit several of the “Luther Cities” (Wittenberg, etc.) for the 500th annual celebration of the Protestant Reformation. Being based in a city that was one of the main arteries in which Luther’s words traveled, this was an important stop in my Olmsted itinerary. I traveled to the far reaches of eastern Germany to find General Zhukov’s bunker that was utilized during the Battle of the Seelow Heights (finding the bunker required several hours of wandering through an Eastern German forest in the dead of winter...an experience for the books!), and traveled to the north to visit the German Naval Academy. I was also invited on an amazing ski trip by one of my close friends and we spent a week in Austria honing our skiing skills and...participating actively in après ski.

I expounded at length in my last report about my love for Italy and the Dolomites where the language is German but the culture is Italy. I was able to return for a couple of climbing, hiking, and skiing trips, and further explored the South Tirol and Tirol region in Austria and Italy. I also traveled to Russia with the Sullivans (Prague, ’15) and that was one of the formative moments in my Olmsted experience. I have been taking some Russia, and unfortunately did not have enough to practice while we were there, but my impression of the country and the people was in no way diminished. One of my areas of interest is the relationship between Germany and Russia and how that relationship affects the rest of continental Europe. Nowhere was the Russian mentality more evident than in Moscow, the heart of Russian politics. Taking that experience back to Dresden, specifically because I lived in the former DDR, was incredibly powerful.



The Stevens family and my father during the Viennese Officer's Ball

My father was also able to visit during my time in country, and we traveled to the Baltics, where I was able to meet one of my friends from CTOC who is a police officer in Estonia, and one of my friends from the Naval Academy who is a Lithuanian serving in the Lithuanian Navy. Additionally, I have been afforded the opportunity to travel to Scandinavia, and more extensively around the Balkans and former Yugoslavia.



Climbing Germany's highest peak!

I have mentioned this sentiment before, but I think it begs repeating. Travel for me has become fully about experience and not as much about “checking a box.” I have found that I

learn more about Montenegrin politics sitting in a café with a man who remembers the years directly after Tito, or a Serbian waiter who does not think that Kosovo should be recognized as a State. I have also learned that no matter how far or wide you travel, there will be Germans. As my friend Caro says “they’re preparing for whatever crisis the world has in store.” She says this in jest, but she isn’t wrong. Germans have a profound sense of duty to travel. They need to understand the world around them, and their place in it. The amount of travel I have been able to take part in, both solo and with friends, has been staggering. Whether it’s a weekend trip to a Polish town right across the border or a ski trip to Austria, Olmsted has forced me to reshape my world view, my perceptions of Europe, AND my perceptions of the United States. Without a doubt, I will be better for this experience and cannot reiterate enough my thanks to the Foundation for providing me with this opportunity.



[At the Munich Oktoberfest](#)

Contact with other Olmsted Scholars

Over the last several months, I have visited David Veney (OSC '16, Helsinki) and fell in love with Finland. David was an incredible host and I feel like I got a true Finnish experience (complete with the mandatory Finnish spa!). I spent time with the Dombrocks (OSC '15, Rabbat) and the Hogans (OSC '15, Berlin) on a ski trip, and loved being able to show them

around Innsbruck! I also was able to spend lots of time with Ryan and Ashley Stevens (OSC '15, Kiel), with whom I not only had the “German connection,” but we became fast friends and saw each other at every opportunity. I was also finally able to visit the Bauses (OSC '15, Sofia) for another ski trip; where I learned that the Bauses have truly integrated into Sofia culture...if you want Bulgarian pottery, they are the source!



Unsurprisingly, one of the best parts of Olmsted has been meeting other Scholars and forming friendships that I will have forever. I know what people mean when they say the Olmsted family. It truly is that, and I am so honored to be a part of it!



Receipt of Orders/HHG shipping/Close-out of Affairs in Dresden

I want to start this section by assuring the reader that I made it back to the United States in one piece. But it was not easy, at least on the Dresden side of the move. My PCS and dealings with Naples regarding my military move were relatively uneventful.

I received my orders to report to Department Head School in Newport Rhode Island in March 2017 and I immediately began the process of canceling contracts for my phone and internet in Dresden. This, as a warning, requires extremely careful planning. German contracts require a 3-6 month cancellation warning, and you need an *Abmeldebestätigung* for the companies to agree to cancel your contract. This *Abmeldebestätigung* is a confirmation from the city that you will indeed be “checking out” and leaving for another job, end of studies, etc. Here’s the catch: Dresden, by law, will not issue this confirmation document until one week before your official departure from the country. See the rub? How can you cancel a contract three months in advance when a termination contract can only be issued one week before departure? Well, I had two options: 1) get SOFA involved or 2) go to the store, talk to the manager, and explain (again) that I was military. I opted for option 2 and they ended up issuing me a confirmation that my cancellation process had *begun*, but could not be *finalized* without the termination contract.

While academically simple, the practical execution of this evolution lasted the last three months that I was in Dresden and was infuriating at times, but with persistence, I was able to cancel my contracts.

The rest of my administration was handled by Naples in superb fashion, but because I was remote, they could not help me on my household goods move. I called the Grafenwoehr PPO and they were able to do a consultation with me over the phone. I ended up doing two shipments: one to Rhode Island where I had rented a furnished apartment, and one to Virginia which will be in “permanent” storage until I move to Seattle for my next ship.

Ultimately, the hardest part for my move was the bureaucracy on the German side. But, the Navy had prepared me to handle that!

Transition Back to the Navy

Thus far, at least administratively, my transition back to the Navy has been very smooth. As a junior Surface Warfare Officer, I lost no time at all in my career progression. I

arrived on time to Department Head School, and despite being rather worse for the wear with respect to general Navy knowledge, I'm reintegrating quite nicely.

The transition that has been the most interesting is the cultural transition. I was able to take a road trip on my way to the East Coast, and suddenly the loudness of American culture was more apparent than ever. But the friendliness of the clerk at the store, and the wide, open, expansive skies are also more valuable to me than ever. I am very interested to see how my perception of American culture changes as I continue living here in the US.

Final Thoughts

Receiving the Olmsted Scholarship was, without a doubt, one of the most significant events in my life, to date. And that's to include everything that happened after receiving the Scholarship! Very earnestly, Olmsted has taught me anew what it means to think critically, to look at problems and find unique solutions, to open your mind and receive information that may be at first glance insulting or displeasing. This experience has reinforced and honed my ability to adapt within multiple cultures, languages, and creeds. And yes. Everything I have learned will make me a better Naval officer, of that I have no doubt. But what is most important to me is having become a better person for having had this opportunity, and I have the Olmsted Foundation to thank for that. This will be something I carry with me for the rest of my life, and I look forward to start giving back to the Olmsted family!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen!

