

# The Muhlenberg Weekly

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2016

VOLUME CXXXVIII, ISSUE 13

## Media and Communications Abroad in Dublin

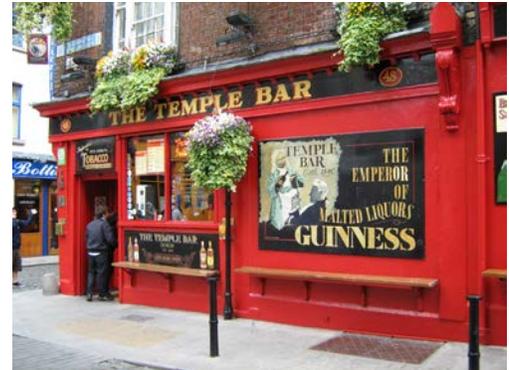
Every year, the Media and Communication Department gives its junior year majors the chance to spend the spring semester outside of the Muhlenbubble" and take part in its study abroad program at Dublin City University (DCU) in Dublin, Ireland. The program, which is now in its fifth successful year, is open to both Media and Communication and Film Studies majors.

This semester, twelve Media and Communication students are abroad in Dublin, fully embracing Irish life and culture during their study breaks. The group arrived in Ireland on January 27th and is set to return back home to America at the end of May. Every year, the students are accompanied by one of Muhlenberg's Media and Communication professors, who teach a six week course on the DCU campus. This is just one of the aspects that make the Dublin program unique from most other Muhlenberg abroad experiences. This year's program director, Dr. David Tafler, is teaching a course called "Community Media," which focuses on local non-profit media in Ireland, on the Irish Red Cross global community media initiatives, and on Indigenous media operations in Australia.

Part of the course experience is getting to go on local field trips around the area. The class has already visited Near Media, a non-profit media project in northeast Dublin, where the Outreach Coordinator, Dorothee Meyer-Holtkamp, explained the organization's media literacy goals. The group also observed an on-air candidate debate for the upcoming Irish national elections.

Along with Tafler's course, which lasts only the first six weeks of the semester, the students are also taking two DCU Communications classes. After the first month, the academic experience in Ireland is proving itself much different from a typical Muhlenberg semester. Many of the DCU classes are strictly lecture-style and host over 100 students in a single classroom, in contrast to the intimate academic setting at Muhlenberg. DCU has a much larger population than Muhlenberg in general, totaling almost 15,000 students.

"Having the ability to navigate large class sizes is a skill that adds diversity to our learning experience and helps get us ready for all types of environments post-graduation," said Maya Shen, one of the students in this year's Dublin program.



After Tafler's course concludes, the twelve students will branch off on their own assigned media-related internship experiences for the remaining eight weeks. From local radio stations to record labels to public relations firms, the students are being given a tremendous opportunity to gain work experience while abroad in a foreign country, another unique aspect of the Dublin program.

"I would have to say the biggest benefit of doing (the Dublin) program is the fact that it's so tailored to our major," said Victoria Marsala, another one of the Muhlenberg Dublin students. "Not only do we get to take all Communications courses, but we get to [gain work experience in our field], all while sharing these incredible experiences with people who have the same appreciation for them as we do. It's a Comm. major's dream."

With a much lighter workload than what students are used to back at Muhlenberg, there is plenty of time to get off of the DCU campus and explore Ireland as well as the rest of Europe. The students have wasted no time in discovering all that Dublin, and Ireland as a whole, has to offer. The group has already traveled to the west coast of the country to see the Cliffs of Moher, toured the Guinness Storehouse and the Kilmainham Gaol, and gotten many chances to enjoy the Dublin city food scene and nightlife.

Many of the students have also booked trips to travel to other European destinations throughout the semester, including Denmark, the Czech Republic, Scotland, the Netherlands, France, and Italy.

The students have adjusted quickly to life abroad and are already having the time of their lives. Living in Dublin, as part of a community of students from all over the world, with easy access to all parts of the country and other parts of Europe, and experiencing a mix of academic classes while discovering the meaning of Irish political, economic, and social culture adds up to an unparalleled experience that certainly comes only once in a lifetime.