Exchange report  
Canada, spring 2017  
Aude Giraud

Basic information  
McGill University, Montréal, Canada.  
Spring 2017  
Studies: Ecology

Montréal (QC)  
Montréal is located in Québec, the french-speaking region of Canada. Montréal is a very dynamic and multicultural city. It is big, and there are many things to do around. A part of the city is a lot of grey (too grey) buildings, with all sorts of shops, and another part has more old houses, and a port by the St Laurent river. The whole is a mix between european and american lifestyle. In the middle, there is also a hill -the Mont Royal-, good for afternoon walks and a great view over the city.  
Very positive point: the snow was amazing!

McGill University  
McGill University is located in the center of Montréal (downtown). It is an old university, so part of the campus includes historical buildings. Everything is on the same spot in the city center, unlike Lund which is streched across the town. There is a second campus, outside of the city (minimum 40 min drive by shuttle bus), which offers courses on agricultural and environmental sciences, as well as some on ecology.  
The university is very international (and english speaking), with a strong emphasis on building a student community... and on maintaining its high-level reputation.

Arrival  
I arrived the 29th of December, to enjoy New Year party organised on the old port by the city! The courses started on the 9th of January.  
There is no system to welcome newly arriving students at the airport or at the university on a specific day. There meeting for internation students, with presentation of the university and practical matters, and few events during a week. There is also a meeting with the advisor responsible for exchange students within each faculty. However, there are pre-arrival webinars, and a buddy program.

Courses  
General  
Students follow several courses at the same time, usually 4-5 courses. Often courses are 3 credits each. Most lectures are about 2 to 3 hours. There can be 'mid-term' exams, and final exams (end of the semester). The tempo is intense, because there are lot of readings for every subject, and only four months to finish all lectures and assignments and exams. It gets even more intense the last month, because the deadlines for all final assignments are often near to one another.
Courses

* Ecological Anthropology *(teacher: Colin Scott)* – Discusses the relation between humans and nature, with a focus on indigenous people, and how these people can act to protect their environment. The assessment was made through small synthesis papers, and the main literature research paper. It was very interesting to get an 'outside of ecology'-perspective, with humanities content. It required more work than for most of the courses I had in Lund, because of heavy readings, and of the research paper, especially if one is not used to such kind of literature.

* Knowledge, Ethics and Environment *(teachers: Jaye Ellis, Julia Freeman, Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert)* – Gives a basic understanding of environmental issues, with a point of view of environmental sciences, history and law. The 'practical' part, and exam, was short explanations of assigned texts, and the main literature research paper. It was an interesting course, though the law point-of-view felt too much; good to get a first background on environmental issues. The research paper required a lot of work.

* Mammalogy *(teacher: Murray M. Humphries)* – Each lecture focused on one characteristic typical of mammals, and there was a 'lab' to learn about 60 species of canadian mammals. There was two written exams, and the 'lab' exam, plus a small personal project. The content itself was interesting, but the way it was taught made everything boring. There are several points that could be improved, and I did not find the small project useful.

  NB: it takes place on the second campus (going there twice a week is not so nice).

* Science and museums *(teachers: Hans Larsson, David Green)* – Presents the life of natural history museums, and its relation to research. There was two written final exam, plus a project. It was a great course! Very interesting topics, and everything happened within the university museum old building (Red Path Museum). The project was great, as part of a virtual museum project (3D pictures and exhibition). The course did not require as much work as in other courses, with only 1h lecture twice a week, plus a small lab, and small amount of homework.

Accommodation

   It can become quite expensive, especially if one aims at living close to the university. There are student housings, but they are the most expensive ones, and not so easy to get as an exchange student. It is easier -and cheaper!- to find a room in an appartement/house shared with other students or inhabitants.

   https://montreal.craigslist.ca/
   https://www.kijiji.ca/

Leisure/spare time

   McGill University offers a wide range of 'recreational' sports -from hockey to swimming, including dancing or martial arts [http://www.mcgillathletics.ca/](http://www.mcgillathletics.ca/). There are also a great variety of student groups and associations within the campus. It is easy to find ponctual events proposed by some student group. You can really immerge yourself in the campus life only, for your free time.

   Finally, Montréal is a very dynamic city, with lots of places to discover, things to do and events to attend to!

Costs

   I think the costs are similar to the ones in big cities in Sweden. But some food products that are easy to find in Europe are more expensive due to costs of importation.
Other
* University-life tip: check the 'Midnight kitchen' for lunch.
* Cultural tip: if in exchange during the winter semester, it is worth renting a car and driving to a 'cabane a’ sucre’ or 'sugar shack' during the maple sirup season -February/march. You will enjoy a delicious meal, out in the canadian forest!
* Insurance tip: Make sure you have the proper health insurance paper from Försäkringskassan (paper FK6351C), so that you are covered through the Québec health insurance system, and do not need to pay McGill’s insurance.

Contact: aude.giraud.946@student.lu.se