

Direct Exchange to Emory University, Spring 2024

First of all, I want to use the opportunity to thank the team of FU International who supported me in every step from the application process until the time I came back to Berlin and prepared me very well for the 5,5-month period I spent in the US. Also, I want to state that studying in a city like Atlanta was a very enriching experience and both academically and personally valuable. Also, for reasons of the cultural experience, I want to highly encourage you to apply for this institution and a semester in the US in general.

Studying at Emory

As a graduate student at FU Berlin (Master) you will be enrolled in a PhD Program at Emory. For me this was a special opportunity to further think about becoming a PhD student myself for the time I will have finished my master. It also means that the standard of learning and working on your own research projects is very high and you get a lot of support from your teachers. However, to study as a PhD student comes with an extensive workload and multiple assignments during the semester. Because the workload is much higher compared to a master's program in Germany and because you have to select and complete three graduate classes, I needed some time in the first weeks to manage and organize my work schedule. After a while it all becomes manageable, and you do not have to be stressed about it. All assignments and/or presentations will help you a lot for your final papers! Due to my research interests in social movements, gender studies and critical race theory, I applied for the PhD Program African-American Studies (AAS) which was just launched at Emory (as part of Laney Graduate School) a year ago. All in all, my experience at the department was absolutely amazing. I was welcomed on my first day of school by the graduate student coordinator, invited to many events and talks on and off campus and could use the Office lobby of the department where to meet with other graduate students and work on assignments and course projects. I also took advantage of the privilege to freely choose classes in other departments. For that reason, I could fully follow my interdisciplinary research interests and visited a class at the department of Philosophy and a class offered in the Women's and Gender Studies Department. In all classes, I enjoyed the open and very respectful debate culture as well as the collaboration among students and teachers to support one another's research projects. There are also several free cultural and sports events on campus during each week.

Living in Atlanta

The first point I want to raise is finding a place to stay. Over the last years Atlanta has become a very attractive place for people all over the US to settle. For that reason, housing prices and costs of living have risen. Finally, I found a room in a shared living house close to the university in North Decatur and I would highly recommend this area together with City of Decatur (a suburb in the city of Atlanta area close to Emory), Atkins Park or Candler Park (a 20-minute bike ride to Emory) or Virginia Highland (also 20 minute ride but also direct bus connection

with bus number 36 to Emory). I found the flat via the website provided by Emory (see link below) which is a very safe way to find trustworthy landlords. It depends on the kind of experience you want to have, but I would recommend living as close as possible to Emory because you will have to spend many hours during the week there and it is not easy to commute to campus with public transport if you live in far distance to campus. I recommend downloading the 'Passio Go!' App on your phone when you look for housing off campus because it shows you the Emory Bus Routes which run often during the week. If you live close to one of these bus lines mentioned in the app you can easily live a bit more distant from campus. Even if most Atlantans complain about public transportation and missing bike lanes, I took the metro during the weekend and into the city a lot and also cycled almost daily. Atlanta is hilly and the first few days on a bike were very different compared to Berlin but the good thing is that midtown is only a 30 minute bike ride from Emory and you will not get stuck in traffic. Facebook groups are a good way to find housing and flatmates in Atlanta as well! There are a couple of facebook groups for Emory or Georgia State/Georgia Tech students where many of my friends were able to find a room or a flat close to Emory.

Culture

You are lucky to be in Atlanta because you find everything around food, music and sports in this city. Many restaurants, bars and small shops are located in Inman Park, Candler Park, Virginia Highland or directly at the Belt Line (a green path that connects different districts of the town via a cycle/pedestrian route). The area around Ponce City Market and Krog Street Tunnel can be very busy but are still places worth checking out. Most importantly, Atlanta is a city of vibrant and diverse hip hop culture and it really shapes the style and open minded character of Atlantans. Most of the people go out to Little Five Points or East Atlanta Village where you can find food, small shops and music venues as well. The Red Light Jazz Café is a wonderful place close to campus where many Emory students play and jam on Wednesdays. Also, football, basketball and baseball are huge in Atlanta and I would highly recommend to visit some games. You can also visit games of the Emory Sport teams for free on a weekly basis and do sports yourself in the Woodruff Physical Education Center. There is also a place for rock climbing and swimming in the Center. Atlanta is a city with a powerful history and presence of social movements and anti-racist alliances. I would highly recommend visiting the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, the MLK Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Freedom Park and the Campus of the Atlanta University Center, the world's largest consortium of African-American private institutions of higher education. Across town there are multiple archives and research centers where you can delve into the history of the Southern Freedom Struggle. In all these institutions I have met people who were very kind and open to share their knowledge about these topics.

Recommendations for Visa, Health Insurance, Travels

Visa

After you are informed that you will be hosted as an exchange student at Emory, I recommend reaching out to your student advisor at Emory (to find your student advisor see the link below) to get the visa process started. This is important because you cannot apply for your visa (J1 Visa) before you have received further information and documents from them that are necessary to start the visa process. FU International will also inform you about the date for an information session on the visa process.

Health Insurance

Emory will provide you with a health insurance and you do not have to pay for an international or US specific one from Germany. As soon as you have your Emory mail address, you will receive information about the process to activate your insurance user-profile. You can then install the Aetna App with which you can have your insurance ID and profile on your phone. Check out Emory's Immunization Requirements (link below) at an early stage. As long as you do not have all the required vaccinations you will not be enrolled as a student. This process has to be finished before you leave for the US.

Travels

The state of Georgia has many beautiful natural sites to offer. I have travelled to the start of the Appalachian Trail (a hiking trail from Georgia to Maine) to see the mountains of Georgia (100 miles north of Atlanta) and to the coast and swamp lands in Savannah and Tybee Island on the coast. From time-to-time Emory students offer collective weekend trips to some of the most famous outdoor parks in Georgia. If you are interested in the East Coast of the US also Amtrak trains can be a nice and very relaxed way of travelling. Atlanta has an Amtrak station as well.

Links

Emory Off-Campus Housing Website:

<https://offcampushousing.emory.edu/>

Find your student advisor (International Student and Scholar Service):

https://iss.emory.edu/students/find_your_advisor/index.html

Get your student Visa:

https://iss.emory.edu/students/getting_your_visa/index.html

US Department of State – Visa Process

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange.html>

Emory Immunization Requirements

<https://studenthealth.emory.edu/immunization/index.html>