

## **The University of California Davis – Aisling O'Rourke, Jill Carmody & Breda Gallagher**

### **Davis**

Davis is a town of about 60,000 people, about 80 miles east of San Francisco, and 20 miles west of Sacramento. The surrounding area is quite rural, but the town is lively, and very student friendly, with nearly half the population of the town attending the university.

UC Davis is part of the University of California system, and was originally the farm for UC Berkeley. It has the best wine school in the US, and an internationally renowned vet school. The law school is in the top 30 US law schools, and top 10 in California.

Davis is really flat, so the main mode of transport is bike. It can take a while to get used to, especially on campus where there are so many people cycling, but it's a great way to get around. Second-hand bikes are reasonably priced.

There are loads of restaurants, coffee shops and bars in the town. There's also a farmers market twice a week. It is really safe, and the cost of living (discussed further below) is reasonable, much lower than in a city. People are really friendly, and *love* Irish accents.

San Francisco, the Bay Area, Napa Valley and Lake Tahoe are all close by, and Sacramento Airport has flights to locations all across the US. Flights from Ireland to Sacramento are only marginally more expensive than flights to San Francisco, but Davis is less than 30 minutes from Sacramento Airport, and nearly 2 hours from San Francisco.



### **King Hall**

The law school has about 600 students. The size makes it really easy to get to know people, and make friends.

UCD students are required to attend the orientation week for incoming 1<sup>st</sup> year law students. This is a great way to meet people, and learn a bit about American law while adjusting to Davis.

The law students tend to socialise together, with 'Bar Review' organised in a different venue every Thursday night. House parties are very popular amongst the law school students and are generally held every 1-2 weeks.

The classes are at postgraduate level, so more is expected of you than at home, but once you get into the habit of reading in advance of lectures, and being prepared to answer questions there shouldn't be any problems. Getting into the routine of reading is also great practice for final year in UCD.

The average age in the law school is 25, which is one of the biggest differences between Roebuck and King Hall. Many students are engaged or married, and have children. There's a crèche in the law school.

## **Subjects**

### **Corporate and White Collar Crime – 3 units**

This was an interesting class with an excellent lecturer. It required a lot of reading, and the lecturer assumed you had read and understood everything before coming to class. A lot of time was spent critiquing judicial decisions and dealing with the theoretical basis of the law. It was a very "American" class, but focused on federal, as opposed to Californian law, so will hopefully be useful in the future. There was a 3 hour exam at the end of term.

### **International Business Transactions – 2 units**

This class focused on how to be a lawyer, as opposed to what the law is. The class was mainly taught through case studies, and real world problems. For example, we were presented with an American franchise agreement, and discussed how to adapt it to suit an international franchise arrangement. The focus was obviously on commercial transactions, but we also covered trade issues with the developing world, with emphasis placed on Africa. The lecturer was a little hard to follow at times, but you learn a huge amount without realising it. The exam was a 2 hour multiple choice at the end of term, which students find very manageable if they've attended class and taken notes.

### **Law of Financial Markets – 2 units**

This was a seminar class with about 15 students. There was one 2 hour class a week. The lecturer would assign reading, which he would present on in the first hour, and then the students would discuss the material for the 2<sup>nd</sup> hour. All the issues covered were very current and topical, but students who didn't have any background or interest in finance sometimes struggled to keep up. It doesn't require in-depth knowledge, reading the financial press occasionally, and googling words you don't understand should be sufficient! We had to write a paper and present it to the class, there was no exam.

### **Basic Finance – 2 units**

This class was a "numbers" class rather than a law class. It is being taught by a different professor next year, so the format will probably change.

### **Bioethics – 3 units**

This was a seminar class with about 15 students. It covered topics from assisted human reproduction to end of life issues, and everything in between. It was unlike any class available at home, and made the students challenge their preconceptions and justify their opinions. There was quite a bit of reading, but the class always involved fascinating discussions. Assessment was on the basis of class participation, an essay and a presentation, but there will be an exam next year.

### **Legal Ethics in Corporate Practice – 3 units**

This course gave an overview of the various roles played by a corporate lawyer, and the challenges and ethical dilemmas faced by the lawyers in those situations. It gives an excellent insight into the work done in big corporate law firms, and as in house counsel. The American Bar Association Rules of Professional Responsibility are focused on, but the principles will be relevant regardless of where one practises law. It was a really interesting class, and helped students work out whether they would be interested in corporate legal practice. There was a 2 hour exam at the end of the semester.

### **Criminal Justice Administration – 2 units**

This was a seminar class with about 30 people, assessed with an essay. It covered topics from across the criminal justice spectrum, from the role of the prosecutor, to sentencing guidelines. The US system was compared and contrasted with the Chinese and German justice systems. There was a lot of in class discussion, which really highlighted different perspectives held by various students. There were some interesting guest speakers also.

### **Family Law – 3 units**

This was a relatively large class of around 70 students. It covered all areas of family law including divorce, child custody, property distribution, same-sex marriage and artificial insemination. As well as a two-hour exam there was a mandatory group work project during the semester in which teams had to negotiate the ins and outs of a divorce. Great subject which overlapped quite a bit with constitutional law.

### **Public Health Law – 2 units**

This was a small seminar class of approximately 12 people. It compared and contrasted the government's obligation to protect the public health against the individual right of bodily integrity, for example in the area of mandatory vaccinations. Students completed a research paper at the end of the semester on a public health topic of their choice.

### **Community Education Seminar – 3 units**

This class provides an excellent opportunity for those who wish to teach the law in the future. Students who take this seminar must teach the public about the law for 3 hours a week during a period of 12 weeks. One may choose to focus on high school students, to attend a local juvenile detention centre or to teach the elderly. This class is undoubtedly a lot of work as students must prepare each class, maintain a diary of events and submit a short paper at the end of the semester. Despite this, the Community Education Seminar is a great experience and very worthwhile.

**Sexual Orientation and the Law – 2 units**

This was a small seminar class consisting of approximately 10 students. The class focuses on the difficulties facing the LGBT community such as same-sex marriage, sexual harassment in the workplace and intersex conditions. It was an extremely interesting class with a great professor and a natural follow-on for those pursuing a family law career. Class participation and a research paper make up the grade at the end of the semester.

**Juvenile Justice Seminar – 2 units**

What was initially intended to be a small seminar class turned into quite a large lecture due to the 50 or so students who showed interest in this topic. The professor who was a juvenile court judge provided an in-depth insight into the legal system and its' treatment of minors. The frequent guest speakers in this subject were definitely a high point, particularly the gang squad who discussed the traits and crimes of California's most notorious gangs. Students submitted a research paper on a topic of their choice at the end of the semester.

**Law and Popular Culture Seminar – 2 units**

This traditional seminar class also ended up larger than expected due to the large student interest in the topic. Each week a law related film was assigned to be viewed and a 2-page paper was completed by each student on the topics it addressed. In the following class the students discussed how the legal system and lawyers were portrayed in these films and the impression given to the public. A final paper on the study of a legal film of one's choice was required at the end of the semester.

**Trial Practice – 3 units**

Trial Practice allows a student to become familiar with the art of formulating a technique for trial. Each student is given either a civil or a criminal case to work on throughout the course of the semester and they must act as the defendant or plaintiff counsel. The class consisted of one two hour theory session and one two hour tutorial session where an adjunct critiqued our trial skills. The class culminated in a trial in the Sacramento Superior Court which each student had to prepare. This class was a pass fail class and therefore will not alter your GPA. It is imperative that you have some grasp of evidence as a lot of the work you will be doing in this class is evidentiary based. This class was a lot of work but was a great experience and is a must for anyone who enjoys debating/public speaking or for someone trying to improve on these skills.

**Criminal Procedure – 3 units**

This bar class involves three two hour lectures a week and deals with American Criminal Procedure i.e. citizen's rights under the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Amendments of the United States Constitution. The topics involve search and seizure, arrest, one's right to a lawyer etc. This class is a lot of work as it is a mandatory class that students must take for the California Bar Exam. It is graded on a curve which makes it more difficult to score highly.

However, if you have an interest in criminal and constitutional law this class is highly informative and interesting and well worth the work.

### **Medical Liability Law**

This course was offered in conjunction with the UC Davis School of Medicine and provided a unique opportunity for medical students and Law students to study and discuss critical issues in medical health. The course was taught in a combined lecture/discussion format and focused on actual cases involving a wide range of clinical specialties and patient care settings. There was a two hour multiple choice exam at the end of term. This course is quite "American" so-to-speak and deals with a lot of health insurance/HMO/MCO issues which are solely related to the American system. It also was not as geared towards law as it could have been with a lack of emphasis on caselaw.

### **Policing Seminar**

This was a seminar class with twelve people attending. Participation in class discussion constitutes 40% of the final grade so reading the material is imperative. Professor Joh sends out the material every week and every second week each student writes a report on the material totalling 3-5 pages. There is no final exam and your grade is based upon the continuous reports and class participation. This class deals with issues in the police here in the US, issues such as racial profiling, broken windows policing, the psychology of policing, DNA, computer police and the private police. This is unlike any class that is offered in Ireland and was highly informative, interesting and enjoyable.

### **Cost**

#### *Flights*

Return from Dublin to San Francisco is about €550, return from Dublin to Sacramento is about €600. A shuttle from SFO to Davis costs \$100, and from Sacramento to Davis is \$20.

#### *Rent*

We paid \$2000 a month for a 3 bed apartment. That is quite expensive for Davis, and rents have since come down.

#### *Food*

Groceries, split between 3, were probably about \$100 a month each.

Lunch on campus/in town costs \$5-10

Dinner out costs \$10-20.

#### *Social*

Davis is small, a taxi rarely costs more than \$10 and it is perfectly safe to walk or bike home.

Bars tend not to have a cover charge.

Alcohol is a lot cheaper than Ireland, but they're strict on the 21 drinking age.

The Grad, the college student bar and resident line dancing bar is a very popular place for students to socialise.

#### *Phone*

Pay as you go mobile costs \$30-50 a month depending on the plan. It costs to receive calls and texts as well as making them.

#### *Internet*

\$25 a month, for the apartment.

#### *Electricity*

Approximately \$40 a month, for the apartment.

#### *Bike*

About \$80 if you can get one on Craigslist, 2<sup>nd</sup> hand shops start selling at about \$100. It's also pretty easy to sell your bike at the end of the year for a decent price.

#### *Books*

Average cost per subject is about \$150. Reading for class is mandatory, so buying the books is also mandatory. They don't keep a copy on reserve in the library. But not all classes have books, some lecturers email reading out to the class or hand out photocopies. Students receive \$70 complimentary printer credit each semester, it costs 10c a sheet to print.

#### *Health Insurance*

UC Davis insists that all students have insurance with a company that has an American billing address, so VHI global cover, or equivalent, isn't acceptable. We got a basic package for \$500.

There is a college health plan which is more expensive, but covers doctor, dentist, pharmacy, physio and optician bills (including glasses and contacts).

There's a health centre on campus which treats all students, regardless of whether they have the college policy. GP visit is \$25.

Ending up in hospital in the US is extremely expensive, so a good health insurance plan is worth the expense. Prescriptions are also very expensive to get filled.

#### *Travel*

Return train ticket to San Francisco is \$40 plus \$8 for the BART. You can get a 10 journey pass that lasts for 45 days for \$125, and a group travelling together can all use the same pass, working out at \$25 return, plus \$8 for the BART.

3 day weekend car hire, with fully comprehensive insurance was \$120 plus petrol.

Day skiing in tahoe (ski pass, equipment rental etc) is about \$100.

Wine-tasting in Napa costs approximately \$10-15 per winery, look out for coupons and special offers.

Round trip flights to east coast (Boston/NY/DC) are about \$400.

Round trip flights + Hotel to LA from SF cost \$370 on Expedia

Flight to Vegas one way from SF cost \$70

Flight to Seattle one way costs from \$90-\$160

### *Part Time Work*

It's quite hard to get, as a J-1 visa restricts you to on-campus employment, or law related work. There are some part time jobs available on campus, but the hourly rate is about \$8 and college work takes up quite a lot of time so it may not be worth while looking for a job. Working during the summer and saving money before you head abroad is recommended.

One can extend their Visa by obtaining a legal job within the United States. An offer letter is required from your employer along with a letter from your academic adviser stating why your employment relates to your academic studies and you also need proof of funding. The visa can be extended for several months as long as you are still employed.

### **Activities & Events**

Weekly softball league in Semester 1.

Annual Float trip down Sacramento River in Semester 1.

Weekly bowling league in Semester 2.

Law School Prom in Semester 2.

Student clubs/organisations – there is a talk on nearly every lunch time in the law school, some of which are really interesting, and all of which have free food. There's also Law Capella, the law school choir.

There's a really good gym on campus, with indoor soccer, basketball courts, a running track, and large weights/equipment room. There's also a good selection of group exercise classes. The outdoor college swimming pool which opens when the weather gets hot is an ideal place to chill and relax.

The Memorial Union is a great place to kill a few hours during a wet evening, it has really cheap bowling, air hockey, pool and video games.

The two cinemas in Davis are conveniently situated downtown, student tickets are priced under \$10. Look out for student night on Tuesday which has mark-down tickets and snack specials.

The Davis Culchies Hurling Team was started in 2010, and is going from strength to strength! It's a mixed team, and most players are total beginners. It's well worth getting involved in.

The Mondavi Centre for the Performing Arts is beside the law school. It hosts a huge range of music and theatre events. Student rates are really reasonable. Gigs are also held in Freeborn Hall on campus with popular DJs and bands such as SuperMashBros. Tickets are approximately \$12-15.

Depending on how much time you have free and how far you want to go, it's possible to visit Berkeley, San Francisco, Sacramento or Napa Valley for a day. It's probably worth a weekend if you plan to go to Tahoe, Reno or the rest of the SF Bay Area, further south to Big Sur or inland to Yosemite. If you want a 3-4 day trip, Vegas, LA or Seattle would be good options.



If you want to go to the east coast it's better to have 5 days to a week, because the flights are long and the 3 hour time difference makes a difference. Boston and LA for Thanksgiving and Vegas and DC for Spring Break were two trips we made this year.