



# DSAAS Newsletter

Issue 04, September-October, 2009

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## Editorial

Dear DSAAS-member,

This is a special issue as you can tell from the table of contents. The focus in this issue is on going abroad to study and how you go about it. I will make this short and just say: get started. It will take way more time than you expect to arrange it all regardless of whether you get an exchange seat or you arrange your stay yourself. This is why we have spent part of our summer holiday to write this up for you. You need to get started as soon as you start in the American Studies program in September.

Also, consider signing up for DSAAS. We will be needing more board members to carry the torch when most of the board goes abroad for the fall term. Remember that volunteer work looks good on your résumé. And most

importantly, it's fun!

We have an intro day for y'all. You can find detailed information under "Events" on the left.

Have fun planning

*Mads Jensen*, Editor

[madsj01@student.sdu.dk](mailto:madsj01@student.sdu.dk)

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## Upcoming Events

August 24: DSAAS Intro Day

TBD: DSAAS constituting board meeting

Stay updated on upcoming events at

[www.DSAAS.org](http://www.DSAAS.org)

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## Past Events

### DSAAS First Annual Summer Party

*The sun was shining, the barbeque lit and the drinks plenty, when DSAAS threw the first annual Summer Party on June 26th 2009.*

Exam were finally over and all waiting for us before we could hit the beach and sleep in was the DSAAS Summer Party. It was the first annual DSAAS Summer Party and the turnout was very good with close to 25 attendees.

On the day of the party DSAAS board members met at 10 AM to go shopping for food, marshmallows and Asti! Then a couple of busy hours were spent turning the groceries into marinated meats, pasta and potato salad and sparkly welcome drinks!

Helle and Karina from American Studies were very kind to host the party, so we all gathered in their front yard - a small cozy garden surrounded by a round hedge.

After dinner and an initial spontaneous marshmallow roasting, the grand 'who-knows-most-about-America-and-American-stuff-quiz' took place. Out of the three tables one table proved the winning table with all four prize winners. Candy and more marshmellow roasting accompanied the party as evening turned into night.

For hours the party continued with songs, people playing drinking games, chatting and then around 4 AM the now already infamous Ana - Ms. Lady Liberty speech took place. The party continued until the sun rose around 5 AM and it was a true testament to the big support DSAAS has enjoyed throughout the last year, when anything social or a bigger event has taken place.

DSAAS wants to thank the members for a great 2008/09 school year. Hope to see you all

next fall/spring and that the summer party will indeed become an annual event both members, students, faculty staff and alumni can look forward to.

*Mira Borggreen*

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## Life In the Real Athens

*Last year I studied at Ohio University, in Athens, Ohio, as a part of my master in American Studies at SDU. What it meant and means to me is still revealing itself to me.*

First of all, I will tell my story of my academic experiences at OU. Before leaving SDU I had a look at the classes that OU offered. The amount of classes offered was almost unbelievable and I had a very hard time picking the three classes for my application. When I got there everything opened up even more and I could 'go shopping' for all classes regardless of faculty. The only limitation was that the classes I picked had to have some relation to the US and be above 400 level classes. I took a hard look at the course catalogue and found my three classes among the seemingly endless possibilities. This is very different from SDU where you have a lot fewer classes to choose from every semester unless you apply for approval of a class outside your home faculty. My experience of the US college system is that it is more flexible and the opportunity to find the right mix of classes that fits your interests should not be passed by. Another difference in the way college life is in the US and Denmark is how you work and - as important - the workload. When going abroad you should be aware of the workload that US colleges hand their students especially at graduate level. The amount of reading for each class will be bigger than you're used to in Denmark but it is not unmanageable. However, you should plan to spend a decent amount of time at the library with a stack of books in order to be able to stay on top of

things. The good thing about this way to work is that the finals are very manageable when you have done your bit during the quarter. This is because your final grade for each class is compiled through your class participation, your midterm, and your final paper and/or test.

What became even more important to me during - and after - my stay in the 'real Athens' was my personal experiences. I lived on campus at OU and before I went I was a little bit unsure about the whole dorm thing. However, when I got there I grew to love the dorm life and the whole 'college feel' living in the dorms provides. Living on campus means a lot of friends, eating in dining halls, hanging around the park, living side by side with all sorts of people, some of whom you would never have met otherwise. I loved living in the dorms for one simple reason: Friends. If you live in the dorms you're never bored. There is always at least one person that has his or her door open and that means that you're welcome to talk to that person. That way I met almost all my new friends in Athens.

Now that I am back home in Denmark the perks of my visit are still revealing themselves to me. Besides having gained new friends from all parts of the world I'm benefiting from some valuable help and advice from one of my professors in Ohio as I am writing my thesis.

On every level I can only recommend going abroad and especially going to Athens, Ohio.

*Lars Noesgaard is an American Studies  
Alumni from SDU*

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## **Applying for an American University**

### *Applying for an exchange seat*

When applying for an exchange student seat in the US you should be aware that you have

to apply for the fall term of 2010 by **November 15, 2009**. This early deadline means that you have to start thinking about what you want to do one year ahead.

You can go to [sdu.dk/det](http://sdu.dk/det) international kontor to find information about how to apply for an exchange seat. Note that most of the information on the website is only in Danish (international indeed). You can contact the International Office personally on campus. Ask for Stefan, he has been very helpful and friendly to all of those going to the States for the 2009 fall term.

Before you can apply you need to find out what universities you intend to apply to. The catalogue is available at The International Office's website and in hardcopy at The International Office. The seats you can apply to for the fall term of 2010 will not be made public until September 1 2009.

Once you have decided to apply you need to fill out a Learning Agreement (there is a link to these documents at the DSAAS website) for **each** of the universities you apply to. You need to hand in two copies of each of these to the study board. They meet only once a month and you need to have a signed copy back in time to hand it in at The International Office by November 15. For the date of the next meeting you can contact study councillor Simon Holmstrøm at [sihol00@student.sdu.dk](mailto:sihol00@student.sdu.dk) but get it done as soon as possible. You can find a list of classes at the universities' websites. Often they will not provide the fall 2010 classes by November 2009 so just pick some classes from their catalogue. Chances are you will change them along the way anyway. The study board will sign most Learning Agreements. If you get a seat you just have to pick classes that have some relation to the USA, be it literature, poli-sci, history or something completely different.

Along with the Learning Agreements you need to hand in an application form as well.

Note that the list of priorities is not that important. At the International Office they let the ones with the highest grades go and then more or less randomly distributes the seats among them.

All of this has to be done by **November 15 2009**.

You will be notified about whether or not you get a seat by **mid-January** or earlier. This means that if you do not get a seat you have to work quickly from then on. That is why if you suspect your grades will not cut it among your classmates you should start looking into other universities while you are applying for exchange seats. This will save you time if you do not get a seat.

*What to do if you do not get a seat*

To my surprise it is not the end of the world. Getting accepted at an American University is often not that hard as long as you can prove a decent academic record as well as assert that you can pay for tuition and living expenses. This will leave them with no economical burden and no academical problems if you should fail since you are just there as a non-degree student and therefore will not look bad in their statistics plus they will not get into trouble with a non-existing exchange university. On the plus side they get to brag about how they can attract students from Denmark so for them it is a win-win.

On your plus side you can pick and choose between a lot of universities. You should note that even though scholarships, "udlandsstipendium", SU and "internationaliseringspulje" will help you fund your stay you will typically end up paying an estimated 10-15.000 Danish Kroner. That is why if money is an issue you should focus on looking at public universities. Here is how I went about finding a university once I found out I did not get a seat through SDU:

- I found out what geographical area I wanted to go to. You can base this on some professors you may know from books, climate or as for me an interesting history. I chose the South.

- There are tons of universities in the South so I had to eliminate some from the get-go. I did this by searching Wikipedia for different states. For instance, I searched for "Alabama." I then clicked on the paragraph about "education" or "health and education". From there you can usually find a link to a complete list of colleges and universities in the state in question. I then disregarded the private institutions from the start. Then I clicked on every single public university in the South and went to their website to find out whether they offered American Studies at graduate level (you do not have to pick a university that offers American Studies, if your interest is American Foreign Policy you should find a university that offers a graduate program in Political Science - I personally appreciate the interdisciplinary structure of American Studies).

- Having looked through all public universities in the South, I found out that only University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Texas at Austin, James Madison University in Virginia and University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa offered American Studies at a graduate level. I then looked into the details of each of these universities and found that University of Texas had an application deadline of December 15 which was months back at this point, University of North Carolina only accepted international non-degree students if they stay for whole school year and James Madison I never got around to applying to. Thus I ended up applying for the Heart of Dixie.

- You should be aware that in the States they have nothing similar to our Coordinated Application system (KOT). Each university has its own system, their own website layout, their own application deadlines and so forth so this research process will end up taking longer than you expect.

- You should also note that despite my above statement about it not being as hard to get in as you might expect, they do expect something from you. What you are is an "international non-degree graduate student." This is important as undergraduate level corresponds to B.A. level which means that classes taken at an undergraduate level will not be approved as part of your M.A.. It is also important that you apply as a non-degree student as the admission requirements for a non-degree student are easier to fulfill than those for a student that will graduate from the university in question. This is typically also important when filling out the application form which tends to be different depending on what you apply for. You can apply online practically everywhere.

- In Alabama they wanted a certification of finances in which I should document that I was able to pay the estimated tuition and living expenses for a semester (\$15.000 in all). You should get an SU document that says how much money you will get that way and then get your or your parents' bank to write a document saying you can provide the rest as well. In this newsletter you will find a list of ways to get hold of more money as well but these money are typically only accessible when you can provide a letter saying you have been accepted and you cannot get that letter until they process your application which they will under no circumstances do until they know you can pay for your stay.

- Alabama also wanted three letters of recommendation. These were very easy to get a hold of. I just asked three professors here and they did it in a day or two. In Alabama they wanted the letters sealed meaning that they wanted the recommendation in an envelope signed and post marked across where it is closed.

- They obviously needed a B.A. Diploma and transcripts of grades. Note that these have to be signed and post marked as well to certify that they are official. All documents in Danish have to be accompanied by a certified English translation. Charlotte Granly has been very

helpful with this. She signed and post marked my documents.

- You also need to fill out a visa questionnaire. J-1 for exchange students and F-1 for individually arranged stays. You mail this to the university and then they mail you back your I-20 (for F-1) or DS-2019 (for J-1) which you need when going to the American Embassy to apply for the visa and when entering the States later.

- Finally, they wanted a ToEFL test result. Once all these documents were received they processed my application. In the States they often have rolling admissions meaning that they process your application once they have received all the required documents. This means that the sooner they get your complete application the sooner you know whether you are in or out. It took around two weeks for me from when they got the documents until I got my letter of acceptance. This is nice since you have to apply for scholarships, find a place to live, make travel arrangements, move from or sublet your apartment and so forth. This is just the beginning.

Note that you also need to fill out a Learning Agreement and have it approved by the study board for an individually arranged stay. This you also need to hand in to The International Office in order to be considered an active student for the fall 2010 semester as well as be eligible for the "udlandsstipendium" and "internationaliseringspuljen."

*Mads Jensen*

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## **The ToEFL Test**

A ToEFL Test score is often a requirement for admittance of foreign students to American universities. It is not a pass/fail test. The university decides what score they accept.

The test consists of four part that account for equal portions of the total score. The four parts are reading, writing, speaking and

listening. You should be prepared for the test not being as easy as you might expect. The test is created to find out how well prepared you are for academic studies and therefore you will be dealing with academic texts and lectures (on blood cells and reproduction of whales among other things in my case).

There is both a paper-based test and an internet-based test. The internet test is not, as the name suggests, possible to take from home. Both test types has to be taken at an official test center where you have to bring your passport for ID (it has to be your passport, driver's licence is not accepted). There is a limited number of tests available.

In Denmark you can take the paper-based test at Frederiksberg in Copenhagen and in Hellerup north of Copenhagen. You can also take the internet-based test in Malmö, Sweden. This turned out to be the only option for me due to time restrictions. You can find available dates at the ToEFL website.

The paper-based test in Denmark is \$150 and the internet-based test in Sweden is \$225. You may also have to pay a late registration fee if you register too close to the test date.

If you wish to prepare for the test you can take a test-test online but it is not evaluated so it is not necessarily worth much. You can also order a test kit where you have your test evaluated but the price for these kits is quite steep so it may be more cost efficient to cross your fingers and hope you get the result you need first time around.

It takes a couple of weeks before you get your scores so book an appointment in time. Note also that you can have ToEFL send the scores directly to the university you're applying to. This means that they get an official document and get it sooner than if you have to send it to them after having received it in Denmark. It is a win-win and it is included in the test price.

toefl.org

*Mads Jensen*

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## **"Going Abroad Scholarship"/"Udlandsstipendium"**

If you are a Danish student arranging your own stay abroad you can apply for the "udlandsstipendium" - a going abroad scholarship. These money are the money the university would otherwise get from the Danish government for the semester you are gone. For us American Studies graduate students in 2009 this amount is 20.800 Danish Kroner for a semester. This will typically not pay for a semester at an American university but it can help quite a bit in funding your tuition.

What you need to do is hand in a copy of your Learning Agreement signed by the study board to the SU office at SDU. Along with this you need to hand in a letter from the American University saying that you have been accepted and a receipt stating how much you have to pay in tuition. Once the SU office have processed your application they will tell you (if you have handed in the required documents) that you will receive the 20.800 Danish Kroner on your bank account in a matter of weeks.

The money is not technically yours until you have handed in a paid and signed receipt from the American university to document that you have actually paid for tuition.

Note that this only applies to students arranging their own stay in the States since this is not part of an exchange deal.

[www.su.dk/udland/udlandsstipendium](http://www.su.dk/udland/udlandsstipendium) (in Danish)

*Mads Jensen*

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## Getting Your Visa

The process of getting your visa is very laborious. The good thing about it is that the processing is very quick.

First of all you need to fill out your visa questionnaire. It is available through whichever university you decide to apply to. You mail this to the university who then sends back your I-20 if you are on an individually arranged stay applying for an F-1 visa or your DS-2019 if you are an exchange student applying for a J-1 visa. You need this unique document to print out a unique DS-156 form. You must bring both to the visa appointment at the American Embassy in Copenhagen. In addition to these you must have:

- a photograph (2x2") attached to your DS-156
- a DS-157 Non-Immigrant Visa supplemental information form (not everybody has to provide this, check the website)
- the DS-158 form
- the signed certification of finances documents you have received back from your host university
- a bank receipt from Jyske Bank ascertaining that you have paid the 750DKK to the American Embassy for the interview. Internet banking is not acceptable. You have to transfer the money from a Jyske Bank branch
- a SEVIS fee receipt to document that you have paid the \$200 fee to the Department of Homeland Security. You can print an online receipt
- your valid passport
- a medium-sized envelope (A5 is fine) stamped with 79.50DKK and with your own address printed on it. This is for mailing you your passport with your visa in it, I-20/DS2019 and SEVIS receipt back.

Please make sure, you bring all the documents and that they are all properly filled out. I saw several people be turned away when I went for my appointment. That is another 750DKK for another appointment plus waiting time you may not have.

If you do not know your exact arrival and departure dates just write it as close as you can (August and December typically). The same goes for your host address. Write the address of the university and that you do not yet know. If you have ever been arrested, it does not mean you will not get your visa but it does mean that they want to know why. You need to bring your criminal record as well as documentation of what you were arrested for.

*Mads Jensen*

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## Scholarship Websites

Here is a couple of useful links when applying for scholarships:

[so.dk/legat](http://so.dk/legat)

[legatmidler.dk](http://legatmidler.dk)

*Mads Jensen*

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## **About DSAAS**

DSAAS was founded by students studying for their M.A. in American Studies at University of Southern Denmark in the fall of 2007.

DSAAS' primary goal is to promote American Studies on a graduate level work both within the academy, the private and public sectors through organizing seminars, conferences, social events and job fairs.

DSAAS will be an independent yet integral part of the Centre for American Studies at University of Southern Denmark, and other American Studies centers in Denmark .

DSAAS aims to be a centripetal force in bringing students from various universities and institutions in Denmark and elsewhere together in the study of the United States and to further the exchange of new ideas and perspectives between students, scholars, and professionals.

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## **Contact DSAAS**

DSAAS - Danish Student Association of American Studies  
Att: American Studies  
Campusvej 55  
5000 Odense  
Denmark

mibor04@journet.sdu.dk or  
madsj01@student.sdu.dk

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## **Website and Mailing List**

www.DSAAS.org  
mls.sdu.dk/mailman/listinfo/dsaas

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## **How to Join**

You can join DSAAS now and it is easy. All you have to do is transfer 100 DKK to this account:

Registration number: 1551

Account number: 3719187854

Remember to write your full name on the transaction and send an email to our cashier at anmoe08@student.sdu.dk with your name, phone number and student number.

100 DKK is for a year's membership  
(September to September)

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## **The Board**

President: Mira Borggreen

Vice President: Majken Havn

Secretary: Ann Christine Brandt

Cashier: Anne Mørk

Webmaster and newsletter editor: Mads Jensen

Board member: Helle Lolck

Board member: Anne Morthorst

Deputy member: Dhushyanthini Gunaratnam

Faculty Representative: Thomas Ærvold Bjerre

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