

Biography – XXXXXXXX – U.S. Teaching Assistantship

Almost five years ago the direction of my life changed dramatically at a school in German-speaking Switzerland. I fell in love with the rolling hills and sharp mountains, and began an exploration of the German language as well as the culture of Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Academically I have been working towards a position teaching English in Austria since I started my studies at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. It is my dream to eventually teach English in a German speaking country or German in the States, and I view the cultural and linguistic benefits of an Austrian Fulbright year as the ideal continuation of my journey thus far.

Following my gap year I entered Colby, where I am a senior German Studies and History double major with a minor in Education. During my fateful first semester, I did very well on the German aptitude test. Well enough, in fact, to land me in a literature class comprised predominantly of seniors. The first day, seated around the seminar table, they introduced themselves in prim northern German accents, swapping stories of Berlin. Their surprise – and the surprise of my Schleswig-Holstein raised Professor – was evident when I introduced myself with an unconventional ‘southern’ accent that would be so at home in Austria. I was not the typical German Studies major, always asking about developments beyond Germany’s borders. By learning German in Switzerland, I have become attuned to listen for accents and to discern dialects. Furthermore, my interest in literature extends beyond the typical German canon.

I maintain an interest in German-language literature and history as well as dialects. I am very interested to find out more about Austrian culture and language, having learned all of what I know thus far from literature, the new video on the Austrian-American Fulbright Program website and a fascinating yet all too short visit to Vienna last summer. Additionally, at a summer camp in Geneva where I was a leader, there were two students from Austria and I would enjoy having such students again – they made an excellent and lasting impression.

My CV contains the list of my teaching and educational accomplishments, ranging from instruction at private schools in Germany to work in local schools near Colby and well-received research presentations to foreign language teachers at a national conference. I have a passion for teaching and am inspired especially by the instruction of my German professors at Colby as well as my parents, who instilled in me from a young age the importance of active critical reading. At all of the schools, I independently organized and gave lessons in the classroom as well as after school, seeking to unify my personal belief in the importance of texts with my own love of literature, music and history. This time spent teaching both abroad and at home has made me a better world citizen as well as an able instructor of English as a second language.

The opportunity to teach in Austria for a full year would be one I would not waste. My students would appreciate my gregarious nature and passion for my work, creative uses of music and compelling literature in the classroom, as well as my teaching style focused on critical self-analysis and critical theory. If accepted as a U.S. teaching assistant I will do my best to contribute towards a better understanding of the English language in my students, and to teach them as much as I can about American culture, as well as what it means to be a citizen of the larger world.

I hope to be in the mountains and hills of Western Austria, and would most enjoy a rural school setting in Voralberg – similar to the Swiss landscape that so captured my imagination and inspired me to continue my study of German. A U.S. Teaching Assistantship in Austria would be the ideal way for me to spend my first year after college, allowing me to combine my passions for education and German with my outgoing nature.