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Elena Lynch

BA Sociology (2011) with International Study Year

I graduated from the University of Birmingham with a degree in BA Sociology (with International Study Year) in July 2011.

Elena Lynch, 2011 - What I found most beneficial about taking the course was the ability to study a wide range of issues that have, and arguably still do, affected our daily lives. For example, I found the study of multiculturalism particularly interesting especially whilst living in as culturally diverse a city as Birmingham.

Other topics I found eye-opening throughout my time at University were the analysis of inequalities in our society based on gender and sexuality – and whether these have really changed since reforms such as the legalisation of homosexuality in the UK in 1967.

While writing my undergraduate dissertation, I found that I gained relevant research and analytical skills which I could apply to future jobs, not to mention the sense of achievement from successfully completing a daunting piece of work based on a topic which I had chosen myself and really believed in.

The study of sociology on my year abroad at the Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg in Germany was a truly rewarding experience. Studying sociological theory in a foreign language – especially having to engage in discussions and give solo presentations on a regular basis in German – helped me to become fluent in a second language whilst learning about theorists whose work I never would have touched on had I not gone abroad. The experience motivated me to consider further travel and work abroad, and I would recommend the year abroad programme to anyone.

At the moment I am working as a special needs classroom assistant at a local school for 4-19 year olds with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Autism is a developmental disability affecting how the person communicates with or relates to other people and can cause various issues ranging from learning disabilities to limited or even a lack of speech. The condition manifests itself differently in every affected individual so in my current job I always find myself dealing with new and often challenging behaviour. Before I began my studies at Birmingham I spent four enjoyable years working with autistic young people and my time at University enabled me to review my options and decide to study for a PGCE in the future in order to qualify as a special education needs teacher.

Studying sociology has put into perspective the changes that have occurred to society and which will continue to affect and shape us and the way we see things. My job is a constant reminder of the benefits of increased awareness of and resources available for disabilities such as autism which did not previously exist.

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