

## Dartmouth-American University of Kuwait Internship Program

Reflection Paper – Spring 2023

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My spring term in Kuwait was the highlight of my Dartmouth experience thus far, and certainly one of the best experiences of my life. There was so much to love about AUK, and Kuwait in general: the people, the food, the weather (mostly), and the calm vibes of Kuwait helped me to really enjoy the experience. I interned in International Relations as my primary placement, and helped work on the Oral History project as my secondary placement. But far and away, the greatest source of personal growth, love, and fulfillment came from the amazing friendships and unforgettable memories I was able to experience in Kuwait.

As a part of my internship, I worked with a variety of professors in the International Relations department on various research projects they were doing. Most notably, I learned from and assisted in the production of *AUK Talks*, a political talk show new to campus which

questions and explores politics in Kuwait and the Middle East more broadly. (Photo: TV Studio at AUK)



Also, I spent time with the Oral History project under the library learning more about Oral History, writing articles about my experience, and exploring the various nooks and crannies of Kuwait in order to learn more about the culture and history. I liked that the internship gave me a lot of agency in what I did or did not work on: this way, each student can cater their experience to their own preferences and interests. I directed lots of time towards the Oral History project, learning

how to conduct oral history interviews, attending local Kuwaiti art exhibitions, and thinking critically about ways that an archive can be digitized and made accessible through social media.

I audited two classes while at AUK, including an Arabic course and a class on anthropological methods. I'm really grateful that I had the opportunity to continue studying Arabic, as well as learn some anthropological research strategies in preparation for fieldwork I'll be doing in Riyadh this winter. Taking classes also gave me the chance to meet lots of new people, and get a sense of the academic culture at AUK.

As an anthropology and Middle Eastern studies major, my research is centered around consumerism, counterculture, and identity in the Gulf. Therefore, I was really interested in spending my time with various friend groups from different backgrounds and political beliefs. I was really able to benefit from a holistic perspective of Kuwait by putting myself out there and talking to a wide variety of people. In most environments I am more introverted and enjoy staying in a routine; however, in Kuwait I challenged myself to take every opportunity to meet new people, try new experiences, and constantly be moving from point A to point B. While I was nervous about being thrown into a new environment and country by myself, the various friends I met in the first week immediately made me feel much more comfortable in Kuwait, so much so that I didn't want to leave!

I tried a lot of things for the first time in Kuwait: hanging out in a diwaniyah (a seating area, usually for men, connected to the house), driving along a 36 km bridge, checking out gaming cafes, making donuts in empty parking lots, feeling like an ant in the Avenues shopping mall, going to the shooting range, and so much more. *(Photo: Avenues Mall, the largest shopping mall in Kuwait)*



On top of that, the food in Kuwait is something else. Within a 5 minute radius of my apartment was a delicious elotes place, smashburger shop, shawarma joint, curry kitchen, and



so many other delicious cuisines. The mix of international cuisine in metropolitan Salmiya and Kuwait City means that dining options are truly endless. KDD chocolate milk is also dangerously good, and is a must-try for anyone visiting Kuwait! I know I will miss Kuwait a lot, but not as much as my stomach will. *(Photo: A yummy mansaf enjoyed with my friend Khaled.)*

Before I came to Kuwait, everyone was asking me why I wanted to go there (including Kuwaitis). A million people told me there was nothing to do, and I would be bored, and it would be a waste of my time. I cannot stress how untrue this was. Kuwait has a distinct culture, humor, and collectivism about it that made my experience there truly something special. I was able to learn so much about social structure, respectability politics, leisure culture, mental health, gender, and so many more facets of Kuwaiti society. My experience opened up many questions and ideas for research projects involving Kuwait, which I will be eager to pursue in post-graduate studies.

I want to give warm thanks and love to Omar and Saleem for creating a strong friendship and bond with me that has just started; SK, Jenna, Lea, and Lilo for letting me annoy them, and Lara, Abir, Hussein, Sheetal, and Nadia for welcoming me into their office. Thanks Issa, Joury, Zee, Mostafa, Dana, and Em for always being good company, and thanks Abdullah, Khaled, Youssef, Ahmed, and Hamood for all the great conversations we had and the amazing



hospitality. Thanks Noor for the great food experience, Musaed for the late night cruises, and Faisal for the shared enthusiasm about museums. As I write this reflection after a week back home in Chicago, I can say confidently that I already miss Kuwait. I will be back soon!



*Photo: Me and Omar at the shooting range*



*Photo: Me and SK working hard in the office*