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2016-17 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

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## Know about Your Home Country

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November 14, 2016

## Know About Your Home Country

As I'm writing this, it's November 8<sup>th</sup>. We all know what that means; it's Election Day. I'm currently waiting to go to a public viewing that the university is putting on to watch the votes come in...until 4 am! The time change can be a bit of a doozy sometimes. Don't worry, I'm not going to talk about the election itself, rather focus on some differences between the US and Germany/Europe in general. Some topics that are arguably a bit more taboo in the US are much more openly discussed in Europe: Politics, for example.

It has occurred several times that I'll meet someone new (either another international student, or someone on the bus, etc.) and we'll go through the normal, 'what's your name, what do you study, where are you from' and when I answer that I'm from the US (or if they just hear it in my accent) the next question, nearly without fail is, 'what do you think about the election?' It's just something that people are unafraid to ask about, right off of the bat. That being said, it does well to know about things like the election process, how the government works, why the states have so much power, what that means, etc. Clearly, this is a special year, and the US election is very high up there in people's minds, however, this also expands to larger things like how our school system works ('Is university actually super expensive?'' is a common one). Essentially, what I'm saying is that it'd be a good idea to brush up on general overall knowledge about the US (or your home country if you're an international student at Linfield).

Along these lines—take photos of where you live at home! Take pictures, of your house, your family, neighborhood, nature, major cities, favorite places, etc. I can't tell you the number of times I've compared photos with other people, namely a friend from Japan. It's a great way to learn about countries other than the one you happen to currently be living in! Heidelberg is home to literally thousands of international students, and at least several hundred short-term students (1 or 2 semesters, like you). This means that there is ample opportunity to learn about the rest of the world (and make friends around the world) while you're here!

Emma