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Person to Person in Germany

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Mid-Semester Assessment, IDST 031

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One of the best parts of living in Germany has been, at least so far, getting to know my German roommates. My dear friend and roommate, Felicitas, let me take up an hour or two of her time for me to ask her about differences between the United States and Germany for this assignment from Linfield. Of course, I learned about many differences between these two countries myself, having lived in Germany for a few months now, but there are some things that other people find more distinct in cultural differences than I do.

For instance, the biggest difference I've seen between Germany and the US while living with Felicitas is that German university students have much longer work days, so to say, than the US. Felicitas, who is a pre-law student, starts classes at about 8:00 or 9:00 every day and usually doesn't come back to our apartment until 7:00 or 8:00 at night, depending on which classes she has that day. This is also true with a molecular biology friend of mine, and I'm constantly amazed at how hard they work. German higher education is also different from that in the United States because most German universities are tuition-free, and students just need to pay for books and housing, all of which are considerably cheaper than in the States. Germans also start college at about 19 or 20, depending on if they took a year off or not, as opposed to Americans who usually start at about 18.

Felicitas, having now lived with two American roommates, says that she likes having us around just because we're always so friendly and open to talking about anything, no matter what time it is. According to her, and other Germans that I've met here in Heidelberg, Americans defy the bad stereotypes that they are given, but all of the positive stereotypes are completely correct. Americans are seen as friendly, open, polite, and eager to meet new people and try new things. The funniest thing about being an American in Germany, though, is the fact that very few people will pick you out as an American before you tell them. I've been mistaken as being British, Canadian, Dutch, Swedish, Austrian, and even German by various people, and few of them believed me at first when I told them I was from the United States. In any case, it's a universal truth that if one just acts polite and remembers the manners their mother taught them, they'll give off a good first impression that can color a better picture of their country for someone of a different nationality.