Aila’s Major: Elementary Education

Program: Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS), Summer

Academic Life: My classroom, iPlay (taught by Miss Judith Ross-Bernstein of Ithaca College in New York), was a mixture of classroom lectures/discussions and field experience. Judith taught for many years at Cornell University about the importance of play, and where it is lacking in the United States. As a result, we were able to do a lot of comparisons between the countries, and discussed room for improvement. My class was very small, and was composed of American students from throughout the country. I was able to spend a few days in a Danish preschool, where I was actually able to teach a lesson (with the assistance and translation of the pedagogue at the school). Additionally, we went to an experimentarium, alternative school, and a forest kindergarten.

On Cultural Differences: A significant cultural difference between Denmark and the United States is the very low level of crime and poverty in Denmark. Because the country is so small, it is possible to implement a high tax system so minimum wage is very adequate for standard living, healthcare and education is free of charge, and there is very little crime.

What Aila Learned About Herself: I feel like studying abroad allowed me to become more independent. Living on my own in a foreign country for almost a month without 24/7 access to my cell phone and a very significant language barrier helped me to problem solve and overcome challenges that arose.

“DIS offers a great variety of interesting classes that offer field experience. In the longer programs, they offer weeklong study tours.”