

# My Australian Experience

Nohad Mouawad

*Nohad Mouawad, an LAU Communication Arts graduate, is the recipient, through the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, of the Marie Bashir Scholarship Award.*

When I graduated from LAU with a BA in Communication Arts (Radio/TV/Film) I honestly had no clue what I was going to do next. I had directed my play and my film, completed two internships, and now I was a fresh graduate trying to find her place in the field. I had found my experience at Lebanese TV stations somewhat limited so I tried my hand at event planning. This experiment proved interesting and entertaining but also quite tiring and stressful. And, I was eager to return to media practice. So, when I learned that I had been granted a scholarship to study Professional Communication in Australia, I was very excited.

I didn't know what to expect when I embarked upon my journey to Sydney. All I had in my mind were vague images of the Opera House, Harbor Bridge, and kangaroos leaping through the desert. The country, however, proved to be much more than I could have imagined. First of all, my program and campus involved many international students from countries as diverse as Sweden and Mexico. From my first day of orientation I was exposed to different cultures and attitudes. I got the chance to see that although my friends' backgrounds differed from mine we could all enjoy each other's company and find many traits in common. Second of all, I discovered that Australia had endless amounts of sites to see — both natural and man-made. The country is full of interesting architecture, wondrous plants, and bizarre animals — enough to keep me entertained for at least two semesters. Finally, the MA in Professional Communication program proved to be far more challenging than I expected. Most of the students in my classes were from Canada and had a great deal of experience in PR and marketing. This gave them a competitive edge

over me, since I had very little business experience. However, I was soon able to get up-to-speed on the terminology and learn from their examples and projects. I tried my best to always contribute to class discussions by drawing on whatever experience I had had in the fields of media and event management. I also had to read extra material relating to marketing and the latest trends. By the end of my first semester I had contributed to developing a full-scale integrated marketing communications plan that could be presented to a corporate client (fictional in this case) and done my own analysis of an Australian brand.

The two theoretical classes that I took — *Transnational Communication* and *Media and Audience* — I found to be continuations of the courses I completed at LAU, such as *Media and Society* and *International Communication*. I felt well prepared for the class discussions because of the wealth of readings I had been exposed to at LAU. Additionally, my practical experience in radio and television production gave me a different perspective on topics such as audience theory.



Nohad Mouawad

Overall, my Australian experience changed me for the better. I have developed a greater degree of independence, deeper knowledge of the media practice, skills in corporate communication, and a broader perspective of the world's cultures. The best part of my trip to Sydney has been that I have been able to combine studying and academic learning with travel and meeting new people. I would have to say that I learned as much snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef as I did writing a paper on audience theory. All of these elements combined have made studying in Australia a time in my life that I will never forget, and my degree has actually changed my career-path. I now look forward to either finding a job in public relations or corporate communications or continuing my experience in broadcast television.