

I n t e r n a t i o n a l S t u d e n t a n d S c h o l a r S e r v i c e s



Halloween



Ghost and witches and goblins, oh my! When nearly all of the leaves have fallen from the trees and the temperature has cooled off, all of the ghouls come out to play. Halloween in the United States is celebrated each year on October 31st. The holiday's roots can be traced back to both Christian and Pagan traditions.

Halloween, also known as "All Saints' Eve," falls the day before All Saints' Day (November 1st) and two days before "All Souls' Day" (November 2nd). This has long been considered the time of year when the souls of the dead could return to the earth to settle accounts as well as a time to pray for the souls of the departed that had not yet reached heaven.

It was believed that on All Souls' Day, the souls of the dead had one last chance to return to the earth to take vengeance on those who had wronged them while they were alive. As a result, many people began wearing masks on this day to avoid being recognized by the souls that had come back to harm them. This is believed to be the origin of the custom of dressing up in costumes for Halloween.

In addition to the belief that the souls of the departed had a chance on All Souls' Day to square old accounts from their life, it was also held that this day was an opportunity for the living to pray for the souls of the dead who were trapped in purgatory. One common way of doing this was for people, generally the poor and children, to go door to door collecting "soul cakes," which, when eaten, symbolized a soul being released from purgatory. It is thought that this practice was the origin of what we know today as "trick-or-treating," where children go door to door asking for candy and other treats.

For more information on Halloween activities happening in Champaign-Urbana, including trick-or-treating times, please visit the special Halloween page on the Visit Champaign County website: <http://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/blog/creepy-champaign-county>



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Fall in Champaign-Urbana



Fall is here! The weather has begun to cool down (at least temporarily) and the leaves will soon start changing colors from green to bright yellows, oranges and reds. A new variety of fall-themed food items also hints at the onset of the season – from pumpkin-flavored coffee and muffins to apple cider and freshly picked apples straight from the orchard.

During the fall there are many events happening in the Champaign-Urbana area to celebrate the season. Local businesses offer hayrides, corn mazes, apple-picking, pumpkin carving and much more! Here are a couple of places in and around C-U where you can take part in some of these classic fall activities:

- Curtis Orchard, located in southwest Champaign, is now open and offers apples for picking and pumpkins for carving, as well as wagon rides and a corn maze! (www.curtisorchard.com/)
- Hardy's Reindeer Ranch, located in Rantoul, features a corn maze, hayrides and reindeer tours. (<http://www.reindeerranch.com/>)
- Parke County, Indiana holds the Covered Bridge Festival each fall, which is a great place to see the leaves changing color. They also have a haunted house open from 9/26-11/1 for those who want to get into the Halloween spirit! (<http://www.coveredbridges.com/>)

Election Day in the USA

While the most watched and arguably the most important election in the United States is the presidential election which takes place every four years in November, there are many other political campaigns and elections that take place in this country every fall at the national, state, and local levels, also usually in November.

A bit of background on the system of government in the United States:

The government of the United States is a federal constitutional republic, with three branches of government that share power through a system of checks and balances to ensure that one branch does not hold too much power and influence. The three branches are the executive (headed by the President), legislative (headed by Congress) and judicial (headed by the Supreme Court).

The Congress is made up of two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. There are two senators from each state, who are elected for a term of six years. The number of representatives from each state in the House of Representatives is decided based upon the population of each state, with more populous states having a higher number of representatives. These representatives are elected for terms of two years.

Every two years, during even-numbered years (like 2014!), there are elections for the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate (this is to avoid having elections for both senators from a state during the same election cycle). Every four years the election includes one-third of the Senate, the entire House of Representatives and the president. (The next time this will happen is 2016).

In addition to the national elections, there are also state and local elections that are held. Elections for the position of governor, the head of the executive branch in each state, are held every four years in most states, with two states (Vermont and New Hampshire) holding gubernatorial elections every two years. This year, Illinois' governor, Pat Quinn, will be running for reelection, with the vote taking place on November 4. If you're interested in learning more about the local elections taking place, check out the elections page on the Champaign County website:

<http://champaigncountyclerk.com/elections/index.php>

Pumpkins, Pumpkins EVERYWHERE!



During fall in the Midwest, you may notice pumpkins popping up in every corner—in your coffee, in your food, on your neighbors' doorsteps. There is candy shaped as pumpkins, pumpkin decorations and towards the end of October, even people DRESSED as pumpkins. There is far from a shortage of pumpkins during this time of year. In fact, Illinois produces more pumpkins than any other state, including more than 90 percent of the country's canning pumpkins. Last year, Illinois farms produced millions of pumpkins—278,000 tons worth, according to the Illinois Farm Bureau.

If you're interested in joining in the pumpkin patch fun, it is important to keep in mind what the purpose of your pumpkin will be when searching for the perfect gourd. There are two main types of pumpkins: ornamental and processing. Ornamental pumpkins are used for decoration and for carving Jack-o-Lanterns for Halloween. Processing pumpkins are grown specifically for canning, and the canned pumpkin is commonly used in making foods such as pies, muffins, soups and breads.

Want to take a stroll through a pumpkin patch and pick out a pumpkin of your own? Check out these local pumpkin patches:

- The Great Pumpkin Patch in Arthur (<http://the200acres.com/pumpkin/>)
- Negangard Pumpkin Patch in Sidney (<http://www.chambanamoms.com/2011/10/06/best-kept-secret-negangard-pumpkin-patch/>)
- Wagon Wheel Pumpkin Patch in Clinton (<http://www.wagonwheelpumpkinfarm.com/>)



College Football



For an international, College Football can be difficult to understand. Not just the sport itself- despite a few minor rule differences, the college version of American football plays out in much the same way as its professional counterpart. No, the most confusing thing for internationals is the scope and scale of American football at the college level. The USA has a bigger college sports system than anywhere else in the world, and the college games *matter*.

These games are played out in front of huge crowds. The 15 biggest stadiums in the USA (which make up 3/5ths of the 25 largest stadiums in the world) are all college football stadiums, and these stadiums are packed every weekend. Every game receives TV coverage, with many being shown nationally on major television stations across the country. Games become events- the college town is transformed as alumni and fans pack the city on days when the college team plays. So why this massive interest?

Firstly, there are only 32 professional teams in the US- a country with a population of over 300 million. Compare this with England- a population of just over 50 million (1/6th of the USA) but with over 5,000 football (soccer) clubs in their professional league system. College football fills that gap in the United States- they act as the 'local' team outside the big professional clubs of the major cities. Furthermore, colleges in the US do an impressive job in cultivating school spirit and pride in the institution. Former students and alumni always follow and support their school and the college football team becomes both a symbol of that pride, and something that can be rallied around to physically demonstrate that support.

This goes a small way to explaining why college football is such big business. A successful football programs raises the profile of the school, which in turn helps recruitment. So while the players are not paid for their services, they do receive full tuition waivers and scholarships to attend, with the best players being heavily recruited by the best coaches. The top coaches- those who can regularly put a winning football program on the field- are paid handsomely. In 28 of the 50 US states, the highest paid public employee is a college football coach, including the state of Illinois.

With all the interest in the sport and with all the money invested it is therefore frustrating that college football has the single worst way to determine a national champion. It is so ludicrous that upon first introducing the concept to an international, they get the feeling you're making a joke. So let me assure you, the following is actually how the champion is determined. Throughout the country there are many numerous leagues, called conferences. Here at Illinois, the Fighting Illini play in the Big Ten (a conference made up of 14 teams, which is another story entirely). For the first three or four games of the season, a team is free to play any team they want in the US, regardless of conference. This usually results in a lot of mismatches, as the big teams are reluctant to play each other as they don't want an early season loss. Then the teams play most- but strangely, not all- of the other teams in their conference, and a conference champion is crowned. At this point, you might feel that the conference champions would play each other to determine a champion, sort of like Europe's Champions League of soccer. But no, instead, a committee votes on who they think are the four best teams in the country, based on an unknown formula. They then decide who they think these teams are- they don't even need to be conference champions- and then those 4 teams play off to determine the national champion.

As ludicrous as this sounds, it is incredibly a step in the right direction. In previous years, only two teams were selected, and the basis they were selected on included pre-season predictions! Yes, a factor in determining the national champion prior to 2014 was how well sports writers thought that team would do prior to the season starting. The new system is slightly better, though not by much. As for the many conference champions and runners up not determined good enough to make this elite four? They play in each other in one off 'bowl games'- strangely named games such as the TaxSlayer Bowl, the Heart of Dallas Bowl, and the Quick Lane Bowl- which serve little purpose other than to allow a team to declare they 'won a bowl' in an attempt to appease their huge fanbase.

Despite this ridiculous system to declare a winner, the college football scene is a vital part of any international student or scholar experience. Whether the Illini are playing well or not, the game day experience of a college football game is unlike any you'll experience anywhere else- and if you're not into football, the marching band show at halftime is always spectacular. If only we could always say the same for the result...



English Corner: Fall is here!

Here are some commonly used English phrases with the word “fall”:

“fall head over heels”

To become deeply enamored with.

Example: She fell head over heels in love with her new neighbor and they were married within a year.

“fall through the cracks”

To get lost or forgotten, especially within a system

Example: It is important to read and follow ISSS instructions carefully so nothing falls through the cracks!

“take the fall for”

To accept the blame for something bad or not legal that another person has done

Example: Joe will take the fall for the mistake so the rest of the group won't be punished.



Calendar of Events: September-November 2014



September	Event	October	Event	November	Event
1	Labor Day	4	Yom Kippur (Jewish)	1	All Saints' Day (Christian)
11	Patriot Day	5	Eid Al-Aldha (Muslim)	2	Daylight Savings Time Ends
23	Fall Equinox	8-15	Sukkot (Jewish)	4	Election Day
25-26	Rosh HaShana	13	Columbus Day	11	Veterans' Day
26	Native Ameri-	16	Boss' Day		
		23	Diwali (Hindu)		
		25	Muharram		
		31	Halloween		