



A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO STUDY ABROAD IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Prepared by the Dominican Republic Consortium (Colgate University, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, LeMoyne College, Syracuse University, University of Illinois at Chicago and Urbana-Champaign, Wells College)

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SECTION 1: Nuts and Bolts

1.1 CONTACT INFORMATION

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Santiago de los Caballeros, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Tel. (809) 580-1962
Fax (809) 583-7770
Cell: (809) 747-3596

NOTE: International calls to the D.R. are placed the same way as long-distance domestic calls within the U.S. Dial "1" followed by area code (809) and then the phone number.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

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Tel: 315 781-3307
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1.2 PROGRAM PARTICIPANT LIST

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1.3 TERM CALENDAR

SPRING 2010

January 4	Arrive Santiago, stay at hotel
January 5	Placement exam, meet host families
January 6-7	Orientation to PUCMM & Santiago
January 8	Registration for classes
January 11	Classes begin
March 30-April 4	Semana Santa
April 17	Last day of classes
April 18-28	Final Exams
April 30	Program and housing ends

1.4 PASSPORTS AND VISAS

You should already have your passport and visas ARE required of U.S. citizens (and other non-Dominicans) remaining in the DR longer than 90 days. You must complete all the necessary documents and give these WITH YOUR PASSPORT to your campus's study abroad office if you would like a representative from the DRC to present your visa application at the Consulate on your behalf. Otherwise, a personal appearance at your nearest consulate is required. If you do not obtain the visa, you will not be permitted to participate in this program. The date for submission of your visa application documents will be given to you on a separate document.

Make copies of your passport's identification page (with the photo on it), any pages with entry stamps, as well as your visa (if you are required to have one, it will be stamped in your passport). Put these copies in various locations. Leave one at home with your parents. Put them in different pieces of luggage/locations. If you lose your passport, having a copy of it will make getting a new one much, much easier.

1.5 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY CARD (ISIC) (OR OTHER EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE)

Please check with your school's study abroad office to see what they require.

1.6 TRAVEL DATES/GROUP ARRIVAL

We have emailed to you (through your home school) some suggested flights and itineraries for those who would like to fly over together and you will soon receive your plane ticket (or eticket)

if you purchased through the Colleges' travel agent, Susan Gordon of Advantage Travel of Central New York (sgordon@advantagecny.com or 315-471-2222). You may also purchase any flight of interest on your own. We ask that you plan to arrive in the DR on January 4th between 5:30pm and 9:30 pm if you are making your own arrangements. Professor Farnsworth will be at the airport during these hours and will meet you just outside of the baggage claim area for your flight (either American or Jet Blue depending upon where your flight is originating). If you are flying on any other carrier and wish to be met, make sure that you coordinate with Prof. Farnsworth about where to find her at the airport. We'll be sure to provide you all with a local cell phone number in the DR just before your departure so you can connect.

As a group, you will be transported to the hotel where you are all staying that first night. If you are arriving independently, you may schedule your arrival to coincide with the group arrival and then join the group as they go off to PUCMM and the hotel. If you fly independently and arrive AFTER the group, you are advised to take a taxi from the airport directly to the hotel. If you are arriving independently, make sure that Professor Farnsworth has your flight itinerary. The group will be staying at:

Hotel Platino
Av. Estrella Sadhala
Santiago, Dominican Republic
Tel: 809-724-7576
Fax: 809-724-7844

The hotel is located immediately across from the entrance to PUCMM. You will be housed there for one night in double rooms. You are assigned to these rooms randomly, to facilitate students from the different colleges meeting one another.

1.7 ORIENTATION

Once you arrive, Professor Farnsworth and the staff of PUCMM will hold an orientation to the program, to living in Santiago, and to the local culture. You will also receive an orientation to Dominican family life and what to expect in your home stay. During the orientation you will have a chance to ask questions and become more comfortable with living and studying in the Dominican Republic. As with all new living situations, but especially at an overseas location, it will take some time to settle in. Many students on past programs have reported that somewhere about mid-term the overseas site begins to feel like home and a certain level of comfort is attained.

During orientation you will take a placement exam and your performance on that – NOT your grades in Spanish in your coursework – will determine which classes you may take.

In order to best prepare for the immersion experience and the courses offered, you should make a concerted effort to brush up on Spanish grammar rules and vocabulary--even if you consider yourself fluent in the language. Here are a few suggested texts for practicing grammar:

Ronni L Gordon, [The Ultimate Spanish Review and Practice](#) (this is a good reference for rules and grammar practice for advanced students and bilingual students)
Joseph Keenan, [Breaking Out of Beginner Spanish](#) (this is an excellent reference of *actual* language use, for students who are mainly used to "classroom Spanish")
<http://www.colby.edu/~bknelson/SLC/> (This website offers free tutorials and practice activities on grammar and vocabulary)

Also, if you have textbooks from grammar classes you have taken, use those to refresh your memory and prepare for the immersion experience.

1.8 WHAT TO BRING

CLIMATE

The weather should be warm and pleasant in the Dominican Republic, although occasionally rainy (it is the rainy season). Be sure to have a warm sweater, a fleece shirt that fits over the sweater, rain gear that fits over both, a jacket, a pair of warm socks for excursions up into the mountains and for occasional cool evenings at the shore. Be sure to have, above all comfortable shoes for a lot of walking!

°C	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun						
High	26	28	27	28	28	29						
Low	18	18	19	19	20	22						

Temperature equivalents are:

Fahrenheit	Centigrade	Fahrenheit	Centigrade
10°	-12°	60°	16°
20	-7°	70°	21°
32°	0	80°	27°
40°	5		
50	10		

PACKING

How much to pack is our concern here, or rather: *How little to pack!* The rule of thumb is: pack light. Most students abroad do more walking than they do in several years in the United States. And often you are carrying your luggage, or a subset of it, around with you. Students who pack three suitcases are often sorry for it. There are several ideas out there about how not to overpack:

1. Pack up what you think you'll need, and walk around the block with it. Chances are you will decide on taking about half of that.
2. Or, trust the experience behind the above piece of advice, put what you planned to take abroad on your bed, and then remove half of it.

WHAT TO BRING

There will be airline restrictions on how much baggage you can bring. The usual is two pieces checked and one carry-on. However, many airlines have recently imposed fees for each piece of checked baggage and are much more stringent about the size of the carry-on. Check your airline web site prior to departure to confirm! Keep in mind that there are weight restrictions and you are responsible for any charges incurred by exceeding either the space or weight restrictions. Be sure to label each piece with your name and address.

Travelers should also check with the Transportation Security Administration (see *Web Resources*) prior to departure to verify current bans on carry-on items. Remember that you should not pack anything remotely sharp or that could conceivably be used as a weapon in your carry-on bag. You

must pack these items in your checked luggage. These include, but are not limited to: Swiss Army knife, tweezers, razors, scissors, mace, etc. Liquids and gels may also be restricted.

Leave room for things you may want to buy in Dominican Republic. Pack an empty duffel bag inside your large bag. You will want to bring home gifts.

Maximize your so space and bring clothes you can layer. Bring some quiet clothes such as tan pants, standard jeans, plain or white shirts, plain windbreakers that will allow us walk around the city without screaming out TOURISTS. Drip-dry and permanent press clothing is desirable, as you won't want to wash clothes during excursions. While at your homestay, your host mother will do the laundry once per week for you as for the rest of the family. If you need an occasional item washed between laundry days, expect to do your own hand washing in the sink.

Dominican students tend to dress up more for class than U.S. students. Female students wear nice jeans and tops with high heels. Their clothing may be more form-fitting than you are used to, and they typically do not wear shorts to class or around town (shorts at the beach are fine). Male students wear nice pants or jeans with a polo or clean t-shirt. One way to think of it is that Dominican students dress for class the way US students may dress to go to a club.

Each individual will have her or his own tastes and habits, but the following is a **suggested** list of items you may want to include. Don't forget that you can buy both clothing and accessories in the Dominican Republic if you need these, but it may be harder to buy larger sizes of clothing or shoes.

THE ESSENTIALS

Passport with visa
Airline ticket or eticket confirmation
Credit card/ATM card/cash/ Traveler's checks
International Certificate of Vaccination
International Student ID card (ISIC) or your university's medical evacuation card
Your student ID (sometimes needed in conjunction with ISIC)
Photocopies of above kept separately with additional copies/contact
Info/itinerary stashed separately in luggage, with parents in States, with directors (passport only)
This handbook

CLOTHES AND ACCESSORIES

Light-weight skirts and/or dress pants (2) for formal events for women
Sport coat and tie (1) for formal events for men
Jeans/trousers (3)
light-weight shirts (5-6)
sundress/summer dress (1-2)
T-shirts
Underwear/socks (7)
Belt (1)
Warm sleepwear and slippers (for excursions at high altitudes) (1)
light-weight sleepwear and light robe (1-2)
Sweater (1)
Dressier shoes (1 pr)
Sturdy walking shoes (most important item! Some light hiking)

Raingear (1)
Light windbreaker (1 waterproof; can fit over sweater)
Sunhat/cap (1)
Bathing suits (2; reasonably conservative)
Beach towel (1) Your homestay family will provide towels for use at home but not at the beach
Day pack (1)

TOILETRIES

You will be able to find most of the following products in Santiago, although you may not find your preferred brand. In general, U.S. products purchased abroad will cost more, so be willing to buy local or regional brands.

A washcloth or hand towel
Sunblock (you'll need it!)
Shampoo
Conditioner
Deodorant
Soap
Toothpaste
Toothbrush
Floss
Q-tips
Razor
Small container of hand sanitizer to bring on trips
Tampons or pads – readily available in the DR
Insect Repellent (Those with 30% DEET or 20% time-release DEET are best. Avoid combination sunscreen and insect repellent. They do not work.) Permethrin treatment can be *in addition* to repellent (not instead of).

MEDICINAL

Dramamine/Bonine (for motion-sickness on buses)
Imodium
Anti-malarial medicine
Spare set of contact/glasses (and bring your prescription with you)
Good, dark sunglasses (VERY IMPORTANT: The sun is BRIGHT!)
Enough prescription medication for the term with your doctor's prescription
Specific medicines you use (prescription or not). Keep them in their original containers even if not prescription.

TRAVEL STUFF

Lightweight but sturdy pack for day trips/weekend jaunts
Water bottle/thermos
Travel-sized sewing kit
Money belt or pouch to wear under your clothes
Guide books
Camera
Binoculars for wildlife viewing (see section on excursions) – optional but recommended

CLASS STUFF

Notebook/binder/folders
Books for classes – consult your reading lists
Notebook, binder for classes
Pens/pencils
Journal
Laptop (optional!!!). See caution below under “WHAT NOT TO BRING”

OTHER/MISCELLANEOUS

Picture of your family
Gifts for your DR host families** (very important!)
e-mail addresses and mailing address book
Battery operated travel alarm clock (unless your watch or cell phone has alarm system)
iPod (if you have one, and do not want to be without your music). See caution below under “WHAT NOT TO BRING”.
Flashlight/spare batteries in case of electrical outages
** talk with the faculty or administrative director if you need ideas about suitable gifts.

WHAT NOT TO BRING

More luggage than you can carry on your own
Expensive jewelry
Expensive electronics that you are afraid will be stolen (petty theft is the most common crime affecting students abroad. These days iPods and laptops are among the most commonly and easily stolen items, so if you bring yours: 1) make sure you have a copy of the receipt for yourself and a copy with your parents for claim purposes if you have insured these items and 2) consider getting insurance for these items if not covered under homeowners or some other pre-existing policy.

Suggestion: Try not to bring brand new expensive articles to the Caribbean such as high-end cameras, jewelry, computer, etc. If you do, you may want to register them at the customs office in the U.S. airport to avoid paying duty on your return. For more information on pre-registration of electronics, go to: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/register_items.xml

Other things to keep in mind:

Point 1: Most other countries have stores that sell things like toothpaste and socks. The brands might be unfamiliar to you, but they will get the job done. Also, you're going to want to do some shopping abroad for souvenirs, art, clothes, etc...so leave some empty space in your pack.

Point 2: Bring a day pack large enough for a weekend away but not so large you break your back. You'll need a day pack to get your books/things back and forth around the city, and a 4000 cubic inch frame backpack is quite inconvenient for this! A lot of people forget this basic necessity. (If you do, see point 1!)

Point 3: Choose the form of your luggage carefully. Many students find the internal frame backpacks efficient for getting around since they can be worn instead of being dragged or

wheeled (not nice on cobblestones or dirt roads!) But there are options for all kinds of people and all kinds of travel. You know what you like best...we really just want to you to bring less.

Point 4: Bring some nice clothes. Check with the faculty director, a guidebook, or students, and they'll all likely tell you U.S. Americans are some of the most informal folks around. That means that for most students going abroad, you'll be diving into a more formal culture with a more formal standard of attire. Shorts are great for hot weather, but (in Europe and Latin America, for example) are reserved for sport and beach, and certainly not for visiting cathedrals! In general, bring at least some dressy clothes with you. It never hurts to look "good"—just remember that this is culturally defined. (See the section on fitting in, as well.)

PRESCRIPTIONS

If you have any medication you must take while you are abroad, please be sure that you have enough for the entire time you are away as it may be difficult to have prescriptions filled. Be sure to bring the written prescription (no photocopies) and a signed statement from your doctor if you have a particular medical requirement. Immigration authorities may question medications in your possession and you should have proper documentation. Finally, it would be advisable to verify that a particular drug is not restricted in the host country (or others that you may plan to visit). Some countries ban certain drugs, even when prescribed by a doctor (for example, the drug Ritalin cannot be legally brought into some countries). The best advice is to be prepared and check either through your personal physician or through official government sources (such as the US State Department www.state.gov/travel/ or the Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/travel/)

LAPTOPS AND ELECTRONICS

The utility of having a laptop computer varies from program to program. As would be the case at your school in the U.S., you may find it convenient to have your own computer, but this is not required as the programs do their best to provide computer access to students. You will have some internet access through PUCMM but may or may not have it with your homestay (most families do not have internet access). Expect that you won't so if there is a surprise, it will be a pleasant one. Also, EVEN if your host family has internet access, this may be expensive so do not make assumptions about use unless they specifically invite you. In all cases, you should be considerate that your use does not interfere with the family's own internet or telephone needs.

Please note that petty theft is the most common crime affecting travelers. Please do not bring anything without first considering the impact of it getting stolen, or the reality of having to worry about the safety of these possessions all the time.

Two general rules for all electronics: 1) bring copies of your receipts. If your equipment looks new, upon return to the U.S., you may be asked to pay customs duties if you don't have a receipt to prove that you didn't purchase it abroad. 2) we recommend you investigate insurance coverage for your electronic devices and other expensive items. They might be covered by parents' homeowners insurance policies.

JOURNALS

Have you thought about keeping a journal abroad? Many students write journals as a way of capturing and reflecting upon their experiences, even though some may have never kept a "diary" before. A journal (or diary) is a book of dated entries. The author can record experiences, dialogues, feelings, dreams, describe sights, make lists, take notes, whatever the writer wants to

leave as documentation of his or her passage through time. **Journals are tools for recording and interpreting the process of our lives.**

Why should you keep a journal? Because a journal...

- is a keepsake that will record memories that you'd otherwise forget.
- is a keepsake that will record the person you are now—and how you'll change abroad.
- is a way to interpret what you're seeing/experiencing.
- gives you something to do on long plane/bus/train rides or alone in cafes.
- helps you become a better writer.
- is a good remedy for homesickness.
- is a space where you can express yourself with total freedom.
- is a powerful tool of exploration and reflection.

DON'T BOTHER BRINGING...

Expectations: "Don't expect, accept," is a good attitude for students crossing cultures to have. How you set your expectations now will impact how positive of an experience you will have abroad. This means that you can do a lot now to help ensure you will get the most out of your program. Simply put, examine your expectations and be realistic. You are going to a different country. Expect that things will be different. You have no idea how many things will differ or in what ways, and of course you may well be surprised at how many things are similar. But for now expect that *everything will be different*.

How you set your expectations now will impact how positive of an experience you will have abroad.

Believe it or not, notions of the "right way of doing things" are entirely cultural and relative. Efficiency, manners, punctuality, customer service and "the rules" do not mean the same thing in different countries. Germans might be meticulously punctual. Italians might operate under a different conception of time (and being "on-time".) The point here is not to draw national stereotypes but to understand that different countries organize things differently, and not all of them work well from the U.S. American's point of view. So don't expect people in your host country to define these terms in the same way as you do. Expect to run into bureaucracy, but do look at how the people around you react to these things, and follow their lead. If they're not throwing a temper tantrum and lecturing the mail clerk/waiter/train conductor, then neither should you.

You'd be surprised how ingrained our expectations are. We don't see them as culturally-determined; rather, we see them as part of "the right way of doing things." So you will get frustrated. Expect that too. But keep telling yourself that things are different, and remember that it's not the local people's duty to meet your expectations—it's your duty to adjust yours to what is considered right and reasonable locally. "Don't expect, accept."

SECTION 2: Studying and Living Abroad

2.1 ACADEMICS ABROAD

There is much to learn outside of the classroom. Nevertheless, study abroad is also fundamentally an academic endeavor. No matter what *your* goals and expectations might be, the Colleges also have expectations of *you*. These include the expectation that you will take all of your academics abroad seriously and that you will come prepared, meet deadlines, read assignments, write papers or exams with care, etc. Having said that, as study abroad programs are uniquely well-suited to non-traditional learning (i.e. experiential learning such as field-trips, internships, or field research), you will likely find that you have never had so much “fun” working so hard. The key, however, is to realize that if the fun comes at the expense of learning, you will likely be very dissatisfied with the final results. The sections that follow are designed to answer the most commonly asked questions about academics and study abroad.

Course options were distributed earlier at each campus and you should have discussed these with your advisor prior to departure. Everyone must take the consortium director’s class AND Spanish workshop (although native speakers are sometimes able to pass out of this requirement and may substitute an elective instead.) Each of our university’s has a slightly different policy on what ‘level’ Spanish class is appropriate for majors or minors to receive credit. If you have any question about the level of the Director’s Seminar or any of the other classes you should discuss these with your own campus AND with Professor Farnsworth if the concern relates to her seminar.

You will take a Spanish language placement evaluation upon arrival in the D.R. and will register for Spanish and all other classes during orientation week. Although this is not required, we strongly encourage you to elect Community Service (in one of three tracks – education, health, or social work) as one of your courses. Note, if you wish to take classes OUTSIDE of the department for “foreigners”, you may do so but only if you make arrangements in advance. Contact Professor Farnsworth (Farnsworth@hws.edu) if you have a particular requirement that you would like to meet by taking classes from the general PUCMM curriculum. She can help you communicate with the academic coordinator in the DR to arrange permission.

Alvarez, Julia. En el tiempo de las mariposas (0452286867)

Director’s Course

The director’s seminar, *Body/Border: Género, cuerpo y migración*, examines the theme of gender performance and body image in works by Mexican, Hispanic Caribbean, and Latino/a authors. Class discussions and readings will focus on the ways in which writers in different parts of the Hispanic world (and on different sides of the US national border) confirm, question, and/or transgress social norms regarding gender and the body. We will use plays, narrative fiction, and essays to study the role of literature, language, and culture in reflecting and reshaping national and transnational attitudes about masculinity and femininity. Course lectures and discussions will reveal how bodily performances and gender norms shift and change as authors, and the characters they create, cross borders, switch languages, and adapt to new cultural surroundings and economic conditions. In the class, you will work towards gaining a broad understanding of Hispanic literature and

acquire the ability to critically discuss a variety of subjects related to gender theory and cultural studies in Spanish. You will further develop your language skills in the areas of reading, writing, and speaking by completing class assignments and participating actively in discussions. Additionally, throughout this course you are encouraged to reflect on your own perspectives on gender and your individual border-crossing experiences.

Please order the following books in SPANISH (the ISBNs are provided in parenthesis) and bring them with you to the program:

- 1) Ashbaugh, Anne Freire, Lourdes Rojas and Raquel Romeu (eds). *Mujeres ensayistas del Caribe hispano*. (8479623799)
- 2) Días, Junot. *La breve y maravillosa historia de Oscar Wao* (0679776699)
- 3) García, Cristina (ed). *Voces sin fronteras: Antología Vintage Español de literatura mexicana y chicana contemporánea*. (1400077192).
- 4) Poniatowska, Elena *Querido Diego* (9684112149)
- 6) Berman, Sabina. *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda*. (9687155590)

Before arriving in Santiago, please read The Feast of the Goat by Mario Vargas Llosa.

GRADES AND CREDITS

Each school in the consortium has slightly different policies regarding how the courses you take in the DR will count towards your major or towards graduation. Please confirm with your advisor, your study abroad office, and/or your Registrar's office to confirm your school's policies PRIOR TO DEPARTURE. Once you arrive and have selected your courses, make sure that the appropriate person at your home school knows your final schedule.

ACADEMIC CULTURE AND STANDARDS

As is the case on campus, there is no single "standard" or classroom culture abroad; each professor will run his/her own classroom his/her own way and your job, as the student, is to adapt to his/her expectations and teaching style. This having been said, there are some general statements that can be applied to most classroom settings outside the United States. Here are some of the most prevalent and most pressing that are likely to affect the classroom "culture" you will experience and to which you must adapt if you will have any professors from the host country.

- 1) Learning is YOUR responsibility, not your professor's. It is much less common abroad for a faculty member to seek you out if your work is deficient, your attendance is unsatisfactory or your understanding of content inadequate. Faculty abroad expect that you will ask for help if you need it – and if you don't then you should be prepared for the consequences.
- 2) Assessment (i.e. graded papers or exams) is less frequent and therefore each grade counts – a lot. In the U.S., we're accustomed to frequent assessment and feedback. You normally receive a paper back with lots of comments. A first exam is usually returned before the second exam is given. This is NOT always true abroad. If you feel uncertain

- about how you are doing, make a point of sitting down with the professor to ask where you stand. For some classes the ONLY assessment may be in the form of a final paper or exam. Be sure you are prepared!
- 3) Unlike here where assigned readings are often discussed in class, faculty abroad frequently provide students with a list of required readings and also some supplemental “recommended” readings to further illuminate some of the themes emerging in class. However, these readings may never be discussed explicitly nor are you assigned homework designed to demonstrate your understanding of the readings. Be forewarned: whether or not readings are discussed, if they are assigned they are fair game for exams. You are expected to do the readings, to understand them and to incorporate them into your thinking about a particular topic. If you feel that you’re not “getting” something, ask questions.
 - 4) Grading standards may vary from those you’ve experienced in the U.S.. In some countries, an “A” is reserved for only the most outstanding or original work with “B”s or “C”s being more of the norm for students who have clearly learned the material but aren’t going the extra mile. Similarly, you may find that you are rewarded or penalized for different skills than are normally measured here. Some cultures place a higher premium than others on rote memorization, others want you to think independently, and in others you might be expected to draw upon a basic factual foundation that is assumed rather than explicitly taught. If you aren’t certain what a professor expects of you or what you can expect from him or her, ask for clarification. Your home university study abroad office and its staff CANNOT change a grade once it’s been assigned nor intervene in its determination.
 - 5) In most societies, classrooms are run more formally than in the U.S. (there are a handful of exceptions) and the division between student and professor is more marked. Unless/until you are told otherwise, here are a few basic “don’ts” about classroom etiquette:
 - Don’t eat or drink in class.
 - Don’t dress more casually than is acceptable for the culture.
 - Don’t shout out an answer without being called upon.
 - Do not interrupt another student while s/he is talking, even if you disagree.
 - Don’t put your feet up on desks or other chairs.
 - Don’t address your professors by their first names without being invited to do so.
 - Don’t enter a faculty member’s classroom or office (other than for the scheduled class time) without knocking first.
 - Don’t challenge a professor’s grade or assignment. (You can and should ask for an explanation of how a grade was determined and what you can do to improve your performance.)
 - Don’t assume that “dissenting” or original opinions are equally rewarded on exams and papers. Find out whether you are free to develop your own ideas or if you must demonstrate understanding and ability to apply the faculty member’s own ideas or themes.
 - In Spanish-speaking countries, use the formal forms of “you” when speaking to university professors and administrators, unless they tell you otherwise.
 - For the community service classes, you will likely find these far less structured than you are accustomed to finding a similar class in the U.S. Be patient. Be flexible. Be prepared that you will show up to work and no one will be expecting you. If you encounter any such problems with the implementation of your service program, BE PROACTIVE! Speak with Professor Farnsworth, your SL instructor and with Professor Lilly Gonzalez who helps oversee the service-learning program. Also, the best way to handle such circumstances if you’ve given patience a week is to look

around, see what needs doing and offer to do it. You'll find you get to work much more quickly that way and have a chance to prove to your host site your abilities.

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING OR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Both the law and the custom abroad with regard to accommodation for special student needs are different than the law and custom here. If you have a physical or learning difference that requires accommodation, you should: 1) disclose this prior to embarking on the program abroad to find out about the accommodation that is available and how to gain access and 2) be prepared to find arrangements more ad hoc than they would be here on campus. For the Dominican Republic Consortium director's class, you can normally expect to receive similar accommodations as you would here for his/her particular class(es) (such as extended time on exams or access to a note-taker, etc.) but may not receive the same accommodation from host country faculty unless this is arranged and agreed to well in advance.

2.2 MONEY AND BANKING

The most important general advice we have regarding money is to make sure you can access money in several different forms. That way, if for some reason your debit card doesn't work at a particular ATM, you can use a credit card or traveler's checks.

We recommend that you carry a credit card as a source of emergency cash and credit. You may also use your ATM card or Visa/MC debit card if it has the Cirrus or Plus logos--don't forget that you will need your PIN number.

Do your homework. Here are some things you're likely to need to learn about each way to access money:

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are useful in many countries now, and one of the advantages is that by using them, you'll be getting a competitive exchange rate. But, if you're going to be using a credit card abroad, make sure your card company knows about your trip. It's possible that they may cancel your card if they see lots of foreign charges all of a sudden. While you've got them on the phone, ask about any fees for using the card abroad for purchases or cash advances. Also, make sure you have your pin number memorized before you go. This will enable you to get a cash advance from many ATM machines. NOTE: You can often get a credit card cash advance inside a bank, though they may wonder why you are not using the machine outside. Just make sure you have your passport for identification purposes. This process may take a while, but can be a saving grace in a financial pinch.

DEBIT CARDS

Make sure your card is on one or both of the big international ATM systems, Cirrus or Plus, by looking at the back of the card. Make sure you contact your bank to let them know you'll be abroad and ask about any fees for using ATMs overseas. **Please be aware of your surroundings when you take out money from an ATM. This is a common place for theft so stay alert.**

Some students have found it useful to sign up for online banking before they leave home so they can keep track of their balance and the fees charged for overseas transactions – and to help ensure that they don't go overdrawn.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

These are used less and less as credit and debit cards become more popular, but they are still useful in some countries and are far safer than carrying cash. You should be aware, however, that the fees to cash them and convert to the local currency can be high. On the other hand, traveler's checks have tracking numbers on them that will allow you to easily cancel them and recuperate your losses in case they are lost or stolen. You must keep these tracking numbers separate from the checks and several copies in different locations are recommended. You can sometimes pay establishments directly with these checks, but most often you must change them at an exchange office or bank. There is often a fee involved in cashing them, expressed as a percentage of the total or a flat fee.

We really recommend traveler's checks ONLY as a backup source of funds in the event that international money networks are down or your cash/credit card is lost or stolen. You will find them inconvenient to use on a regular basis. However, it's not a bad idea to bring along about \$200 (in relatively small denominations) in traveler's checks – just in case. If you don't use them while abroad, they're still “good” here in the U.S. upon your return. In the Dominican Republic, traveler's checks sometimes are exchanged at a pretty unfavorable rate, but they are still important as an emergency backup.

Be sure to set aside your exit taxes of \$25 **in cash** for leaving the D.R. Keep this in mind if you are traveling internationally independently as you may need exit fees for each country. Above all, be smart and safe with your money and valuables, as when you travel anywhere. Avoid changing money on the street and have a friend with you. Keep valuables out of sight. This includes not leaving money on your dresser in the hotel when you leave for the day and separating your cash as well as your other sources of money (i.e. put ATM and credit card in different places). Use inside pockets when you need to carry money on you: you can carry a wallet hanging inside your trousers, suspended from the waist, sew-in inside pockets, or purchase neck-hanging or other type of money holder from a travel store.

HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU NEED?

Students and families always ask us to estimate the amount of funds that they'll need for personal spending in the Dominican Republic. This is VERY difficult for us to estimate as “typical” student spending ranges vary so widely depending upon resources available, personal spending habits, and your interest in traveling independently of the program. Given the fact that all your basic needs are provided for (see meals, housing below) and that the program pays for A LOT of group travel and tourist admission fees, you actually NEED (as opposed to will want) very little personal spending money. Thus, for most students an extra \$800-\$1,200 for personal/discretionary spending should be adequate. This sum should still buy you that occasional night out, souvenirs or one or two extra weekend trips. Be forewarned, however! If you are a power shopper, expect to travel to a new destination every weekend, or tend to consume large amounts of alcohol or food at night, you will certainly spend a lot more. You'll also need more if you expect to stay on in the Caribbean through much of the summer. Most students tend to spend however much they have (we seldom hear of students bringing money back home with them), whether this is \$600 or \$3,000 or even more; our best advice is for you to sit down as a family and decide what you can afford and what you think is reasonable. Given that it is very easy to get money to you quickly if you underestimate (mom or dad make a deposit at the ATM in the U.S.; you have access to the funds within 24 hours), it's better to bring less and ask for more in a pinch than to re-mortgage the home up front. If you're on a tight budget and need tips, ASK us!

2.3 HOUSING AND MEALS ABROAD

U.S. Americans are used to large living spaces, lots of privacy, endless hot water and access to the telephone. Most people in the world do not have the same expectations and get by with (sometimes much) smaller spaces, have less privacy, take very quick showers, often turning off the water between getting wet and rinsing off, and use the telephone for only very brief communications. Often there are economic and ecological reasons for these differences.

While in the Dominican Republic, you will be staying with a host family carefully selected by PUCMM staff and you will receive your meals each day except for the times you will be out on field trips. The resident director will be providing a meal stipend to you for most of the meals you will be eating away from your host family so you will need to use your own money only for snacks between meals or the occasional night out. The living arrangements will be reasonably comfortable, though perhaps noisier, hotter, and somewhat less private than you may be used to. Be prepared for long hours during the day when the electricity goes off - taking the running water with it. Bring a flashlight and spare batteries. Laundry will be done at your homestay, but you will have to use your own money if you decide that you need to dry clean. (We don't recommend that you bring any garments requiring special laundering).

These will be your families for several months. Many alumni of the program still keep in contact with their host families. Please be considerate to your host family as they have opened up their home to you. Be conscientious and polite. For example, call if you will be late so the family doesn't wait for you for dinner. You may want to bring pictures of your significant others (family, boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.) to share with your host family. You may also want to bring gifts for them from the U.S. to give them when you arrive (i.e. dictionary, something typically American, such as post cards, baseball caps, American CDs or something decorative for the house or nice beach towels).

You will all be given a questionnaire to complete a few weeks into your stay in the DR which will inquire about your home stay experience. If you have any immediate or urgent problems in the home, of course, you do not need to wait until the assessment point. However, if you were waiting to adjust (we do recommend that) before bringing up any concerns, be sure to bring these forward during the assessment period. If someone needs to speak to the host family on your behalf about, for example, a worry about meals or about household routines, they can do so only if you are honest about your situation and any concerns that you have. In other cases, your response on the questionnaire might prompt a discussion between you and the local housing coordinator on how you can best discuss your concerns directly with the family. In very rare cases, it might even be determined that you should move to another locale. PLEASE be a good self-advocate. While we expect all students to be respectful of local cultural norms and to be adaptable, we also expect you to speak up if something really doesn't go right. There are wonderful staff members on site who can help you – but only if you let them know you need something.

2.4 SERVICE ABROAD

U.S. Americans live in a service-oriented economy. We expect a certain level of service for our money. Many other countries have no similar service culture. Store clerks don't have to be polite and warm. Wait-staff in many countries do not make their money from tips and do not feel the need to give you a lot of attention or deference. Remember that you expect what is normal, and what is normal for you is not necessarily normal for the local culture. The good side to this

different definition of service is that you can often stay for as long as you would like at a café and the waiter won't bother you too often or urge you to leave. Europeans and Caribbean folk are clearly okay with the quality of service at cafes and restaurants—they would have a different system if they were not. So accept it, and look to the local people to help you figure out how to get your check. Tipping is still appreciated, of course. In the most “touristy” locales, tipping IS expected and is a necessary part of getting decent service.

2.5 EMAIL ACCESS

Seemingly a strange thing to add to the list, but email has become such a part of student life in the United States that many students abroad are appalled by the lack of easy email access. So take note: email/internet access is not as universally available as it is in the U.S. Don't expect to be able to log in from your homestay. Don't expect unlimited access at school. You might not have it at all at some points in the program, and you may have to rely on internet cafes. In some cases you may have to revert to that old stand-by, snail mail. The bottom line is that you should not expect the level of access and ease you've come to expect here. You're likely to be disappointed if you do.

Email accounts, such as hotmail or yahoo can be used or you can log in through your home university account and computers are available at PUCMM. In addition, internet cafes and phone cards abound. Details will be provided during orientation.

Be sure to check your home school's email regularly because that is how we will be in touch with you. Make sure you clean out your mailbox before you go – otherwise it could fill up and you could be unable to receive any new mail.

If you will be switching email systems, you may want to bring a printed version of email addresses so that you can transfer them to your new account.

2.6 EXCURSIONS

The program includes a number of day trips and multi-day excursions. They are REQUIRED educational activities, the cost of which is included in your tuition, and you will be expected to participate. Below is a *tentative* list of activities:

- Whale Watching in Samaná
- Visiting the Haitian-Dominican border town of Dajabón
- Visiting sites on the coast such as Cabarete, Sosúa, and La Romana
- Hiking in Pico Duarte, and visiting the Mirabal Sisters' museum
- Observing birds and other wildlife in National Parks such as Los Haitises, Isla Cabritos, Monte Cristi, José del Carmen Ramírez, and Armando Bermúdez
- Attending Carnaval in Santiago
- Watching Baseball in the Cibao stadium
- A trip to Santo Domingo for cultural activities and visits to historic sites.

Since wildlife viewing (bird watching and whale watching) figure prominently in our program, it might be worthwhile to purchase a pair of binoculars (these will also come in handy for watching baseball). This is entirely optional, but if you are

interested in finding binoculars for nature viewing, you may want to try Eagle Optics (www.eagleoptics.com). Models such as the following are adequate for our purposes: Vortex Diamondback, Vortex crossfire, Eagle Optics Raven, Bushnell Excursion, Bushnell H20. If you are an eyeglass wearer, make sure you get a pair with “eye relief.”

2.7 TRAVEL TIPS

For some of you, your term abroad represents your first excursion out of the country and your first real travel experience. Some of you are already seasoned travelers, or, at least, seasoned *tourists*. A term abroad will open up to you many opportunities for further travel. Sometimes there are so many choices it can be difficult to make decisions. It’s worth thinking about what you’d like to do, and how you’d like to do it, before you go. Develop a strategy or philosophy to guide your travels. Perhaps you have two weeks to travel after your program. Do you plan a whirl-wind tour of 10 countries? Or do you choose one or two places to get to know well? Do you put the well-known cities and sites on your itinerary, or do you choose lesser-known, out of the way places? This is a good time to do some homework, too, reading guidebooks about the country you are going to and the surrounding region. Consider what is important to you, what kinds of things you think would make the best memories later on. You might want to make a list of things you hope to see and experience while abroad, or maybe you even want to make a detailed plan; or maybe you want to leave it entirely open and be spontaneous. But thinking about how you want to explore now will enable you to make better use of your time.

AROUND THE CITY

The city you are studying in is your major entry-point into the study of the nation as a whole. Students abroad can choose between two extremes, spending a lot of time getting to know every corner and nook the city has to offer, or traveling most weekends to other cities or even other countries. These trips will not offer the level of in-depth access you will get by regularly exploring the city you live in while abroad. One of the writers of this guide was struck when, at the end of his study abroad term in Seville, Spain, a fellow student asked him “what’s there to do in this town?”

TRAVEL WITHIN THE CARIBBEAN

Once you arrive in the DR you will find that it is relatively easy to travel within the country and also to other Caribbean nations. You will no doubt want to spend some of your free weekends or the spring break enjoying these travel opportunities. Please keep in mind one important policy and one recommendation:

POLICY: Presently, U.S. law makes it illegal for U. S. citizens and permanent residents to travel to Cuba for tourism. While many Americans disagree with this policy, it is nevertheless the law. Therefore, while the DR program is **in session**, you will NOT be permitted to visit Cuba, even during your free travel periods. Failure to comply with this policy could result in removal from the program.

RECOMMENDATION: Students sometimes express interest in visiting islands (such as Haiti) that are listed on the “travel warning” roster of the U.S. State Department. Nations may be listed on warning by the State department for political reasons – such as instability – or safety reasons – such as an outbreak of medical epidemic – or ‘natural disaster’ reasons following a serious

hurricane. In all cases, if there is a travel warning it means that the U.S. government is advising against travel to this region or nation, that services to U.S. citizens in this country may be limited, and that, if you do travel anyway, you understand the risks involved. The DR Consortium program will never sponsor any program-related travel to countries on the travel warning list and we urge that you heed such warnings if travelling on your own.

FAMILIARITY AND TIME

Remember that around the world, most people don't move as often as U.S. Americans do. We're a very mobile society. Globally it is much more common for a person to spend his/her entire life in one city of one country. A result of this difference in mobility is that in general, people abroad spend much more time building relationships and friendships than U.S. Americans do. What this means for you abroad is that you might need to spend more time getting to know a place and its people before you become a "regular" at a café or life-long friends with your host family or local classmates.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

If you do travel during weekends outside of the excursions are built into your program, consider limiting yourself to your country, especially if you're on a language immersion program. Taking a break entirely from the language for a weekend will delay or even push back the progress you've already made. Traveling around a country and visiting its different regions and cities can give you a fascinating comparative view and a sense of the diversity of the place. Also, traveling in a country where you speak the language (even not very well) will always be a more in-depth experience than traveling through countries where you speak none of the language.

SECTION 3: All About Culture

If you think back to your first year of college, you might remember both apprehension and anticipation. You were quickly hit with what you did not know—how to do your laundry, how to navigate the cafeteria, the necessity of having your I.D. card on you at all times, where to buy books, how to succeed in a new kind of study...the list goes on. What you were going through was a *process of cultural adjustment*. You were learning the rules of a very new game; it took time, patience, and a willingness to watch, listen and learn. What you are about to experience abroad is roughly comparable in character to the transition you went through starting college, but it will be far more intense, challenging and rewarding. It's the next step. Congratulations on choosing it.

How long will you be abroad? About four months? That's really not all that much time to fit in what many returned students would call the most significant and amazing experience of their college careers (if not their lives). Although many students experience homesickness and/or culture shock and have good days and bad days, you want to try to maximize what little time you have abroad. This section will help you understand what *intercultural adjustment* is all about, what you should expect to experience, and how you can actively work to make this process a vibrant learning experience.

You are about to encounter a culture that is typically much different from that with which you are familiar. The rules of the game will not be the same. Researchers of cross-cultural communication use several models to describe various aspects of the study abroad experience; this packet will guide you through them. You may not think you need this information now, but many students who have crossed cultures—and come back again—say that they are glad they knew about these

ideas beforehand. Take this packet with you...our bet is that at some point in your time abroad, you'll pick it up again.

3.1 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

danger



Much of the value of your study abroad program lies in the experiences of day-to-day living, the encounters and relationships you build with the people of your host country. The experiential learning model depicted to the left contains several key ideas that, if you keep them in mind, can help you get the most from your time abroad.

The experience of living amidst a totally new culture can be at turns exhilarating and frustrating. These frustrations can add up as you run into more and more differences between the culture you carry around with you and the host culture. One of the benefits of study abroad is this realization—that you actually carry America around with you. It's your comfort zone, a set of values, ideas, and manners, a language and a set of products. You've got to step out of this comfort zone if you want to truly have a great experience.

There's no way around this: If you want to really learn, you'll have to go outside of your comfort zone. And going outside of your comfort zone means taking a social risk.

A good rule of thumb for students abroad; if you're not feeling *uncomfortable*, you're not in much of a position to learn anything. *You haven't felt confident enough in your language to talk to the newspaper seller you pass every day, even though he looks like a character. You've felt too shy to go into that corner pub. You're lost—but rather than ask someone for directions, you fumble with a map. You pass the town square and people are dancing in traditional costume—what's the occasion? Your host family invites you to a familiar gathering—but your American friends have planned a day away at the beach. You're in class all day with foreign students and many of them look very interesting but they haven't introduced themselves to you.*

Stepping up to these challenges involves social risk and possible feelings of discomfort. But they all offer opportunity as well. There's much to gain, so take a chance!

TOURISM VS. STUDY ABROAD

Most cities have their tourist attractions and these are great things to take in during your time abroad. But remember that most local people don't frequent these places. And remember too that the spaces where the local people live aren't frequented by tourists. There is a name for this: tourist infrastructure. Tourism is the largest economy on the planet. This infrastructure (with multi-lingual tour guides, menus in 12 languages, museums and historic sites, and boutiques) is designed to do three things: make you feel comfortable, show you what most tourists want to see, and separate you from your money.

If you understand the experiential foundation of study abroad, then you realize that this is not the optimal space for students studying abroad to spend their time. Tourist infrastructures in fact insulate the traveler from the daily life of the country (and the citizens that don't speak the tourist's language) and this is exactly what you should want to experience while abroad. So, as a student abroad and not a tourist, take delight in the simple pleasures of daily existence and really

get to know your neighborhood and your city. Find a local hangout. Become a regular. Go to restaurants without menus out front in five languages (they're also often less expensive). Get to know the merchants, waiters, and neighbors you bump into every day. Play basketball or football (soccer to us) with the local kids. These experiences often have as much (or maybe more) to say than every city's "tall thing to climb" or sanitized "attractions".

BREAKING AWAY

If you're abroad for a language immersion experience, hanging out all the time with other U.S. Americans will keep you from advancing your language skills. So too will missing out on activities because you have to wait around for your boyfriend/girlfriend to call for the second time that week. And: did you really travel halfway around the world to spend *all your time* with people you already know or talking to people at home? So take advantage of invitations from your host family, your language partner, or a foreign classmate. Go off exploring on your own or with one good friend.

It's okay to explore with an American buddy, but beware of the pack! Large groups of U.S. Americans (along with being immediately recognizable and off-putting) will keep you from really getting to know the local culture and people.

Going abroad is about *breaking away* from what you know, so make sure you actually do that and don't live abroad in "Island America". There are two other related things that will keep you from actually experiencing what is going on around you: one is the easy accessibility of internet cafes, and the other is cell phones. Technology allows us to be connected with people far away with great ease, but remember that is often at the expense of connections with those immediately around us (not to mention actual monetary expense!)

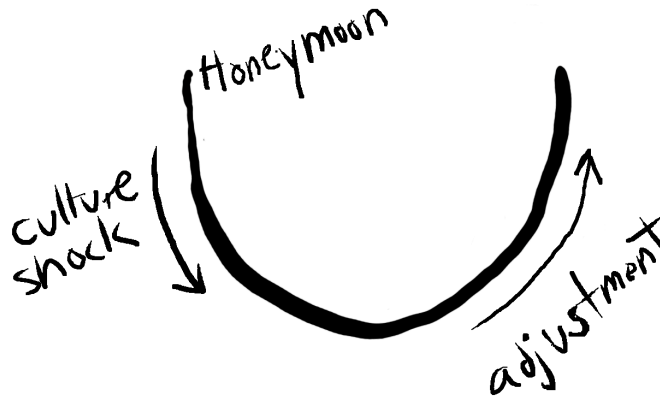
BLENDING IN

Why should you try to blend? First and foremost, it's a great way to learn about the culture. To blend in first requires you to actually look at the people around you. You must become an ardent and keen observer of people's behavior, language, etiquette, dress and, in more general terms, the way people carry themselves and treat each other. Local people will appreciate your efforts to understand and adopt some of these behaviors. It will show them that you respect and want to understand their customs and values. And therefore they'll trust you more, share more with you, and feel more of an immediate bond of commonality with you. You'll learn even more. Another reason you should try to blend in is safety. The reality is that foreigners are often the targets of petty crime or unwanted attention from the wrong kinds of people. Not sticking out in the crowd will keep you safer, and that bond of commonality will mean that local people will be more likely to look out for you.

3.2 ADJUSTING TO A NEW CULTURE

Just as you did when you entered college, you will go through a process of cultural adjustment abroad where you will learn to operate in a different cultural system, with different signals, rules, meanings, values and ideas. Your experience living in this host culture will change over time. Once the immediate sensations of excitement subside (*the honeymoon phase*), the experience of adjustment will likely be characterized by feelings of anxiety, stress, sadness, and fatigue, as

things begin to seem very...*foreign*. This process of intercultural adjustment is often represented by the “u-curve”, plotted below:



If you're studying in a non-English speaking country, your language skills will be quickly tested to their limit. You might not understand the local accent even though everyone speaks English. You may not understand (or be understood by) the bus driver. Your homestay family's behavior may be difficult to fathom, making you wonder whether they like having you. You will certainly feel fatigued at times by the challenge of having to work so hard at connecting with people.

The truth is living in a culture different from your own is challenging and exhausting, especially early on in the process where almost everything is a mystery. What is happening is simple: you are realizing how different this new culture really is! And you are realizing that what you knew from before, what was familiar and comfortable to you, may not help you at all now. Some people call this “*culture shock*”.

You may react to “culture shock” in a number of ways: you may find yourself favoring time alone, preferring contact with friends or family at home over contact with foreigners or fellow students, and perhaps as a sense of rejection of the host culture (hopefully, for your sake, temporarily!). Don't let this phase of adjustment forfeit an amazing opportunity to learn and grow! It is important to bear in mind that the initial difficulties do wear off, and get much easier with active immersion in the culture that surrounds you. As shown on the U-curve, the initial low subsides as you become accustomed to the norms and custom of your host-country. This is called *adjustment*. Another note of good news: there are concrete strategies you can use to minimize emotional and social difficulties:

- * Take time to re-energize with your friends. Don't feel guilty about hanging out and comparing experiences...you can do a lot of processing in these sessions. Just don't isolate yourself from the culture in that group.
- * Get out and explore. Don't waste your time abroad in a mob of U.S. Americans! Strike off on your own, or pair up with a friend, be it another American on your program, your host brother or sister, or a local acquaintance you've cultivated. It's good to have someone to experience things with, bounce ideas off of, help out with language—but it's also good to explore on your own and see what life throws your way.
- * Narrow your world—focus your efforts on a neighborhood, street or even a single place, and try to get to know that, using it as a window onto the rest of the culture.
- * Widen your world—wander around the city or take trips to places you've never really heard of. Be curious and open to the possibilities around you. View unfamiliar things as mysteries to be investigated.

- * If you have a hobby or interest you pursued at home, pursue it abroad. If you sang in a choir or played soccer, do those things abroad, too. You'll meet local people who share that interest! One student we know of brought her tennis racket to France; every other day she'd play tennis at the nearby university, and this social sport became her doorway into French culture, introducing her to many local people she would never otherwise have encountered.
- * Keep a journal. Journals are powerful tools for becoming aware. You can focus on the changes going on within yourself, or you can focus your writing on what is going on around you, the weird and wonderful details of that culture, or both.
- * Write letters. Letters can help you formulate your impressions and communicate your experience with others; just be careful, you could alarm family and friends unnecessarily if you write about your difficulties only and not your successes!
- * Set small goals for yourself every day. "Today I'm going to buy a newspaper and conduct the transaction in the local language." "This evening I'll accompany my host parents to their relative's home and see what happens."
- * Read...reading a book about the culture and civilization, be it a popular history or the musings of another traveler, can be relaxing and informative. It's great when what you read sheds light on what you see or experience every day.
- * Find a conversation partner. In non-English speaking countries, many local people are seeking to practice their English. Set up meetings and spend half the time conversing in English and the local language. In English-speaking countries, take advantage of the shared language to really engage people in dialogue about local history and contemporary issues.
- * Be open to invitations! One student reported back to us that she never felt like she had successfully lived in a place unless she had had dinner in a family's home and seen how normal people lived. In some countries inviting foreigners into one's house is an honor—for both the guest and the hosts!

You may have your down moments, but if you persist in trying, eventually the daily victories—when you have successfully adapted to one or another aspect of the culture—will start to outweigh the setbacks and frustrations. Over time, as you gain confidence in your ability to navigate through a different cultural system, as your familiarity with local norms, values, and attitudes grows, and as you start to see things from different perspectives, your adjustment will enhance the exciting and happy time you originally anticipated your experience abroad to be.

One final note: everyone experiences cultural adjustment differently. This is just a general model to help you visualize the fact that you will go through a process of cultural adjustment, and that this process will include ups and downs, good days and bad, and moments of alternating homesickness and elation at the new culture that is all around you.

3.3 CULTURE LEARNING: CUSTOMS AND VALUES

Before you go abroad, it's a good idea to start thinking about culture as being one part customs and one part values. As a person going abroad to immerse yourself in a different culture, you should be extremely flexible about your customs, that is, the little things that make up your daily routine, the way you do things, the level of service or quality of life you expect. You should, however, be more reserved about your values, that is, the core beliefs that are important to you. It won't hurt you to eat a food you are not accustomed to (notice the word "accustomed"?) but say, for example, your host-father makes a racist comment about the latest wave of Haitian

immigrants. You shouldn't feel like you have to agree with him just for the sake of fitting in. Be respectful, but be true to your values, too.

There's a connection between customs and values, however; the values of a culture are often expressed in its customs. The café society of many Mediterranean and Caribbean countries suggests a certain value for comfortable social interaction, a relaxed view of time, and the idea that life should be savored teaspoon by teaspoon. So as you adopt new customs, take time to reflect on the values that underlie them, and examine your own values as well. Is there something in this culture worth taking back with you, making part of your own core values?

LOCAL CUSTOMS

EATING AND DRINKING

Food is one of the most important parts of any culture. Although we may have pushed eating aside in the United States, trying to make it fast and unobtrusive on the *real* concerns of our lives, for many cultures across the world, eating and food are still of central importance to family and social life. Be aware that many countries frown upon eating on-the-go and it is considered rude to eat food while you're walking across campus or down the street. Follow the examples of the locals: if you never see anyone else eating food as they walk, you can assume it is not appropriate. Following the logic above, a country's eating habits and customs suggest its values. Note the café example above; a simple cup of coffee has many facets of Mediterranean culture encoded in it. In Africa, to take another example, meals may be eaten with hands from a central bowl. Encoded in this is a statement about community, family and sharing. As a guest in another culture, you should be open to trying as many different new customs as you can, and this means kinds of food and modes of eating. But be realistic: don't expect yourself to eat beef if you're a vegetarian or down tripe soup for the fourth time if you really hate it. If you're in a home-stay, first and foremost, be honest on your application for housing. If you're a vegetarian, say so. If you can't handle cigarette smoke, write that. The programs we work with abroad will try to meet your needs as best as they can. But expect some compromises! Also, be honest and polite with your host families; probably not every family member likes the same kinds of food there, too. It should be a process of mutual discovery. But also try new foods. Experiment with menu items you can't necessarily identify. You never know what you'll discover. Bon appetit!

While alcohol consumption varies in degree and social context from country to country, it is safe to say that, in general, few countries consider the kind of drinking prevalent on American college campuses to be socially acceptable. Many countries do not have strict drinking ages and therefore alcohol, not being illegal or taboo, isn't considered novel, and binge drinking is relatively rare. Many other cultures appear to have a much healthier relationship to alcohol than does society in the U.S..

Keep in mind that while you will find alcohol readily available and your host family may commonly serve wine with meals there are different social norms concerning alcohol. Men and women both drink – but as a rule women drink LESS than men, especially when they go out. Public drunkenness is frowned upon and women who are drunk tend to send a certain (unintended) message to men about their availability for sexual activity.

Although you are all “legal” abroad, we strongly encourage you to drink responsibly and carefully abroad. Drinking too much leaves you more vulnerable to pick-pocketing and other petty crime and, in excess, will lead you to display behavior that may fuel anti-American sentiment. If you choose to drink, be very aware of the quantities you consume. Also note that

alcoholic drinks in other countries, beer and hard cider in particular, tend to have a higher alcohol content per volume than their U.S. counterparts.

SHOPPING

Expect shopping to be a very different experience in Latin America than at home. There are some U.S. style, upscale stores which set firm, non-negotiable prices and have sales clerks not unlike those you'd find in the U.S. In many other cases, however, you will find that marked prices are not firm and, in fact, that many vendors enjoy bartering and bargaining with you. Your hosts at PUCMM will tell you more about how and when this is done. It will seem very strange to you at first, but try it!

MANNERS

Professor Farnsworth will brief you on site, as will our hosts at PUCMM, but here are a (very) few basics about manners and customs in the Spanish Caribbean:

Friends and acquaintances often greet each other with a hug or a kiss on both cheeks. Don't feel embarrassed if you are greeted this way even by someone of the same gender. After a while, you'll probably find you enjoy it! However, you will NOT offend someone if you put out your hand for a shake as a greeting if this is more comfortable for you.

In your homestay, you can expect to have your own (bed)room and your family will respect your privacy in your room. There may be a cleaning woman who enters your room once or several times a week, but this is standard in most middle class Dominican homes. Once you leave your room and enter the common family areas, DON'T expect much privacy! Always ask before you use anything belonging to a family member unless he/she has given explicit permission for you to use this item any time. You should be aware that host moms often feel very proprietary about "their" refrigerator. We strongly encourage you to ask what the expectations are in the household about food. May you prepare your own snack if you are hungry between meals? May you help (please do offer) with the cooking? DO NOT help yourself to the contents of the refrigerator unless your host family has given you permission because this is considered rude (and also might lead you to snack on what mom was planning to serve the family for dinner that night!). Be open to tasting new foods. If you really don't care for something, you can say so, politely, and ask if you can have something else instead. But taste everything before deciding you don't like it!

A final, important courtesy at home is to let your host family know in advance about your plans for the evening or weekend. It is perfectly fine for you to go out late with friends in the evening but tell your mom the night before or that morning if you will not be home for dinner. Similarly, if you expect to be away for the weekend or overnight, tell them so they will not worry. They will not restrict your freedom, but since they feel responsible for your safety, you should always show the courtesy of advance notice or a phone call if you will be late.

SECTION 4: Safety and Health

4.1 SAFETY ABROAD: A FRAMEWORK

Take a look at the experiential learning model again. Notice that there's "social discomfort", and there's **danger**. Taking social risks doesn't mean putting yourself in harm's way. What you "risk" should only be embarrassment and a wounded ego, temporary feelings that wear off. You

can rely on your good judgment to tell the difference between risk and danger much of the time: for instance, there's talking to the newspaper seller, and there's wandering through a seedy part of town alone in the middle of the night. One poses the kind of social risk we're encouraging, and one poses danger to your well-being.

Recognize, however, that there are instances when you **can't** sense the line between social risk and danger simply because you don't understand the culture. Sellers in the open market place follow you around. They seem aggressive. Are you in danger, or is this simply the normal way of doing things in your host country? Is there some kind of body language you can use to communicate that you're not interested? You can't know this unless you know the culture well. And to know the culture well, you need to get out there, learn, ask questions, and take social risks!

The best way to stay safe abroad is to be more aware and learn as much as you can about your host-country.

Statistically the crime rate in most overseas locations where we send students is lower than the typical US city. However, because there is often a large student population in many of the locations, students can be lulled into a false sense of security. Unfortunately, there have also been some recent isolated but serious crime incidents that have affected some of our students in the Dominican Republic so we encourage you to be vigilant.

Remember that with your American accent and clothing you will stand out and could be a target. Given that you will be in unfamiliar surroundings while you are abroad it is particularly important that you use your best judgment. Above all, be street smart: if you are going out at night we ask you to go in (small) groups, ideally with some local students or family members, and be aware of your surroundings. After dark, we recommend that you take a taxi rather than walking or using public transportation. Sharing a cab is NOT expensive. Look out for one another. You will be spending a lot of time in an urban environment so act accordingly. If something doesn't feel right, listen to your instincts.

Regarding your personal belongings, be sure to secure your important items (passports, travelers checks, valuables) and to lock the door to your flats at all times.

DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR

The following is behavior you should avoid while abroad:

- 1.) Don't give out the names, numbers, and addresses of other program participants.
- 2.) Don't invite new friends back to your quarters; meet in a public place until you know them better.
- 3.) Don't do drugs abroad (see below for why).
- 4.) Avoid American hang-outs (McDonald's, Hard Rock Cafes, etc.) and avoid being in large groups of Americans.
- 5.) Don't wander alone in an unfamiliar city where you don't know the good areas from the bad.
- 6.) Dress appropriately for your setting. If local people are not wearing shorts or tank tops than you shouldn't either; it's disrespectful and it invites unwanted attention.
- 7.) Don't drink too much in public; it may make you look foolish and you become more susceptible to crime such as assault, pick-pocketing, and unwanted sexual attention or even assault.

4.2 HEALTHCARE AND INSURANCE

It is possible that you will have the need for medical care while you are participating in an off-campus program. Your host family can be extremely helpful to you if/when you do. The resident director and the staff of PUCMM will assist you in case you need to seek professional medical care. Our local hosts have developed relationships with English speaking doctors for routine office visits, minor illnesses and prescriptions. For many of you, your parents' policy and/or your school's policy will cover you. **Check in advance to confirm that you are covered when you are abroad.** Normally, you will have to pay for your office visits and obtain an official receipt of the treatment you have received with the date of treatment.

Please confirm your home school's policies regarding medical insurance while abroad.

In the case of serious illness or emergencies, the resident directors will ensure that you receive prompt and adequate care. Your parents (and home college staff) will be notified and consulted whenever possible in situations of a serious nature.

4.3 WOMEN'S ISSUES ABROAD

American girls are easy. A special word to women going abroad: the sad truth is that some foreign men believe this stereotype to be true. How they may have arrived at this conclusion is not hard to surmise if you watch a little TV. What this means for you is that certain behaviors in public (drunkenness being a big one) may get you unwanted attention from the worst kinds of people. Again, blend in by watching the behavior of those around you and adopting it as your way.

Females may receive more attention than they are used to in the United States. Dominican men may make flirtatious or other comments to you in the streets. Whistling, hissing, and cat-calling are all very common, even in a university setting and certainly in public places. Ignore the comments and the men, look straight ahead, and do not smile back at them. You may smile because you don't want to be rude or because the comment was funny. But your smile is a sign to them that you want to continue the flirtation.

4.4 RACIAL AND ETHNIC CONCERNS

No two students studying abroad ever have quite the same experience, even in the same program and country. This same variety is true for students of color and those from U.S. minority ethnic or racial backgrounds. Reports from past participants vary from those who felt exhilarated by being free of the American context of race relations, to those who experienced different degrees of 'innocent' curiosity about their ethnicity, to those who felt they met both familiar and new types of ostracism and prejudice and had to learn new coping strategies. Very few minority students conclude that racial or ethnic problems that can be encountered in other countries represent sufficient reasons for not going. Having said this, in the context of the Dominican Republic, keep in mind that relations between Haiti and the DR are somewhat troubled and complicate race-relations. U.S. students of color are sometimes perceived to be Haitian and may not be treated as respectfully as either other Dominicans or as Americans. In no way do we condone this treatment but we advise knowing what you are getting into and preparing yourself for it. We also encourage all of you to support one another in your own social networks and in the choices you make. If your classmate of color is not welcome at a particular club or venue, then perhaps you should

rethink whether you would like to dance or socialize there particularly as you could choose instead an environment where you are all welcome.

If you are upset or struggling with local norms relating to these issues, the PUCMM staff and our faculty Director can help you to find others who can provide you with some counsel and support.

A word to those of Dominican heritage: Keep in mind that in the U.S., with our ‘melting pot’ concept, most Americans or immigrants raised here have grown up with a sense of ‘hyphenated’ identity (i.e. African-American, Latina or Dominican-American, Irish-American, etc). We use these labels ourselves and others certainly apply them to us. So, here in the U.S. you might feel very Dominican. Expect that once you arrive in the DR you will suddenly realize that to many local people you are American. Or, at least, they perceive you to be ‘other’ in some way. This can be an upsetting feeling and force you into rethinking your own sense of identity. If this is causing you distress, we encourage you to seek out others you will meet who have made the transition back and forth between U.S. and the DR and to speak with the faculty director and/or someone in the counseling center.

4.5 HIV

HIV is even more prevalent in the DR than at home and just as deadly as it is here. Sometimes Americans abroad lower their guard and engage in activities that they never would back at home, feeling somehow “immune” or “invincible”. Resist these thoughts! We also urge you to keep in mind that STDs are equally problematic in the DR and, in fact, there is a stronger cultural resistance on the part of some Dominican men to using a condom. Also, in a different context, many Americans are unsure of the cultural cues involved or are unsure of how (or whether it is appropriate) to talk about sex. Don’t let this uncertainty get in the way of your safety: get to know your partners, use a condom, and be aware of safer sex practices. If you are not certain that you are open to a sexual encounter, avoid meeting a potential partner alone or in an isolated place. Finally, keep in mind that abortion is illegal in the DR so an unplanned pregnancy can have a very big impact on your life!

4.6 DRUGS

Each year, 2,500 U.S. Americans are arrested abroad, 1/3 of these arrests for possession of illegal drugs. So here it is in simple terms: don’t do drugs abroad. If you get caught doing drugs in another country you are fully subject to their laws (which are often more stringent than our own) and chances are good that you will spend time in prison, or worse: some nations have the death penalty for those found guilty of drug trafficking. Being a U.S. citizen gives you no special privileges. The U.S. embassy will not go out of its way to help you out. The Marines will not execute a daring amphibious landing to rescue you. And, your home school can do nothing to intervene other than to call your parents and advise them to hire an international lawyer – fast and at their own expense.

There are three key things to understand about this issue (drawn from a study of U.S. Americans in prison abroad by journalist Peter Laufer):

1. Most nations adhere to the Napoleonic code, which presumes the accused to be guilty until proven innocent.
2. Few nations grant bail between arrest and trial.

3. The State Department will rarely intervene to aid an accused or convicted American for fear of upsetting relations with the host country.

DON'T DO DRUGS ABROAD! Use of illegal drugs is, on top of everything noted above, grounds for being returned home to the US (to your parents' home – not to your college) at your own expense and normally at the forfeit of academic credit (and tuition dollars) for the term. If you are caught using drugs abroad by the authorities, the only assistance the Faculty Directors and your home campuses will provide is to refer you (and your parents) to legal counsel. We cannot and will not intervene in matters between you and the local authorities. Breaking the law there is simply unacceptable and could be a decision you will spend a lifetime regretting.

4.7 TRAFFIC

Look both ways before you cross, cross in the cross-walk, obey the right-of-way rules. Traffic safety and the roles of drivers and pedestrians are deeply engrained in a car-oriented culture such as the U.S. When going abroad, it's important—essential—to understand that like everything else, traffic rules differ from country to country. In the Dominican Republic and throughout the Caribbean, pedestrians are expected to make way for cars – in the crosswalk, in the middle of the street, even sometimes on the sidewalk. In some areas of the country, chaos rules, livestock may share the roads with cars and buses. You never know when some donkey (or cow, mule, etc) will decide to step out in front of you. Expect vehicles to stop suddenly, for large numbers of people to jump in and out even when in the middle of a traffic flow and look out for bike traffic!

A final word about traffic: given the differences in the traffic rules but also patterns and driving customs, we strongly advise AGAINST ever renting a vehicle and driving yourself while abroad. Public transportation in most nations is far better and more accessible than it is here, so use it! The program strongly advises, however, that you use buses and conchos (shared taxis on pre-set routes) and that you do not EVER use the motoconchos (motorcycle taxis) due to safety concerns.

4.8 POLITICS

Don't read the newspaper? Unfamiliar with what's happening in Washington or New York, let alone the events shaking Paris or Moscow or Delhi? You're in the minority. People around the world, by and large, know a lot about politics and spend a lot of time talking about it. Not just their politics, *our* politics. So it is very important to read up on what's going on in the country you're going to, and what's going on here, too. We can pretty much guarantee you that people will press you for your opinion of the current U.S. administration or the next stop on the globe-trotting war on terror.

You can learn a lot from talking politics with surprisingly well-informed foreigners. Some of you might, however, be on the receiving end of angry talk against the United States. Second to the surprise over how knowledgeable people around the world are about politics is how angry many of them are over U.S. policies. In general people are very good at distinguishing between U.S. Americans and the U.S. government, but in some cases you might feel the need to remind them of this distinction and to diffuse some of the anger by saying that you might not necessarily agree with the policy either. It's an instance where you'll have to use your judgment. As you re-examine some of your values over time, you might also find yourself questioning some of your political beliefs. And you might change other's minds as well. Eventually people all around the world will have to come to the table and talk out their differences...you might as well be in on it early.

SECTION 5: Coming Back

5.1 REGISTRATION & HOUSING

Before you leave for the DR, check with the offices of the Registrar and Residential Life to see how you will register for classes and select housing for next fall semester.

5.2 REENTRY AND READJUSTMENT

This information is designed to help you prepare for the transition back “home”. It is organized into two themes: *Closing the Circle* looks at a few things you can do now to prepare for the next phase of your international experience, coming home (or reentry). *Opening New Doors* suggests ways you can keep your international experience alive and relevant, including information about some of the programs the CGE offers for returning students.

CLOSING THE CIRCLE

Are you ready to leave this place? Have you wrapped up all your academic work? Think back to all the times over the last few months (or in those months of planning and anticipation) that you said “before I leave I’d really like to...” Now’s the time to review this list and see if there’s any way to fit a few more of these things in before you go. We hope this will ignite a lifetime passion of travel and intercultural endeavor on your part, but although many students say they will return to their host country again, in reality most do not. So get out there while you can and have as few regrets as possible.

Think about all the photographs you’ve taken over the last few months. Did you really photograph everything that’s important to you? How about what you see on your walk to class every day? Or your host-family? Do you have a photograph of your favorite café or restaurant, or your host-country friends? Don’t end up with a thousand pictures of churches, temples or castles and none of the things that make up your day-to-day life, because it’s those commonplace details you’ll think-and talk-about most when you’re back.

An idea: do a “day in the life of” photo-shoot. Photograph your whole day from morning till night, so you can visually answer the question “what was a typical day like?”

PACKING UP

Remember the airline weight limits you worried about before you left? They still apply. Check with your airline if you don’t remember what they are. Now might also be a good time to pack up some things you wouldn’t have thought about bringing home otherwise Think of the food you’ve (hopefully) grown to love over the last couple of months. Is there anything you’d like to share with your family, or just have at home for a taste of your host-country on those days when you’re missing it? (Remember you can only bring back dry or canned/jarred food, not fresh meat, agricultural products or cheese.) Are there any recipes you’d like to have? Now’s the time to ask about them and write them down.

Other things you might want to pack up include memories. If you’ve been keeping a journal, the last few weeks are a great time to reflect on your experience. The times in peoples’ lives that are

characterized by change often have a crisper quality to them; every experience seems to be imbued with a deeper meaning. Try to capture this in your writing.

Ask yourself some questions:

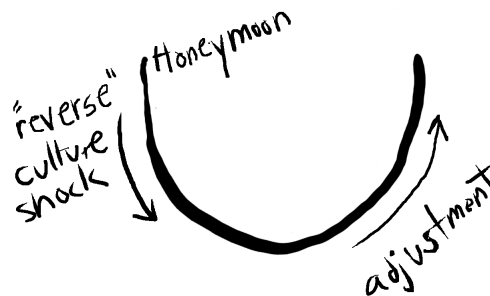
- What did I accomplish while abroad?
- What did I learn about myself?
- What did I learn about this country?
- What friends did I make, and what did they teach me?
- What will I miss the most?
- What am I most looking forward to?
- What does this experience mean for my future? Will I live differently now?
- What did I learn about my own country and culture while abroad?
- Do I want to return to this place? What have I left undone?

You'll want to ask yourself these questions again after you've been home for a while, but thinking about them now can be rewarding and can help you put a little closure on your experience.

COMING HOME

The first (and often surprising) thing to know about coming home is that in many ways you will feel like you did when you arrived in your host country a few months ago: exhausted and excited. Probably it will feel as great to be home as it felt to be in your host country for the first few days, though for different reasons. You'll enjoy some home cooking, calls from old friends, and telling your family about your experiences.

But, just as your initial elation at being in a new and excited place was tempered by a realization at how foreign and unfamiliar it felt, your honeymoon period at home may also start to not seem totally right. Things that you expected to be familiar may now seem quite alien. Your ears might find it weird to hear English being spoken everywhere. You might think your family throws too much away. You may balk at spending \$50 for a meal out when you know your host family lived off that much for a month. The abundance in the supermarket may stop you in your tracks, as you have become used to getting by with less. You may be dismayed at how fast-paced US culture is, or frustrated at how little people actually want to hear about all your experiences (or look at all your pictures). You may not experience every single one of these things, but most of you will experience some of them. The most important thing to realize is that this is totally normal, and the ups and downs you're experiencing constitute what is frequently called "reverse culture shock". It actually often gets mapped just like the U-curve:



The most important step in being ready for reverse culture shock is to expect it, and to realize that most of it is caused not by changes in home, but changes in you. You won't know how far you've come until you can reflect on the journey from the place you call(ed) home. This is actually a great time to not only learn about yourself and how you've grown while abroad, it's also a great time to learn about home from a far more objective perspective than you've ever had before. Lots of students come back saying that they never felt more American than when they were abroad, and never more foreign than when they were back in the US.

The first thing to do is relax. Like culture shock the first time around, you'll get through this, and end up stronger for the experience. You'll have your ups and downs, good days and bad. Some of the same coping skills you used to get yourself through the low points while abroad will serve you well here—reflect in your journals, keep active, rest and eat well, explore your surroundings with new eyes. Soon you will have adjusted, though we hope that you're never quite the same as you were before your experience abroad!