



Middlebury

Middlebury Schools Abroad Evaluation for the 2008-2009 Academic Year/Spring Semester

Evaluating your period of study abroad is one of the most valuable services you can render Middlebury College and future students planning to study abroad, and it is one of the most important ways you can help us maintain the highest possible standards. For this reason, until this form is submitted to International Programs and Off Campus Study a hold will be placed on official Middlebury transcript requests for Middlebury College students who studied at Middlebury Schools Abroad. Please note: If you studied abroad for two semesters on two different programs, you must submit two separate evaluations.

The staff of International Programs and Off Campus Study welcomes the opportunity to hear about your experiences abroad; please feel free to stop by or call and talk with us!

This document contains respondents between 1 and 1 inclusive.

Home Institution

Middlebury College

Other Institution

If other than Middlebury, please indicate your home institution:

.....

With which program did you study?

Middlebury School in China

Middlebury School in France

Middlebury School in Germany

Middlebury School in Italy

Middlebury School in Latin America

Middlebury School in Middle East

Middlebury School in Russia

Middlebury School in Spain

At which site did you study?

- Alexandria
- Beijing (not J-term)
- Belo Horizonte
- Berlin
- Bordeaux
- Buenos Aires
- Concepcion
- Cordoba
- Ferrara
- Florence
- Florianopolis
- Getafe
- Guadalajara
- Hangzhou
- Irkutsk
- Kunming
- La Serena
- Logrono
- Madrid
- Mainz
- Montevideo
- Moscow
- Niteroi
- Pairs
- Poitiers
- Santiago
- Temuco
- Tucuman
- Valdivia
- Valparaiso
- Xalapa

Yaroslavl

What was the period of your study abroad?

- 2008-2009 Fall Semester
- 2008-2009 - Spring Semester
- 2008-2009 - Academic Year
- 2007-2008-2009 - Spring then Fall Semester

Given that overseas educational systems differ significantly from our own, please reflect on your adjustment to your host country's educational environment. What effects did this different academic environment have on how you learned, both inside and outside the classroom? In what ways did you benefit from being in a different academic environment.

I have mixed feelings about my academic experience at La Rioja. On the one hand, of course my Spanish improved tremendously and that was my major goal in going to Logrono. From that standpoint, I'm quite happy with my academic experience. On the other hand, I found that most of my classes were not that stimulating intellectually. One out of my four classes could have actually been taught in the US. The others were either a laughable waste of time or just quite simple. It was difficult for me to be in this kind of academic environment because I had no motivation to work for the classes. I'm a hard worker generally, so I slogged through it but I didn't really enjoy my academic experience the way I do at Middlebury. I had to remind myself that despite how much I disliked some of my classes, at least I was improving my Spanish by going to them.

AFTER studying abroad, how do you now view the differences/similarities between the culture of your host country and that of your own?

Identical

Very Similar

Mostly Similar

Somewhat
Different

Very Different

Please Comment:

Being abroad for that amount of time and in that provincial of a place gave me a new appreciation for American culture. For the past few years, I've taken a generally critical approach to American culture and a more favorable approach to European culture. I would say that my view of the two cultures has balanced considerably. I have a mixed critical-favorable view of both cultures. And in that way, I think it was an important experience for me. I'm glad that I came away with more appreciation for the US and that I feel that I know have a more measured, educated view of both cultures.

How has study abroad influenced your understanding of your host culture? In what ways has it influenced your perceptions of American culture?

Studying in Logrono gave me a much greater understanding of Spanish culture in that I was in a provincial city. Madrid and Barcelona are fabulous cities but fit easily into the metropolitan trend of major European and US cities (well at least NYC, where I'm from). Last summer, I lived in Paris and definitely had a romanticized view of European culture. Living in Logrono deromanticized my views of European culture. I came to appreciate little things in American culture, like grocery stores being open on Sundays, the facility in using credit cards, etc. that I previously hadn't appreciated. I also came to understand how sustainable life is in smaller European cities and still feel that America has a long way to come in living a more sustainable lifestyle, not from an environmental standpoint, but from the standpoint of losing our affinity for the quick and easy solution to our problems, whether it be our dependence on cars or our expectation that everything we could possibly want should be at our beck and call all the time. Our consumer culture, I suppose, would be a better way to say that.

In what ways has study abroad contributed to your personal growth? What personal characteristics did you find most useful during your time abroad?

My ability to travel on my own and to take care of myself (cooking, cleaning) were certainly helpful. I also think that my ability to spend long periods of time by myself was helpful. Being in Logrono was often lonely and, while I would've have preferred to have been less lonely, I'm good at entertaining myself. That includes traveling and sight seeing on my own, I guess.

How has study abroad influenced your academic and career goals? How has it influenced your personal goals?

It has made me wish to pursue languages in whatever career I choose (I also take French) and it has definitely made me more committed to pursuing languages on a personal level. A semester and probably even a year is not enough to be totally fluent in a language and I'm still astounded by how much I have to learn. Academically, at Middlebury, I'll definitely make more of an effort to go to language tables and there is a chance I will pursue a year of graduate study in a foreign language.

What was your housing situation during your study abroad?

- Homestay
- Dormitory/Student Residence/Foyer
- Apartment
- Other (please describe)

Do you feel that your housing situation provided you with an opportunity to integrate into the host culture, and/or provided you a context for gaining insight into the host culture?

					Very helpful in terms of fostering insights and/or my integration
	Not at all - it was isolating	Somewhat helpful, but less than I expected	As helpful as I expected	Somewhat more helpful than I'd expected	
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please comment on your response to the question above.

I lived with 3 Spanish girls around my age. It gave me a chance to practice my Spanish, to observe Spanish eating habits and living habits. Other than that, we weren't exactly friends. We mostly kept to ourselves. That's why I would say it was only a somewhat helpful instead of a very helpful situation. Perhaps that was partially my fault for not being more outgoing, but they weren't either and I felt in the beginning like I was coming into their space instead of into my own space. It took a while for it to feel equally my home.

Did you take courses alongside students from the host country?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes to the question above, how well do you feel that your mainstream classes helped you to develop relationships with nationals of the host country or integrate into the host culture?

- Poor
- Neutral
- Helpful
- Very Helpful
- Not Applicable

Comments

.....

Did you participate in any extra-curricular activities or internships?

- Yes
- No

Please describe the extra-curricular activities or internship in which you participated, and make any additional comments about these activities that you think would be helpful to Middlebury staff or future students.

Limited options in Logrono.

What was the language of the host country?

- Arabic
- Chinese
- French
- German
- Italian
- Portuguese
- Russian
- Spanish

What kind of progress did you make in your listening comprehension of the language?

	No improvement	Little improvement	Improved somewhat	Improved	Very much improved
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

What kind of progress did you make in your ability to read in the language?

	No improvement	Little improvement	Improved somewhat	Improved	Very much improved
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What kind of progress did you make in your ability to write in the language?

	No improvement	Little improvement	Improved somewhat	Improved	Very much improved
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What kind of progress did you make in your ability to speak in the language?

	No improvement	Little improvement	Improved somewhat	Improved	Very much improved
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please comment on the progress you made in your target language. Was it greater or less than you had expected? What do you think were some of the factors that contributed to your progress (or lack thereof), either on your own part or on the part of the program? Do you have any specific suggestions for the program and/or for future students that pertain to language learning?

My listening comprehension improved a ton. My reading and writing skills were already at a good level, so I don't think there was very much room for me to improve besides in adding vocabulary and picking up some colloquial phrases. I wish that my speaking had improved more and, from that standpoint, I wish that I had made Spanish friends. At the end of the day, the Erasmus kids stuck together. We all spoke Spanish with one another, but of course we were all limited in various ways. By the same token, I think I had unrealistic expectations for how much I would improve in a semester. You just won't have all of the experiences necessary to fully round out your vocabulary in that time. But I'm totally comfortable speaking now and feel that I have a good accent so that it's not patronizing for me to speak to native speakers in Spanish. I still make mistakes with verb conjugations, that might be where I wish I improved more the most.

Are there any particular academic strengths of your host university/program that you would recommend to other students?

- Yes
- No

Please explain:

.....

Are there any particular academic weaknesses of which other students should also be aware?

- Yes
- No

Please explain:

.....

Please tell us about the courses you took, including what level (intro/upper/seminar.) If you did an independent study project or internship, please describe it.

Course Title #1

Introduccion a la literatura espanola, siglos XVIII-XX

At which institution/university did you take this course?

Uni. de la Rioja

Means of assessment (e.g., papers, exams, homework, etc.)

1 paper, 2 exams

Please describe the course content:

A broad overview of Spanish literature between these centuries - prose, poetry, and theater.

Please describe the means by which the material/concepts for this course were conveyed, particularly if the teaching style was different from what you are used to.

Lecture 3 times a week, discussion during 1 lecture period every other week or every 2 weeks depending on the length of the current work.

Other comments about this course:

This course was great. We actually analyzed the works we were reading and then learned a lot about the social, economic, political, and religious contexts to each work. I felt like I came away with a great understanding of the works as well as what currents affected Spanish authors at any given time. We read the best authors for the major works and the professor supplemented those works with poetry, letters, and essays during class. It was demanding in a way that you felt accomplished when you succeeded. Having a discussion was wonderful and really challenged my Spanish and increased my knowledge of the books.

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement:

"This course helped me to improve my knowledge about the subject."

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement:

"The instructor's teaching in this course was effective."

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Please tell us about the courses you took, including what level (intro/upper/seminar.) If you did an independent study project or internship, please describe it.

Course Title #2

Historia de la literatura espanola II

At which institution/university did you take this course?

Uni. de la Rioja

Means of assessment (e.g., papers, exams, homework, etc.)

1 paper, 1 exam

Describe course content

An overview of Spanish literature from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Please describe the means by which the material/concepts for this course were conveyed, particularly if the teaching style was different from what you are used to.

Lecture 3 times per week.

Other comments about this course:

I have never taken a worse course. This was the lowest point in my academic experience. It was actually a complete waste of my time. The course materials consisted of going over "schemas" of authors. Our evaluation was based on our ability to recall authors' names and the works they wrote. We never had to read any of the works they wrote or know anything about them besides what movement they fit into (i.e. Religious works, Odes, Historical Writing by the Court, Historical Writing by Conquistadores, etc.). We were assigned various books that we were told would show up in the course and on the exam, neither of which was true. We never discussed even one of the books we were assigned. The exam didn't have one question asking about any of the books we were meant to read. We spent class time listening to the professor make sexual innuendos and go over maybe a poem. I cannot express enough my deep disappointment in this class. And my anger, since I never felt that I was given a chance to show any of my efforts at studying and keeping pace with the work. Class participation was discouraged.

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement:

"This course helped me to improve my knowledge about the subject."

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement:

"The instructor's teaching in this course was effective."

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please tell us about the courses you took, including what level (intro/upper/seminar.) If you did an independent study project or internship, please describe it.

Course Title #3

Política social de la Union Europea.

At which institution/university did you take this course?

Uni. de la Rioja

Means of assessment (e.g., papers, exams, homework, etc.)

2 exams, 1 group project

Describe course content

Overview of the history and structure of the EU and a brief look at its social politics.

Please describe the means by which the material/concepts for this course were conveyed, particularly if the teaching style was different from what you are used to.

2 lectures a week.

Other comments about this course:

This course was only interesting to me in that I knew very little about the details of the European Union. Everything I learned I could have read on Wikipedia, however. We never went beyond the basics. We actually never did any work with social politics until the end of the course in our final projects, which meant that I learned what my project was on and that was about it. The professor had no control over the classroom. All of the students besides the front row and the Erasmus kids were disrespectful.

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement:

"This course helped me to improve my knowledge about the subject."

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement:

"The instructor's teaching in this course was effective."

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please tell us about the courses you took, including what level (intro/upper/seminar.) If you did an independent study project or internship, please describe it.

Course Title #4

Fundamentos de psicología

At which institution/university did you take this course?

Uni. de la Rioja

Means of assessment (e.g., papers, exams, homework, etc.)

1 exam, 1 lab experiment and report, class participation

Describe course content

Basic psychology introduction.

Please describe the means by which the material/concepts for this course were conveyed, particularly if the teaching style was different from what you are used to.

2 lectures per week

Other comments about this course:

I enjoyed this course. I had never taken psych, so I definitely learned a lot. The professor really emphasized class participation and it was in this class that I had the most contact with Spanish kids. We did a lot of in-class practice and simulated lab experiments, which was interesting and got me involved. On the other hand, the information was so basic that this class never would have been taught in the US. It was more basic than our AP Psych class in high school that my close friends took. Our "lab experiment" didn't have to be done. What I mean is, we just had to think up an experiment and then make up the results, which I found strange.

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement:

"This course helped me to improve my knowledge about the subject."

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the following statement:

"The instructor's teaching in this course was effective."

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the following questions, please rate your experience with Middlebury staff and staff abroad using the five-point scales provided.

Did Middlebury provide you with adequate information prior to departure?

	Poor		Good		Excellent
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Did Middlebury provide you with an appropriate orientation on arrival?

	Poor		Good		Excellent
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Did Middlebury provide you with sufficient support while you were abroad?

	Poor		Good		Excellent
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Did you see or experience any form of discrimination or harassment in your host country?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes to the question above, what advice would you give to future students? Likewise, if you have advice for Middlebury staff, please share that as well.

I only said yes so that I could write in this box. I didn't experience harassment necessarily, but I think it is important to let girls on the program know that Spanish men are much more aggressive than American men. I already expected this having lived in Cadiz a few summers ago and Paris last summer, but the whistling, the catcalls, etc. are much more forward. We were only followed once by a man and that was the only time I even remotely felt in danger, but maybe someone else less informed would've been more taken aback.

Would you recommend that other students attend this program or university? Why or why not?

- Yes
- No

Please explain:

I think it is extremely important for Middlebury to offer a northern Spain study abroad option. The possibilities for travel up there are incredible and Michelle and I definitely took advantage. The linguistic and cultural variations that run across the northern band of Spain in such a condensed space are amazing and it was cool to be in among it. That being said, I was unimpressed with Logrono. I can't understand why Middlebury has a program in that city. I found the city really quite boring. There didn't seem to be that many young people around and the Erasmus program was tiny. While that was in some ways a good thing, it limited the amount of friends you had. Because while the goal is to become friends with Spanish students, in reality most of your friends will be Erasmus students. While it was a good place to travel from, Logrono was small and didn't have a lively vibe. On top of that, I was academically disappointed although I wouldn't have traded the experience because my Spanish improved a ton. I just think that all of that could have happened in a different northern city like Bilbao, Zaragoza, San Sebastian, or Pamplona.

What advice would you give to other students considering study abroad in general, and this program or university in particular?

1. For Uni de la Rioja, try to take classes all in the same year and the same facultad. It was hard to make Spanish friends because I was in 3 facultades and in different years. Spanish kids all study together in one facultad so that is how friend groups seem to be organized. 2. Travel a lot. There isn't much going on in Logrono but there is so much to see in northern Spain and it is so easy to see. 3. Don't ever take a class with Francisco Matito. His forms of evaluation were unrelated to assigned work and most class work. He often made me feel uncomfortable by having me sit next to him so our legs were touching in class or by touching my hand or my arm. He never respected our time - would show up 15-20 minutes late and hold us 10 minutes after. 4. Teach English. A lot of people in Logrono want to learn and it's a great way to feel like you have a family there. We had 2 families there than really took us under their wings and made us feel at home. I almost went to the ER and if I had to, I definitely would have felt comfortable calling Violeta, the mother of one family. It's also a good way to make a bit of money and to fill some free time. There aren't many good internship options or even extracurricular options in Logrono, but I taught a few hours of English a week which I enjoyed.

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE STUDENTS ONLY: Did you attend Middlebury's on-campus pre-departure orientation meeting(s)?

- Yes
 No

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE STUDENTS ONLY: Did you find the pre-departure meetings and handouts useful?

- Yes
 No
 N/A - Did not attend meetings

ALL STUDENTS: What aspects of the pre-departure process did you find particularly useful (or not), and how would you recommend that we improve the pre-departure meeting or supplemental materials?

Everything was great.

ALL STUDENTS: Would you like to make an appointment (in person or phone) with International Programs and Off-Campus Study to discuss your study abroad experience?

- Yes
 No

MIDDLEBURY STUDENTS ONLY: Would you be interested in volunteering your time to help with pre-departure orientations and/or other study abroad meetings or promotional activities?

- Yes
 No

ALL STUDENTS: May we use your comments in future publications?

- Yes
 No