Study Abroad:
A Pre-Departure Handbook

A guide for Middlebury students participating in study abroad programs not administered by Middlebury College (externally-sponsored programs)

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Please note that information in this Handbook is subject to change.

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Please contact International Programs (studyabroad@middlebury.edu) if you are interested in a list of resources used in compiling this handbook.

Photos courtesy of student submissions for the Study Abroad Photo Contest.
Welcome

Dear Study Abroad Student,

Congratulations on your decision to study abroad! You are about to embark on what promises to be one of the most significant experiences of your life.

We in International Programs are here to help you plan for study abroad, keep in touch with you while you are away, and when you return we want to hear about your experience and help you re-integrate it back into your life at Middlebury. This handbook is one tool in this process. The hope is that this handbook, in conjunction with advising by International Programs and your academic adviser, pre-departure orientation meetings, and information you receive from your host program or university, will be useful to you in planning to make your study abroad the best experience it can be. You should also, of course, plan to do research and exploration on your own to learn as much as you can about where you will be studying.

As you know, study abroad can enrich your undergraduate education, broaden your worldview, deepen your intellectual and personal maturity, foster self-confidence and independent thinking, and enhance your career prospects, among many other things. We wish you the best in this experience! Don't hesitate to contact me at any point in your study abroad experience if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Stacey Woody Thebodo, Assistant Director and Adviser for Externally-Sponsored Programs
International Programs
Middlebury College
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1. Pre-Departure Logistics

Passport
One of the first things you should do in preparing for your study abroad experience is obtain a passport. If you do not currently have a passport that is valid at least six months after your program abroad ends, you must apply for or renew your passport immediately. It can take from four to six weeks or more, and student visas cannot be issued without a valid passport.

New passports cost $135 (including processing fee), and if you are renewing your passport, the cost is $110 (if you qualify to renew by mail).

In Middlebury you can apply for a passport at the Court House (next to Shaw’s) or at the U.S. Post Office on Main Street. To apply for a passport, you will need:

- Completed passport application (see http://travel.state.gov/passport/);
- Passport application fee;
- Valid proof of citizenship [e.g., an expired U.S. passport, a certified (original) birth certificate];
- Proof of identity (a valid driver's license or government identification card, provided they identify you by physical description or photograph);
- Two identical 2 x 2-inch passport photographs taken within six months of applying for your passport. In Middlebury, you can get your passport photograph taken at several locations:
  - Kinney Drugs (Rt. 7 South, 388-0973)
  - The UPS Store (40 Court Street, 388-3020)
  - U.S. Post Office (10 Main Street, 388-2681)
Prices for two passport photos range from $8 to $15. Passport photos must be on photo quality paper as well as meet other requirements (see web site for details).

Important Note: If you already have a passport, many countries require that your passport be valid for six months beyond the dates of your trip. Also, some Middle Eastern and African countries will not allow entry if your passport indicates travel to Israel; check with the embassy or consulate of the country in which you will be studying for their requirements.

More information and passport application: http://travel.state.gov/passport/
Student Visa
A visa is an endorsement stamped into your passport by a foreign government, allowing you to stay in their country for a specific purpose and period of time. Most countries require you to have a student visa in order to enter the country and stay there legally as a student.

Each country has its own rules, so you will need to check on the regulations for the country in which you will be studying. If you are studying abroad on a program with a U.S. Sponsor (e.g., Arcadia, CIEE, DIS, IFSA-Butler, SIT Study Abroad, etc.), the program sponsor will most likely give you instructions on how to obtain your student visa. Otherwise, you will need to check with the embassy or nearest consulate regarding requirements. Many countries require that you apply through the consular office that has jurisdiction over your primary area of residence. Contact information for embassies or consulates is on the web at http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/dpl/32122.htm

In order to obtain a student visa, one or more of the following may be required:
- Current, valid passport
- Visa application form
- Visa application fee
- One or more passport-size photographs
- Letter of acceptance from the host institution
- Evidence of financial support during your period of study abroad
- Physical examination
- Proof of medical insurance
- Police record from Vermont and/or your home state
- A negative HIV test

If you plan to travel to other countries within your period of study abroad or after your program finishes, check the entrance requirements of each country before you leave home. **It is your responsibility to make sure you have proper documentation abroad.**

**International students**, please remember that study abroad may affect your international student status. You must speak with International Student & Scholar Services (Carr Hall, x5858) to discuss your plans well in advance of studying abroad.

**Important Note:** DO NOT wait until the last minute to apply for your student visa. As with passports, this can take many weeks to process, and if you do not have a valid student visa (and passport), you could miss your flight and/or program.

**Registering at the Embassy**
All U.S. citizens should register themselves with the U.S. Embassy in their country of destination before departure from the U.S. In the event of international, political, or family emergencies, or in the event that your passport is lost or stolen, the U.S. Embassy is much better able to assist registered citizens. You can complete this process online through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at https://step.state.gov/step/.

Print the confirmation page after you have registered; leave one copy at home and take one with you. Students of other nationalities should check with their own embassies to see if it is possible to register prior to departure.
Flight Arrangements
You should start looking into arrangements for your flight as early as possible. However, do NOT book your ticket before you are accepted to your program/university abroad and pre-approved by Middlebury. The sponsoring organization or your host university can tell you the exact date you are expected to be there (usually for orientation) and when your program or university session is scheduled to end. Be sure you find out when the exams are scheduled to end, not just the coursework, as Middlebury requires you to sit for all exams where and when they are offered. If the exam schedule is not set until after the semester begins, and/or if you are unsure of your post-semester travel plans, be sure your ticket allows for one low-cost change. When shopping around for flights, check into student fares and/or discounts. Some travel companies to help you get started are listed below.

In Vermont:

AAA
800-878-8233
http://www.northernnewengland.aaa.com/home.html

Accent Travel/American Express (Middlebury)
802-388-3125
http://www.accenttravel.com/

Milne Travel (Middlebury)
802-388-6600
http://www.milnetravel.com/

Other:

AESU Travel
800-638-7640
http://www.aesu.com/

Kayak
http://www.kayak.com/

STA Travel
800-781-4040
http://www.statravel.com

Student Universe
http://www.studentuniverse.com/

Travel Cuts
http://www.travelcuts.com/
Absentee Voting
If you wish to vote in any U.S. election, you should make arrangements for an absentee ballot before leaving the country. Visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program at www.fvap.gov and check your state’s requirements.

Personal Property Insurance
You should consider purchasing insurance to cover loss of personal possessions while abroad. It is possible that you may be covered under a policy held by your parents, so investigate this prior to departure. Inexpensive but limited travel insurance coverage can be found at www.insuremytrip.com.

International Student ID Card
The International Student Identity Card (ISIC), available through STA Travel, is issued and recognized in over 90 countries and gives you access to student benefits around the world. The cost is $25 (plus postage and handling), and entitles you to discounts on airfare, transportation, attractions, and accommodations, as well as basic sickness and accident insurance (which you should supplement with additional insurance; see Health Issues), and more. You can purchase your ISIC at www.statravel.com/discount-cards.htm.

Staying in Touch
There is no shortage of free and low-cost methods for contacting friends and family in the U.S. and elsewhere overseas. Free services are often web-based and require reliable Internet access. Computer-to-computer and computer-to-phone calling service providers include:
FaceTime (apple.com/mac/facetime)
Google through Gmail, Hangout, Talk, and Voice (www.google.com/talk and www.google.com/googlevoice/about.html#)
Skype (www.skype.com)

Cell Phones
Depending on the country, it may be more economical and/or more convenient for in-country communication to purchase a cell phone upon arrival. Often buying a GSM phone that takes a rechargeable SIM card can be an affordable option. If you intend to use your U.S. cell phone while abroad, contact your cell phone provider about options for managing your account while you are abroad. For a summary of cell phone tips, see www.studyabroad.com/pages/sitecontent/parent_guide_cell.aspx.
2. Packing

Pack Lightly!
It is nearly impossible to take everything you want, and remember, you are the one who has to carry your belongings. A common suggestion is to pack your bags, then carry them around the block and up and down some stairs; then, re-evaluate what is really necessary to take. Another method is to lay out everything you want to take and then reduce it by half. Also, remember that every airline has restrictions on how many bags you can check and carry and how much they can weigh, with hefty charges for going over the limit. Check with the airline before you leave home. Keep in mind, as well, that you will acquire things while abroad that you will want to bring back, so consider taking an empty suitcase with you or purchase one there.

Checklist of packing suggestions:

**Documents**
- passport and visa
- photocopy of passport
- credit cards, debit card, currency from your host country
- money belt and/or passport pouch
- proof of insurance, insurance card and insurance claim forms
- personal medical records
- acceptance letter from your host university and/or approval letter from Middlebury
- travel information and in-country staff contact information provided by your sponsoring program or university abroad
- your academic adviser’s phone number and email address
- extra passport-size photos for any ID cards you may need abroad

**Medical/Health**
- prescription medications in original containers and copies of prescriptions in generic form
- contraceptives
- eyeglasses/contact lenses, including extras and prescriptions
- travel first aid kit and sewing kit

**Travel Practicalities**
- converter and/or electrical adapter
- camera and equipment
- travel alarm clock
- language dictionary
- country travel guide
- photos of your family and friends, Middlebury, and your home
- gift items for your host family and/or other friends you meet abroad
- toiletries, including feminine products
- dress outfit and shoes
- swimming suit and exercise clothes
- robe and slippers, especially for those who will live in dorms
3. Money Matters

Managing your money abroad can be challenging, and advance planning is important. Before you go, pay attention to the exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the currency of your host country, and learn to think in the foreign currency. Check out x-rates.com or xe.com to get started.

Fees for Study Abroad

Look closely at program fees. Often there are significant living and transportation expenses for which you must plan and budget. In general, most study abroad experiences can be achieved well within the total cost of a semester or year at Middlebury. Students returning from study abroad are good sources of information about the real expenses of study abroad.

Middlebury study abroad fee

All Middlebury students studying abroad are charged a non-refundable administrative fee of $1,500 per semester abroad. Be sure to notify your parents/guardians of this fee, which covers some of the costs associated with the administration of the study abroad process.

How Much to Take

Your program or university's international office should be able to provide you with estimates of how much spending money you will need. Also, consult students who have returned from studying in your destination city or country. International Programs can provide you with a list of returned study abroad students.

Keep in mind that the amount of money you spend depends on the lifestyle you choose. One returned study abroad student noted, “I would even make a direct relationship here: the less money you spend, the better the experience. The more money you spend, the more you alienate yourself from the experience and miss a main point of the program.”

Students who plan to regularly shop or sample the nightlife of their host city should budget extra money, likewise if you are planning to travel before or after your program. The rise of no-frills airlines has made regional air travel competitive with train and bus travel if seeing your host country or region is a priority.

Lastly, be sure to take enough money to last you for the first month or two. Those relying on financial aid should note that it may take several weeks after the start of your program for funds to be disbursed. See the box on the following page which lists common expenses for which you should budget.

How to Carry Your Money

No traveler should carry large amounts of cash, but it is a good idea to change a small amount of money into the foreign currency before you arrive in your host country. You can change money at any international airport; however, the exchange rates and fees are not the most favorable. You can carry the rest of your money in the form of traveler's checks, credit cards, and/or an international bank draft or bank check, drawn in the currency of your host country. Check with your program or with the international office at your host university to find out the best way to transport your money to your particular host country.
Banking
You may want to open a bank account at a local bank when you arrive. This may be more convenient and less expensive than withdrawing funds from a U.S. account. Your resident director or the international office staff can advise you how to do this. Be sure to ask if there are any restrictions for international students.

ATMs
In many countries around the world, you can use your ATM card from home to withdraw money from your U.S. account in the local currency. If your card has either a Visa or MasterCard logo, you can use it in machines that bear these symbols, and you can also use it to make purchases similar to a credit card. Check with your bank at home for transaction fees, as well as making sure your PIN is valid abroad. Know that you might be hit with two fees for each transaction, one from your U.S. bank and one from the local bank whose ATM you are using. You should also notify your bank that you will be abroad, so they will not assume fraudulent activity and freeze your account. For security, use only use ATMs attached to banks.

Traveler’s Checks
Traveler’s checks have declined in popularity with the rise of plastic, but are still a safe way to carry money. Each check is identified by a serial number which you should write down and keep separate from the originals. If your checks are lost or stolen, the full amount can be reimbursed with these numbers. You can purchase traveler’s checks at many U.S. banks, and they can be exchanged at banks and money changing houses (e.g., Bureau de Change) overseas. You will have to show identification for changing checks, so bring your passport. Be aware that there is usually a 2-3% transaction fee for converting checks to cash.

Credit Cards
In most places around the world, it is a good idea to have a credit card for either everyday purchases and/or for emergencies. Credit cards can be useful for large purchases or for hotel or travel reservations, and they can be used for obtaining cash advances from banks. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are the most widely accepted. Check with your credit card provider about foreign transaction fees which typically hover around 3% per transaction. You may want to consider getting a credit card with no annual fee or foreign transaction fee for the duration of your time abroad. See www.cardhub.com/credit-cards/foreign-transaction-fee/.

Wire Transfer
A wire transfer is an electronic transfer of funds from one bank account to another. Fees for international wire transfers vary, but they are relatively expensive. In some cases you may have to establish an account abroad in order to receive the money. Some students open a local account abroad and make a few transfers of larger sums to reduce fees.

Checks and Bank Drafts
In most countries checking accounts are not as widely used as they are in the U.S. Do not rely on being able to cash personal checks from your own account or from your parents. If you carry an American Express card, you may be able to cash personal checks at an American Express office.
A foreign currency draft is like a bank check in a foreign currency. From a U.S. bank, you purchase a check in, say, British pounds and have it mailed to a recipient in the U.K. who can cash or deposit it there. The exchange rate is not likely to be very favorable, nor is it the most expedient method.

**Common Study Abroad Expenses**

- tuition
- room/accommodation
- meals (board)
- university fees
- study abroad fee ($1500/semester)
- airfare
- transportation in-country
- passport/visa
- immunizations/preventive medicines
- books and supplies
- communication (phone, Internet, postage)
- health insurance
- taxes
- clothes
- gifts
- recreation and travel
- expenses for any breaks
- personal expenses

**Financial Aid**

U.S. citizens eligible to receive federal grants and loans can usually apply these to any kind of approved study abroad. Check with the Office of Student Financial Services for more detailed information:

[www.middlebury.edu/offices/support/sfs/aid_apply/study_abroad](http://www.middlebury.edu/offices/support/sfs/aid_apply/study_abroad)

For more information on outside financial aid sources and scholarships:

[www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/what_to_know/scholarships](http://www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/what_to_know/scholarships)

Working out financial aid arrangements for studying abroad requires more time and paperwork than staying at Middlebury. This should not discourage you, but you need to be especially diligent in seeing that things are done in a timely manner. For externally-sponsored programs, after you are approved to study abroad, you must have a consortium agreement completed by your host program or university. Consortium agreements are available from Student Financial Services ([www.middlebury.edu/offices/support/sfs/forms](http://www.middlebury.edu/offices/support/sfs/forms)); they should be completed as soon as possible and returned to Middlebury’s Student Financial Services Office.
Middlebury grant and loan financial aid is available for:

■ Students who study at C.V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad

■ Students who are pre-approved International and Global Studies majors with a focus in South Asian Studies who study abroad outside of India (IGS/South Asia majors with a focus on India are normally expected to study at the Middlebury School in India)

■ Students who are pre-approved International and Global Studies majors with a focus in African Studies (with a language focus other than French) who study abroad in Africa (IGS/AS majors with a French language focus are normally expected to study at the Middlebury School in Cameroon)

■ IP&E majors with a focus on Africa and a language focus other than French, who study abroad in Africa (IP&E majors with a French language focus are normally expected to study at the Middlebury School in Cameroon)

■ Students on official exchange programs

■ Classics and Classical Studies majors on approved programs in Greece or Italy

Middlebury grant and loan financial aid is NOT available for:

■ Study in countries/programs where English is the official language or lingua franca (this includes Middlebury's affiliation with Lincoln College/Oxford University), except at the Middlebury-CMRS program or as part of an official exchange program

■ SIT Study Abroad programs, unless a student is studying in Africa or South Asia as a pre-approved IGS or IP&E major, according to the above language policies (scholarships are available directly from SIT on a competitive basis)

■ International students who seek to study on an externally-sponsored program in their home country
4. Academic & Administrative Matters

Middlebury Approval
You must be approved by Middlebury in order to receive credit for your study abroad experience. You are required to submit an application to International Programs by February 1st of your sophomore year. For more information, please see the Study Abroad Guidelines (www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/guidelines) and speak to an adviser in International Programs.

Grades
All of your courses must be graded. Courses taken pass/fail or audit are not eligible for transfer credit. All grades earned on approved study abroad programs will be recorded on the Middlebury transcript and will be calculated into the Middlebury grade point average. This includes failing grades. International Programs has grade conversion charts for universities that use different grading systems than Middlebury. These grade conversion charts are sent to students the summer prior to study abroad. Contact Stacey Thebodo (sthebodo@middlebury.edu) if you need a grade conversion chart for your university.

Transcripts
At the end of your semester or year abroad, your program or university should send an official transcript directly to:

Stacey Thebodo, Assistant Director
International Programs
Sunderland Language Center
Middlebury College
Middlebury, VT 05753 USA

Do not assume your program or university knows where to send your transcript; please double-check that they have the correct information. In addition, please be sure that the transcript is sent directly from your host university to our office (hand-carried transcripts are not accepted). It is your responsibility to request a transcript.

Independent Studies, Fieldwork and Internships
If an independent study project is part of your program (e.g., SIT programs) or if you participate in an internship, you must bring your project and any work back to campus to be reviewed by a Middlebury faculty member. Credit will only be transferred after this faculty member has read and approved your independent study and/or internship work. Failure of the work to meet Middlebury's standards may jeopardize the transfer of credit. It is strongly recommended that before you go abroad, you identify a Middlebury faculty member who is willing to read and evaluate your independent study project. Also remember that independent study projects on SIT programs in French- or Spanish-speaking countries must be written in the language (i.e. not in English).

Research Abroad
Consider taking advantage of the academic and other educational resources abroad to incorporate into a senior thesis or research project when you return to Middlebury. Study abroad is an excellent opportunity to do first-hand fieldwork in a wide variety of disciplines. You should consult with your academic adviser in advance of study abroad, or while abroad, to generate ideas for research projects and research methods.
Depending on the type of research project, you may also need to clear the projects with Middlebury’s Institutional Review Board. See [http://middlebury.edu/offices/academic/irb](http://middlebury.edu/offices/academic/irb) for more details.

**Course Selection and Transfer Credit**

Please keep in mind the following information regarding selecting your courses abroad and transfer credit:

1) Select the courses you take abroad with a careful eye to what might or might not receive college and/or major credit on your return. In other words, **select liberal arts courses** (do NOT take courses of a pre-professional nature, such as business, journalism, engineering, nursing, communications, etc.). Select courses at an appropriate level that do not duplicate coursework you have already completed at Middlebury.

2) You must take a **normal full course load** (not a minimum full load) as defined by your host university of liberal arts courses. Where course loads are measured according to the U.S. system of “credit hours,” this would mean 15-16 credit hours per semester (NOT 12); where credits are measured according to ECTS credits, the normal full course load is 30 ECTS credits per semester. Lighter loads will jeopardize credit transfer; heavier loads may be taken, but you should not plan to make up courses while abroad since Middlebury does not grant extra credit for an overload of courses.

3) You are required to take exams in all courses in which they are offered, whether voluntary or not. This means that Middlebury students are required to sit for exams at the same time and place as students in the host country. You may not avail yourself of any exceptions offered to visiting students in order to avoid the sometimes long reading period between the end of classes and final exams. Please note this is a Middlebury requirement even if your host university gives you the option of not taking exams.

4) To receive major, minor, or distribution credit for courses taken abroad, you will need to have such courses individually approved by the appropriate department chair or program director. Many courses have been approved in the past and can be found in the Course Information Database ([www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/cid](http://www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/cid)). For courses that have not yet been approved, students must bring back all syllabi, bibliographies, assignments, and written work for evaluation by the appropriate department chair or program director and complete a Transfer Credit Application Form ([www.middlebury.edu/media/view/266874/original/newtransfercreditform12407.pdf](http://www.middlebury.edu/media/view/266874/original/newtransfercreditform12407.pdf)).

**Please note:** Students planning to take introductory courses in economics, computer science, or mathematics should be aware that many entry-level courses abroad in these disciplines may not be considered equivalent to a Middlebury course and may therefore not receive credit. Students wishing to take an entry-level course in one of these disciplines are advised to seek pre-approval from the appropriate department chair by forwarding him/her the course description and syllabus along with your request.

5) You must also complete an evaluation of your study abroad experience in order to receive transfer credit. An evaluation form will be made available to you after you return to Middlebury.

In addition, there are other requirements specific to certain countries and programs; please read the study abroad pre-departure information carefully, and also see the Study Abroad Guidelines for more information ([www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/guidelines](http://www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/guidelines)).
Academic Environment Abroad

In deciding to study abroad, students should be aware and be prepared to accept that educational philosophies overseas differ substantially from those dominant at U.S. colleges and universities. While the American higher educational system is based on contract-like relations between faculty and students and continuous assessment, foreign educational cultures place primary responsibility for learning on the individual student. This is generally also true of overseas programs that are administered by a U.S. college or university, since in most cases their teachers are drawn from local institutions.

The experience of studying abroad will be very different from what you are accustomed to at home. This is one of the purposes of study abroad – to do something different. To put it simply, probably the biggest difference between most overseas institutions and U.S. higher education is the approach that the host institution will have to you as a student. They will work under the assumption that you are an adult and a serious learner who takes responsibility for your education. In most countries it is highly unusual for professors to go out of their way to ensure that you are doing your work. Chances are your progress will not be closely monitored by your professors, and you will not be told (without asking) how or when to do the work that is expected of you. That said, most professors are pleased to interact with students who seek them out. Needless to say, you will be expected to turn in papers and assignments on time and to perform successfully on exams.

In many countries you will find large lectures similar to those at large universities in the U.S. as well as smaller classes or seminars, and sometimes small-group or one-on-one tutorials. Participation is often not expected in lectures, but you are usually expected to fully participate in tutorials and seminars, as this is your opportunity to discuss the material. Science, language, and psychology courses will often have labs required as part of the course. You may be assessed by assignments, papers, and exams, just as you are at Middlebury; however, in many countries the majority of your grade for the course may be determined by how you perform on the final examination.

Admission to foreign universities is usually very different from the admissions process at U.S. institutions. In many countries students are not admitted to universities as a whole, but rather to a particular course of study within the university. Often students have a lot more preparation for their particular subject and much less flexibility in taking courses outside of their course of study. The concept of a "liberal arts education" is unique to the United States. Keep this in mind when you select your courses abroad, as you will need to be very careful that you meet any pre-requisites that are listed for each course. Keep in mind, as well, that what you may perceive as a more casual approach to coursework among your peers at overseas universities is a consequence of the fact that they often have several opportunities to take final exams in any given course, where you will have only one chance.

Another difference you may find abroad is that of available resources, or lack thereof, such as libraries and computers. In many countries libraries are not as willing to loan out books, and you may have to visit several libraries in order to complete a paper or assignment. Also, computers are not as plentiful, and hours of computer labs are not as long or as late as you are probably used to at Middlebury. You may even realize how lucky you are at Middlebury to have these things at your fingertips.

Of course no generalization will apply in every case, and some programs (such as more field-oriented programs) do not fall under these general guidelines, but wherever you go or whatever program in which you participate, expect some significant
Embrace this challenge as a unique educational and cultural opportunity. You would not have been approved for study abroad if it was not felt that you were up for the academic challenge.

**Honor Code**
All students studying abroad, whether a Middlebury student on an externally sponsored program, or a student from any institution at a Middlebury School Abroad, are considered Middlebury students and are expected to uphold complete intellectual and academic honesty in the preparation of all academic work and exams. Violations will be evaluated and discipline will be determined by the externally sponsored program or host university, as applicable. This may include resolution through processes designated by that program, or through Middlebury College’s academic disciplinary process, as appropriate.

Middlebury reserves the right to take disciplinary action upon a student’s return to Middlebury, if deemed appropriate by the Dean of International Programs and the Judicial Affairs Officer, in consultation with others. Students may not seek to appeal at Middlebury any disciplinary procedures determined or conducted by the externally sponsored program or host university.

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**Principles for Incorporating Grades from Non-Middlebury Programs into GPA**
Adopted by Educational Affairs Committee April 2003

When a student’s application to study abroad is approved by the Programs Abroad Committee, the approval will indicate the number of units of credit that the student will receive upon successful completion of the program: 9 units (full academic year), 5 units (one semester and Winter Term), or 4 units (one semester).

Assuming enrollment in a normal full load of coursework as outlined in the student’s approval letter, the number of courses will be divided into the number of credits the student will receive to determine the weight to be assigned each course in the calculation of GPA. For example, if a student is enrolled in 5 courses in a 4-unit program, each course would be assigned a weight of .80. If a student is enrolled in 4 courses in a 5-unit program, each course would be assigned a weight of 1.25. These calculations will be carried out to the second decimal place. If truncating a weight after the second decimal point does not produce a sum that is equal to 4.00, 5.00, or 9.00, weights will be rounded up as necessary. The higher weights will be assigned to the courses in which the student received higher grades.

Normally, as is the case with courses taught on the Middlebury campus, all courses in which a student is enrolled will be assigned an equal weight in the computation of the GPA, regardless of the number of contact hours. However, if the transcript issued by the program abroad clearly indicated that a course was a double course or a half course, the calculation of course weights will be adjusted to reflect this.

Only grades that are reported on an A-F scale, or that can be converted to an A-F scale, will be used in the calculation of the GPA, including grades of D and F. Per general college policy, courses graded on a pass/fail or audit basis will not be transferred. Because the Middlebury faculty voted to eliminate the A+ grade, grades of A+ will be converted to A on the Middlebury transcript.

Since the weight to be assigned to each grade is a matter of calculation, not assessment, students may not appeal the determinations of International Programs or the Registrar’s Office regarding the weight to be assigned to a course. Students who wish to appeal their grade in a course may do so using the grade appeal procedures established by the program or by the International Office of the institution at which they were enrolled.
5. Health Issues

Travel and study abroad will most certainly affect your health in one way or another, as many factors that influence your daily health have to do with lifestyle and environment, not to mention that good health, or lack thereof, will have a significant impact on the success and enjoyment of your time abroad. Be sure to plan ahead properly by considering the following health issues.

See Your Health Care Practitioners
It is a good idea to visit your family physician, dentist, gynecologist, and any other health care practitioners that you regularly see. Make sure your health records are up-to-date and that you discuss any medical issues you have that may affect your experience abroad. Take copies of your medical records with you abroad, especially if you have specific medical conditions or if you expect to need medical care abroad. Also, be sure you have an adequate supply of any prescription medications (in their original containers) with you. You will need a physician's prescription (in generic form) for medication and medical supplies to pass through customs in your host country.

Immunizations
Some countries require specific immunizations in order to enter, and there are also immunizations recommended for travel to specific areas of the world. Be sure to check this out well in advance of your departure, as some immunizations require a series of vaccinations starting many months before your scheduled travel.

Check with health care providers or your own records to ensure that your immunizations (e.g., tetanus and polio) are up-to-date. Under the International Health Regulations adopted by the World Health Organization, a country may require International Certificates of Vaccination against yellow fever, and a cholera immunization may be required if you are traveling from an infected area. Prophylactic medication for malaria and certain other preventive measures are advisable for travel to some countries. No immunizations are required to return to the United States.

An increasing number of countries have established regulations regarding AIDS testing, particularly for long-term visitors. Check with the embassy or consulate of the country you plan to visit to verify if this is a requirement for entry.

Detailed health information can be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

www.cdc.gov/travel

It is very important to discuss these guidelines and recommendations with your own physician.
Medical Insurance

**VERY IMPORTANT:** You must be sure that you have adequate health insurance coverage abroad. Check your policy to see what coverage it provides for medical services overseas. Take your insurance card with you, as well as any claim forms you will need. Be sure you have coverage for medical evacuation, in the rare case that you would have to be flown back to the U.S. (or to a different country) for medical treatment, and for repatriation of remains. Also, check that your policy covers any continuing treatment you may need for newly acquired medical conditions after you return home. The International Student Identity Card (see Pre-Departure Logistics) provides some basic accident and sickness insurance, but you should supplement this with additional coverage.

If you need to purchase coverage for your time abroad, International Programs recommends enrolling in a program designed for Middlebury students through HTH Worldwide. To enroll online, go to [www.hthstudents.com](http://www.hthstudents.com) and enter the code EWH-9608 on the home page under “Enroll in your school or organization’s group plan.” This will allow you to enroll in the group policy with a credit card payment. A list of other insurance providers can be found at [http://www.studyabroad.com/pages/sitecontent/marketplace_insurance.aspx](http://www.studyabroad.com/pages/sitecontent/marketplace_insurance.aspx).

Regardless of the type of insurance you purchase, doctors and hospitals require payment at the time of the visit. You can seek reimbursement from your insurance company only after you have paid the bill and can produce the receipt. Some of these services will take credit cards as payment. You should also have access to emergency funds in case of hospitalization or other emergency medical care, as Middlebury College does not assume these expenses for students. In general, you will find medical care, particularly in the public sector, somewhat less expensive than in the U.S.

Foreign health insurance coverage should be considered complementary to, rather than a substitute for, a U.S. policy. Moreover, such insurance does not guarantee access to a public hospital, where there can be long waiting lists for all but major or emergency ailments, and private hospitals and clinics can be as expensive as their American counterparts. If you intend to travel outside of your host country, please remember that most local health insurance policies will be accepted only within the issuing country’s borders.

**Medical Treatment Abroad**

Be aware that cultural and regional differences also extend into health care. Doctor-patient relationships, the nature of health care delivery, which medications are available, notions of privacy during a medical visit and many more attributes are likely to differ to some degree. Because of cultural differences, travel, and other adjustment concerns, you will need to continue to pay attention to your health (both physical and mental) when you arrive and throughout your program. Be sure you know how to get medical help should you need it, including routine healthcare, as well as emergencies. Make sure you make your medical needs known to anyone in your host country who can be of assistance. Most importantly, give yourself time to adjust to the new culture, and be attentive to your personal well-being—make sure you eat healthy foods and get regular sleep and exercise.

**Assess your health and identify your needs**

Please remember that study abroad is not a magic cure for concerns and problems that you may be having at home. Emotional, psychological, and physical problems will indeed follow you wherever you go. Contrary to popular belief, travel does not minimize these problems; rather, it often can exacerbate them to the point of crisis if you are not careful.
Be clear and honest about your health needs when choosing a study abroad program and when making your housing arrangements. This includes issues such as medical needs, allergies, psychological treatment, dietary requirements, and disabilities. Services for people with disabilities vary widely around the world; if you have questions or concerns about these issues, please feel free to discuss them with staff in the Middlebury ADA Office and in International Programs. If you have any kind of mental health issues or eating disorders, or if you have had in the past, think carefully about your decision to study abroad, and please discuss these issues with your physician and with your mental health practitioner.

### Health questions to consider

- Are there illnesses that are endemic to the region? What medications should you take to prevent these illnesses?
- What is the quality of water in your host country, and what precautions, if any, do you need to take with your drinking water and food preparation?
- What precautions are recommended for safe sexual practices?
- What are the customs, beliefs, and laws in your host country regarding sexual behavior and the use of alcohol and drugs?
- What are the laws in your host country regarding bringing in medications, medical supplies, and contraceptives?
- What kind of medical insurance do you need?
6. Safety and Legal Issues

Safety is an understandable concern and is best approached with a balanced perspective. Crime can happen anywhere, including the United States, and the media plays a key role in intensifying fear. An unreasonable amount of fear will limit your experience; disregarding safety concerns will put you at unnecessary risk. As a study abroad student, you should remain aware that you might stick out, especially when you first arrive.

Always remember that there are things you can do to minimize your risk. The following are precautions you can take to help ensure that your study abroad experience is a safe one: *Read and evaluate all materials provided by your program or university that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in your host country.*

*Review the U.S. State Department’s Travel Advisories/Alerts/Warnings at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).*

*Register with the U.S. Consulate or Embassy having jurisdiction over the area in which you are living (see Pre-departure Logistics).*

*Pay attention to the local conditions. Stay informed about local and regional news, read newspapers with good international coverage and analysis of local issues.*

*You should have valid identification (e.g., a student ID card, a photocopy of your passport, or a driver’s license) with you at all times. Also, leave photocopies at home of all your personal documents (passport, credit cards, etc.).*  

*Your foreign language skills, clothing, body language, and your speech will make you recognizable as a foreigner. Your time might be well spent observing the locals and identifying various ways in which their appearance and demeanor are different from what you are used to. As you adapt to your new surroundings and carry yourself with more confidence and like a local, less attention will gradually be drawn to you.*

*Avoid protests or potentially violent situations or places where Americans are known to congregate. In the event of disturbances, do not get involved.*

*Be street smart. Remember that adjusting to city life is part of the cultural adjustment process, since most cities where students study abroad are much larger than Middlebury, Vermont.*

*Do not carry anything of value in a backpack. Zippers can be opened or material cut with a knife and wallets lifted without anyone seeing or realizing it. Backpacks are also easy to set down, making it easy for anyone to pick them up and walk away. Instead of putting your passport or money in a backpack, buy a small flexible bag that you can hang around your neck and/or a money belt to hide inside clothing. This is absolutely necessary when you change money at a bank. Thieves watch these places and trail their targets after seeing that they have received money. Should you carry a handbag, wear it across your body rather than under your arm, and with the clasp against your body. Do not carry money or valuable papers in your pocket.*
Thieves have a great many tricks that require you to let go of your bag: a person may ask you for directions, obliging you to set down your bag to look at a map, and an accomplice picks up the bag and walks off with it; someone “accidentally” spills something on your coat then courteously insists on helping to clean it off while an accomplice comes along and carries away your belongings.

If you must exchange money, do it at a time when you can go directly home afterwards instead of between classes or before going out at night. In general, never have a large amount of cash on you.

Do not carry house keys, your address, credit/debit cards or personal identification number (PIN), in the same place.

Keep your residence locked and report any suspicious persons hanging around your building or campus.

Make sure your family at home and your resident director, host family, and/or foreign university official knows how to contact you in case of emergency. Leave your itinerary if you are traveling.

Avoid walking alone at night. Go places with friends rather than alone, and do not go to someone else’s home alone or invite anyone to yours. Cultural differences and language difficulties can lead to “misunderstandings.”

Traveling with host country friends, as opposed to American friends, will provide you with an extra degree of safety.

Be wary of impairing your judgment through the excessive use of alcohol, and do not use illegal drugs.

Minimize the display of money, jewelry, cameras, or other valuable items.

Be wary of motorcycles. While walking along the street, carry your purse and/or bag on the inside next to a building. Motorcyclists can grab your purse/bag or cut it away in a matter of seconds.

Familiarize yourself with your neighborhood, locate your nearest police station and hospital, and be sure you have any emergency phone numbers.

Don’t allow yourself to be vulnerable. Take the same precautions you would at home regarding giving out your name and address to unknown people. North Americans are notorious for talking to strangers and lending a helping hand. When a stranger requests the time, a light, or directions, either ignore the request or oblige from a safe distance, paying close attention to your belongings.

Regarding road travel, be aware that driving customs vary a great deal, and in most countries pedestrians are not given the right of way. Find out which roads are safest and whether it is safe to travel on overnight trains and buses. You are advised not to drive at all while abroad.

If, during your stay abroad, there is a serious event involving casualties (whether or not it has put you personally at risk) that is likely to gain international media exposure, we urge you to contact your family by phone, fax, or email, to reassure them that you are okay. Remember that what may seem like a relatively minor local event to you could cause alarm back home.
Relationships
Entering into a relationship should be approached with the same precautions as at home. It can be very tempting to be charmed by the idea of a once-in-a-lifetime foreign romance, but you should consider all relationships carefully, particularly when you are overseas. There are cultural values and rules regarding dating and relationships, and the relationship norms to which you have become accustomed may no longer be the norm. Differences in solicitation, dating, and what exactly constitutes a relationship will not be as apparent as they are in your home culture. While cultural sensitivity is a necessary part of adapting to your host culture, if you ever feel that your personal safety is threatened, it is okay to put aside your cultural sensitivity long enough to remove yourself from any uncomfortable situation in which you might find yourself. In a cross-cultural relationship, it is also okay to share your own standards of safe sex and discretion with your partner. Proceed cautiously, realizing that you are in the country for only a short period of time.

Avoiding Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assaults
*Be aware of how you carry yourself and dress. Even things as seemingly insignificant as smiling and your stride will mark you as a foreigner. Avoid looking like the stereotypical American; dressing fairly conservatively will help deflect at least some of the potential harassers (e.g., avoid wearing short skirts on the street even if you see local women wearing them).

*An effective way to avoid stares while on the street or the buses or trains is to read.

*Usually the best response to unwanted stares, comments, or touches is to ignore the harasser and to remove yourself from the situation quickly and calmly. Although verbal responses often work, cursing your harasser in the local language or English may result in being assaulted. Avoidance is the safest tactic.

*If you continue to be followed, spoken to, or touched after repeated attempts to get away, try to remove yourself to a very public place. Tell your harasser firmly and calmly to leave you alone. Sometimes threatening to get the police is effective, but sometimes the police are less than supportive.

It is essential to your safety that you never allow yourself to be vulnerable to attack, that you avoid behaviors that can make you prey. You may have the right to walk down the beach at 2:00 in the morning, but if you do, you are making yourself prey to a waiting predator.

You may want to go to a bar or a party and have some fun, let off some steam, kick back and have a good time but if you drink alcohol or use any mood altering substance, you are now potential prey. It’s as if you said to the strangers/acquaintances around you, “I’m going to relinquish control of myself/my body now. I put myself in your hands.” Being under the effect of substances of any kind sets us up to be vulnerable to the attack of a predator.

It’s not fair. Of course, it’s not. But it’s true—and staying in control of yourself can save your life. Being awake and aware allows you to pick up on warning signs that alert you that something is wrong. In the book The Gift of Fear Gavin deBecker describes the "gut feeling," the intuitive sense, that something is not right—that some danger may be present—as the gift of fear. Fear alerts us if we are awake and aware and respectful of the feelings we get. We must not override our sense of fear by saying to ourselves, "I don’t know what I’m worried about, I’m sure nothing’s wrong here," instead of paying attention to that little voice in our gut that says, "I don’t know what’s going on here, but
something’s up.” It is really, really important to pay attention to our intuition, that little sense of knowing that something is amiss here, and not to dismiss it or deny it.  

**Terrorism**

Unfortunately, terrorism is a reality today. Although it is highly unlikely that you will be the object of a terrorist act, there are precautions that you can take to minimize your exposure to risk:

* Do not draw attention to yourself through culturally inappropriate dress or behavior.

* Avoid traveling in groups of Americans and speaking English in public.

* Avoid areas where Americans congregate or with symbolic value, such as the U.S. Embassy, McDonald's, Hard Rock Café, American Express, etc.

* Avoid crowds and protest situations.

* Keep abreast of news and stay in contact with your family.

* As a study abroad participant, you have the privilege of furthering your own understanding of the world as well as your host community’s understanding of your own culture. Students abroad often become de facto representatives of the U.S., and the positive impressions and experiences you leave behind will help foster positive relations long after you’ve returned home.

**Legal Issues**

When you are abroad you are subject to the laws of the country in which you are living and studying. The laws are likely to be very different from those in the U.S. and in Middlebury, Vermont. You should know that the American principle of "innocent until proven guilty" does not apply in all legal systems, so the best advice for you is to know the laws and obey them. Please remember that if you should get yourself into trouble with the law in your host country, there is nothing Middlebury can do for you, and there is little the U.S. Embassy or Consulate can do.

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1 Section in italics by Nancy Newport, RN, LPC
SAFETI on-line newsletter Vol. 1, No. 2, 2000
Additional words of advice:
The only assistance the U.S. Embassy or Consulate can provide for you is to give you a list of local attorneys and physicians,
contact your next of kin in case of emergency, contact friends or relatives on your behalf to request funds or guidance, provide
assistance during civil unrest or natural disaster, and replace a lost or stolen passport. They cannot get you out of jail.

The experience of a foreign jail is not something with which you want to become familiar. In many cases the conditions are
deplorable, and bail provisions as we know them in the U.S. are rare in many countries.

You should avoid all involvement with illegal drugs. In most cases, drug laws are extremely severe (much stricter than in the
U.S.), regardless of whether the drug is in possession for personal use or for sale, and in many cases regardless of the amount.
There have been cases of Americans arrested and jailed for long periods abroad for possessing as little as 1/10 ounce of
marijuana.

For more information on safety:
State Department Travel Advisories/Alerts/Warnings
www.travel.state.gov

Study Abroad Safety Handbook
www.studentsabroad.com
7. Cross-Cultural Issues

Robert Kohls, a renowned author of intercultural literature, defines culture as:

"an integrated system of learned behavior patters that are characteristic of the members of any given society ... the total way of life of particular groups of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does, and makes, its customs, language, material artifacts and shared systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation."

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**Personal Inventory**

Time abroad often facilitates personal reflection and teaches people as much about themselves as it does about your host culture. Before you go, you will want to consider how your identity might affect, or be affected by, your experience abroad.

**Gender**

Gender is a socially defined characteristic that can affect your experience abroad. Women are often particularly aware of gender-based treatment in a foreign culture. It's good to talk with someone who has spent time in your host country about these differences before you go. Some of the best ways to avoid problems are to try to fit in, spend time with other women from the host country, and understand the roles of the sexes in the culture in which you are living. Observe how the host country’s women dress and behave and follow their example. What may be appropriate or friendly behavior in the U.S. may bring you unwanted, even dangerous, attention in another culture. Try not to take offense at whistles and other similar gestures, regardless of whether they are compliments, invitations, or insults. Realize that, in many countries, these gestures are as much a part of the culture as is the food, history, and language.

**Race, Ethnicity and Minority/Majority Status**

Because of your race or ethnicity, you may encounter different privileges or barriers abroad than those you experience at home. A negative racial stereotype subscribed to widely at home may be nonexistent in your host country or vice versa. This can be liberating or shocking, respectively. Be aware that cultures define "race" and "ethnicity" differently and create categories that have different expectations.

**Class**
Overseas you may experience class issues differently than you do at home. In certain contexts, working class Americans may be considered rich. In other contexts, upper-middle class Americans may be considered poor. Certain cultures have more rigidly defined or more openly articulated ideas about class than those in the United States. Think about who you will be meeting as a student engaged in higher learning in your host country. Think about who you would like to meet during your semester or year abroad.

**Sexual Orientation**
While overseas, people often examine, or reexamine, questions of sexual identity because of increased personal freedom or increased time for personal reflection. Since many ideas we have about sexual orientation and sexuality are culturally-based, students need to be aware of how this will affect their relationships with host nationals, cultural adjustment and re-entry, and the overall study abroad experience. Please feel free to talk with the staff of International Programs about this issue and/or consult http://www.rainbowsig.org/us-students-abroad/.

**Religion**
People around the world have different ideas and expectations regarding religion. To be respectful of others, it is important to learn as much as possible about the religious beliefs, practices and norms of the area to which you are traveling. You may also want to research whether or not people of your faith meet and practice in the place you are going.

**Disability**
Travel is always a challenge to a person's problem-solving abilities; this is no different for a person with a disability. Mobility International USA (www.miusa.org) is an excellent resource on travel for people with physical disabilities. Please also feel free to contact Middlebury's Americans with Disabilities Act Office at x5936 if you have concerns about these issues.

**Learning Style**
Classes in many other countries are often more formal, consisting almost entirely of lecture with little interaction between students and professors. Research the system of education in your host country before your departure. Be prepared to be an active participant in your learning. Talk with students who have studied abroad in your host country about these issues. (For more information, see Academic Matters.)

**Dietary Concerns**
In the United States, we live in a society which offers a wide range of food options. When traveling abroad, it is sometimes difficult to maintain a particular diet. Vegetarianism can mean a variety of things to different people. Prepare yourself for places in which ingredients are rarely listed on packaging, and if you have any food allergies, discuss this with your physician(s) and program provider. Lastly, think carefully about how your food choices might affect your friends who invite you to dinner, your homestay family, or students with whom you cook in the residence halls.
Health
Because an experience abroad can be physically, mentally and emotionally demanding, think carefully about your health. A certain amount of stress due to culture shock and a change in living conditions is a normal part of an experience abroad. In some cases, such stress may aggravate an illness you have under control at home. You may also have concerns about health care facilities, delivery and insurance (For more information, see Health Issues.)

Smoking
While there is strong support in the United States for banning smoking in public places, the situation in many other countries is quite different. While abroad, you may encounter more second-hand smoke than you are used to in restaurants and on trains, with smokers showing little concern about whether or not it bothers you. For smokers, traveling abroad might be a long-sought haven of smoking freedom.

Being an American Abroad
As with any of the previously mentioned identity issues, stereotypes of Americans exist as well. Frequently, the stereotype of the American is not at all flattering, and can include characteristics such as:

★ arrogant patriotism (the “Ugly American” who expects everyone to speak English and thinks that every country should pattern itself after the United States)
★ obsessed with being hard-working
★ loud and overly friendly behavior
★ drunkeness
★ immature behavior
★ wealth
★ promiscuity
★ always in a hurry
★ overweight
★ ignorant of other countries’ history, politics, current events and customs

In addition, “American” is often shorthand for “white American,” which can be frustrating for U.S. citizens of other ethnicities. It is up to you to behave in a way that will show the people in your host country that these are in many ways unjustified stereotypes that cannot be applied arbitrarily, at least to you.

It is important to recognize your “Americanness” and to think about what cultural baggage you will be carrying abroad. To help you think about this, Kohls has developed a list of 13 commonly held American values. See if you recognize yourself in any of these, and try to think of examples you’ve seen of these values playing out around you.

1) Personal control over the environment
Americans do not generally believe in the power of fate; they see this as superstitious and reflective of an unwillingness to take initiative. Life's problems tend to be viewed as coming from one's laziness or unwillingness to take responsibility, rather than from bad luck.
2) Change
Americans tend to see change as good, leading to development, improvement, and progress. More traditional cultures see change as destructive; they value stability and tradition.

3) Time
Time is of utmost importance to Americans. Time is something to be kept, filled, saved, lost, wasted, and even killed. Time is money. Americans tend to be more concerned with getting things done on time than they are with interpersonal relationships. Americans stop discussions abruptly in order to make appointments on time and describe their time in terms of productivity.

4) Equality and fairness
Equality is so valued in American culture that it is seen as having a religious basis. At least in theory, Americans believe that all people are created equal and that everyone should have equal opportunities. This value is fundamental to the notion of social mobility.

5) Individualism and interdependence
Americans tend to view themselves as highly individualistic and self-reliant and resist being thought of as part of any homogenous group. Individualism leads to privacy, which most Americans highly value. It is interesting to note that the word for "privacy" does not even exist in many non-Western languages.

6) Self-help and initiative
Americans tend to take credit for accomplishments as individuals, and they tend to value the "self-made" man or woman.

7) Competition
Americans tend to believe that competition brings out the best in people, and "free enterprise" is valued in many areas of life.

8) Future orientation
Americans tend to value the future, devalue the past, and to an extent, are unaware of the present. Many Americans work so hard and think so much about their future that a perfectly happy present often goes unnoticed.

9) Action/work orientation
Americans tend to see any action as superior to inaction. Americans tend to lead active lives and schedule in time for relaxation. Often the first question people ask each other when meeting is, “What do you do?” meaning what is their profession.

10) Informality
Americans are more informal than many other cultures. For example, many Americans call their bosses by their first names, dress in more casual attire, even at formal events, and even greetings are casual (e.g., "Hi" rather than, "Hello, how are you?").

11) Directness, openness, and honesty
Americans tend to prefer the direct approach to delivering information, no matter how unpleasant. Americans tend to see honesty as most important, and those who use an intermediary to deliver unpleasant information is seen as manipulative and untrustworthy.
12) Practicality and efficiency
The reputation of Americans is practical and efficient. They tend to value rational and objective decisions over emotional and subjective ones, and the pragmatic approach is the overwhelming philosophy.

13) Materialism
Foreigners tend to consider Americans to be very materialistic. Americans tend to give high priority to obtaining, maintaining, and protecting material objects, and they value newness and innovation.

Anti-Americanism
As anywhere, you will occasionally run into unfriendliness, and, as anywhere, such unfriendliness may be based on misunderstanding, resentment, or prejudices that have nothing to do with you individually. Anti-American sentiment can manifest itself in one of two forms: political, which sees the U.S. as oppressive, racist, and imperialistic not only abroad but also at home; and cultural, which considers the U.S. to be the source of many of the ills of modern life, such as fast food, low-quality TV shows, mindless efficiency, materialism, and wastefulness. One’s first encounter with anti-American attitudes can be very unpleasant, but remember that you may harbor some stereotypes of your own that are going to be challenged during your stay and that one of your major goals in studying abroad should be to see yourself as others see you. Bear in mind as well that there are people who see the U.S. as a land of openness, opportunity, and generosity. On the whole, you might say that most people are quite receptive to foreigners and are happy to lend a hand. Your efforts to speak the language of your host culture will be appreciated.

Students are encouraged to prepare themselves for conversations about U.S. foreign policies and the reasons behind them by brushing up on U.S. political and cultural history. It is also critical to understand the current U.S. foreign policy towards the country you will be studying in, as well as that country’s current political climate. A well-informed student will be better able to engage himself/herself thoughtfully in conversations with host country nationals rather than taking criticism of U.S. policy as a personal attack or insult.

Being an International Student in the U.S., then Going Abroad
Studying abroad affords you advantages over your U.S. counterparts. Having left your home country to study abroad in the U.S., you’ve already learned how to adjust to a new culture, educational system, and language. Your skills and experience may help you to enjoy a relatively smooth transition into your new host culture and university setting. However, do keep in mind that you may still experience culture shock, feelings of isolation, or adjustment difficulties to a greater or lesser degree than when you arrived in the U.S.

Cross-cultural Adjustment
Because of the cultural differences you will encounter, as well as the cultural baggage that you will inevitably take with you abroad, you will certainly encounter some adjustment issues. This is nothing to fear, and indeed it is a normal and common part of the process. It should help you to know a little bit about what you may experience.
Upon arrival in the host country, many students go through an initial phase of euphoria and excitement, sometimes known as the "honeymoon phase." You will probably be very excited by the newness of your surroundings and things that appear unusual will be interesting. Sometimes students in this first stage have a false sense of security, so it is especially important to keep safety precautions in mind. After this initial period wears off, it is common to feel that your usual ways of dealing with things and your habits and routines do not work in your host country. There are endless subtle cultural differences, and the most minor tasks may seem major. For example, you may find yourself relying on others to do seemingly mundane activities like buying food or using an ATM. This abrupt loss of independence can be frustrating. You may encounter difficulties with language, housing, money, transportation, food, recreation, and even health. You may begin to feel like an outsider, things may seem confusing and frustrating, and you may even start to feel a little depressed. This psychological disorientation is what is often referred to as "culture shock."

There is no "right" or "wrong" way to deal with culture shock; rather, there are more and less constructive ways. The most important thing is to be aware that this is a very normal phenomenon, so recognizing and accepting your experience is an important first step. It is suggested that you avoid seeking out other disgruntled or unhappy people who sit around criticizing the culture and being negative; this will only prolong your gloom. Instead, seek out individuals or groups with whom you can discuss the culture in an inquisitive and constructive manner. Engage with the culture, set goals for yourself (even write them down), and do your best to suspend judgments. Be aware that the problems likely are not so much with your surroundings, but with your own adjustment to them. In time, the negative symptoms of culture shock will lessen, and you will certainly adjust. Kohls states that, "Culture shock is in some degree inevitable . . . and is the occupational hazard of overseas living through which one has to be willing to go in order to enjoy the pleasures of experiencing other countries and cultures in depth."

See Appendix 2: Recommended Reading for useful resources on cross-cultural issues and adjustment

How to Cope With Culture Shock

◆ Be aware that it does exist.
◆ Remember that the problem isn't with "them," but with you.
◆ Refrain from thinking that you are "strange" or "abnormal."
◆ While sometimes difficult, remember that culture shock can leave you with broader perspectives, deeper insights, and wider tolerance.
◆ Look for the best, not the worst.
◆ Keep an open mind.
◆ Practice laughing at yourself.
8. Sustainable Study Abroad

◆ Traveling 2,000 miles in an airplane emits ONE TON of CO₂ per passenger.

◆ During the academic year each Middlebury student is responsible for nearly THREE TONS of CO₂ emission for energy use.

As you may know, Middlebury College has made a commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2016 to help address climate change. This chapter outlines several important steps you can take to green your study abroad experience.

Live Sustainably
Energy- and resource-reducing actions you already take in your everyday life should be applied as much, if not more so, in your host country. In fact, resources like electricity, water and gas are typically much more expensive outside the U.S., so your habits may change out of necessity. Simple green habits that you can start developing now include taking shorter showers, turning the water off while you shampoo and soap up, shopping with reusable bags, and unplugging computers and appliances when not in use. Check out more tips for college students at www.chasinggreen.org/article/15-great-green-tips-college-students/.

Buying used instead of new is another way to live more sustainably. Many students buy cell phones abroad and use them for no more than a few months. Contact returned students to inquire about purchasing their cell phone. Ask the international office at your program or university if they collect phones from outgoing students. If they do not, consider a starting a collection project of your own to keep these hardly-used electronics and the toxic metals they contain out of environment.

Sustainable Study Abroad Grants
Grants of up to $500 are available to students studying abroad through Middlebury College. Undergraduates studying at the C.V. Starr Middlebury Schools Abroad, as well as Middlebury students studying abroad on approved externally-sponsored (non-Middlebury) programs, are eligible.

Students should submit proposals that outline research or projects related to sustainability in which they will be participating during their semester abroad. Grants may be used for research projects or participation in events or projects related to sustainability issues; this may include projects or research that look at ways of reducing the human impact on the environment, enhancing social well-being, or economic development that addresses the environment and/or social well-being. Grant recipients who are Middlebury undergraduates will be expected to present their projects back on campus at a special event arranged for this purpose.

Sustainable Study Abroad Grants are co-sponsored by International Programs and the Franklin Environmental Center. For more information and an application, see www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/sustainable/grants.
Green Passport Program

Green Passport was created to help students take into account the social and environmental consequences of studying abroad. Green Passport helps students improve these aspects of their study abroad experience by minimizing impact on the environment, acting in culturally appropriate ways, and engaging with and giving back to host communities.

For more, see www.facebook.com/greenpassportprogram.

Project 350

350.org is a global initiative launched by Middlebury graduates to spread a particular idea: 350 -- the safe parts per million level of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Their goal is to bring people all across the globe together and with a collective voice, to move this number 350 to the very heart of public consciousness through art, music, education, rallies, and actions of all kind. You can help build this movement while you study abroad, networking with organizations, organizing actions, talking with people you meet during your travels, documenting stories, and more. No matter how much you feel you can help, Project 350 encourages you to email them, organizers@350.org, to learn more.

Carbon Offsets

When you study abroad your air travel produces a tremendous quantity of greenhouse gases, contributing greatly to climate warming. In 2006-07, Middlebury led the way in the field of education abroad by creating one of the first organized study abroad carbon offset programs. Through this program, Middlebury worked with Native Energy, a Vermont carbon offsets company, to facilitate the purchase of carbon offsets for study abroad travel. These offsets supported many of Native Energy’s projects, such as renewable energy at schools, methane digesters on family farms, household water filters in rural Kenya and even the first large scale Native American-owned wind turbine in the U.S. Though Middlebury no longer facilitates the purchase of carbon offsets for study abroad travel, students are encouraged to purchase carbon offsets independently through Native Energy or another carbon offset provider (more information and research on carbon offset providers can be found here).

Resources for Information on Sustainable Travel

http://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/ie_mayjun12_sustainability.pdf

Article: “Sustainable Travel and Study Abroad” by Astrid Jirka (Transitions Abroad):

Transitions Abroad’s Responsible Travel Handbook:
Sustainable Travel International’s Sustainable Travel Checklist:
www.sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/gi_travelchecklist.html

Global Footprint Network:
www.footprintnetwork.org/index.php

Contact Stacey Thebodo in International Programs for more information on any of these Sustainable Study Abroad initiatives
sthebodo@middlebury.edu
9. While You’re Away

Keeping in Touch with Middlebury

It is important that you give your contact information abroad to International Programs. This includes your mailing address and email if different from your Middlebury address. Remember, you know where we are, but we don't necessarily know where you are. If you do not know your address abroad before you leave, please let us know as soon as you get settled.

Course Registration for the Semester You Return to Middlebury

You will be notified by email about registration processes and timing, so be sure to check your Middlebury email. While away, you will register for courses using BannerWeb. You do not need an alternate pin. If you do not have Web access, the Registrar’s Office can help you register.

Housing for the Semester You Return to Middlebury

Students who are participating in partial year study abroad programs must depart from/arrive on campus at the approved dates. Failure to do so will result in sanctions and fines so please take notice of emails from the housing office and plan accordingly based on the college’s official, posted dates.

Fall term housing procedures begin as early as January and continue until the junior/senior on-line draws take place in April. Students should pay attention to their Middlebury email account for related messages and also refer to the go/roomdraw webpage for details.

Make sure your finances are settled prior to room draw as unpaid fees prevent you from participating in the on-line draws. Questions about your financial status must be directed to the Student Financial Services office; please contact them in a timely manner if you have concerns.

Residential Life Positions:

The application process for FYC, RA or CA positions takes place during January and February. Stay informed by referring to the webpage and reaching out to your Commons Coordinator.

Wellness House:
Students who wish to reside in a quiet community which focuses on a healthy life-style can apply for a bed in the Wellness House by visiting the webpage, go/wellnesshouse.

SuperBlocks:
For details about the SuperBlock program and how to be part of an application visit the go/superblocks webpage. This selection process begins in January and is completed in February.

Academic and Special Interest Houses:
If you are interested in living or applying for a Program Assistant position in one of the academic or special interest houses please contact the appropriate academic department by mid-January. Links to those webpages can be found at go/interesthouses.
Off Campus Housing: Students with three of fewer terms left until graduation who wish to apply to live off campus, should refer to the go/offcampushousing webpage for details about the process well in advance of the lottery. The Off-campus lottery takes place in February. Students do NOT need to be present to participate in the lottery.

Social Houses:  
If you are a social house member and would like to live in your house, please contact the leadership of your House in January. Fall term social house rosters are due at the start of March.

After having reviewed the Undergraduate Housing webpage (go/housing) should you have unanswered questions about housing upon your return contact Karin Hall-Kolts.

Campus Jobs  
Jobs are posted on the Student Employment website and are updated regularly: http://middlebury.edu/offices/business/seo. Usually the majority of campus jobs are filled by the third week after fall classes have begun. If you are planning to be abroad, it is always helpful to let your present employer on campus know when you will be returning and ask to be re-hired when you return. Keep in mind it is very difficult to find work at Middlebury while you are abroad, particularly for the summer. Students interested in Resident Assistant positions upon return should contact their Commons Office by the beginning of January for an application and/or further instructions.

Center for Careers and Internships  
While abroad many students are looking ahead to summer job or internship opportunities. The Center for Careers and Internships has a web page where you can learn about these opportunities: http://www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/ccj.

The Middlebury Campus  
Should you wish to keep in touch with what is happening at Middlebury, you can view the campus newspaper at www.middleburycampus.com.

Library Resources  
The online resources you use on-campus are for the most part also available wherever you have internet connectivity. In order to use them, you need to link through the LIS website.

Important Middlebury Contact Information:

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<tr>
<th>International Programs</th>
<th>Parton Center for Health &amp; Wellness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tel: 802-443-5745</td>
<td>tel: 802-443-5141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fax: 802-443-3157</td>
<td>fax: 802-443-3407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:studyabroad@middlebury.edu">studyabroad@middlebury.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:cchr@middlebury.edu">cchr@middlebury.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Student Financial Services</th>
<th>Center for Careers &amp; Internships</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tel: 802-443-5374</td>
<td>tel: 802-443-5100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fax: 802-443-2058</td>
<td>fax: 802-443-2061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:studentfinancialservices@middlebury.edu">studentfinancialservices@middlebury.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:cso@middlebury.edu">cso@middlebury.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Housing
www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/commons
khall@middlebury.edu

Registrar’s Office
tel: 802-443-5382
tax: 802-443-2063
registrar@middlebury.edu

Student Employment
tel: 802-443-5377
fax: 802-443-2990
seo@middlebury.edu
10. Returning Home

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
--T.S. Eliot

Cross-Cultural Re-entry?
When you return from studying abroad, it is very common to experience what is known as "re-entry." You may have heard it referred to as re-entry culture shock, or reverse culture shock. Regardless of the name, coming home from study abroad can be a challenging and difficult time, and it can also be the time when you learn the most from your cross-cultural experience. As you re-adjust to the culture of the United States and to the culture of Middlebury, it may be helpful to know a little more about what you are going through and some positive ways of dealing with it (see Appendix 2 for additional resources).

What is re-entry?
Re-entry can be defined as the often unexpected and sometimes difficult experience of re-adjusting to life in one's home culture after living abroad. Some study abroad returnees do not find re-entry to be difficult; however, most returnees experience some degree of stress upon returning home. In fact, for many students the process of re-adapting to home after study abroad is even more difficult than adjusting to your host culture. Re-entry is different for everyone, just as your experience abroad was unique and special. However, there are some common re-adjustment issues that study abroad students report:

Personal Growth and Change
You may have experienced a challenge to your beliefs, convictions, values and world view while you were immersed in a different culture. You may have also experienced more academic freedom and personal independence while abroad. You may feel that you have matured and become more self-confident. You have undoubtedly changed in many ways. One of the greatest challenges of re-entry is adjusting your "new" self to your "old" home. It is very common for returnees to experience loss of identity during this time.

New Knowledge and Skills
Just as your attitudes changed while you were abroad, you probably developed new knowledge, skills, and behavior patterns. For example, you probably developed competencies that helped you survive in your everyday life overseas, such as learning to find your way around a new city, to act in a culturally appropriate manner, and to converse about new subjects, and of course, foreign language skills. Other new competencies may include new knowledge about your major, new research skills, and new problem-solving skills. Some returnees feel frustrated if they feel these skills are of little use once they return home.

Relationships with Family and Friends
Some study abroad returnees say the most difficult issue to deal with when they return home is relationships with family and friends. It is important to realize that other people did not stay the same while you were gone (or in some cases they did not change). Also, all of your changes will undoubtedly affect your family and friends. Many returnees describe feelings of aliena-
tion, and some say they feel pressure from family and friends to revert back to the person they were before study abroad. Perhaps the most difficult, and most common, aspect of this issue is telling others about the overseas experience. Many returnees find that beyond general questions such as, "So how was Australia?" their friends and family do not seem to be very interested in hearing about their experiences.

Coping with Re-entry

There are many positive ways of coping with re-entry. The process of re-adjustment can take weeks or months, and it is very important to give yourself time to cope with the experience. Perhaps the most vital coping strategy is to recognize that what you are going through is normal and very, very common. Expect a period of stress, and know that re-entry is a natural part of the re-adjustment process. The following are coping strategies suggested by study abroad returnees:

Talk with people who understand your situation.
All of us in International Programs have spent time abroad and love to hear about your experiences, and we can also help put you in touch with other returnees. Keep in touch with people from your host country and from your program.

Tell others about your study abroad experience.
Let International Programs know if you would be interested in speaking with prospective study abroad students or helping with pre-departure meetings or other international events. Talking to others who really want to hear about your experience can be a wonderful way to keep your study abroad experience alive.

Write about your cross-cultural learning.
Writing will help you interpret your experiences and will advance your thinking forward. Self-empowerment comes from writing in that the more you write, the more opportunity you will have to better understand your host culture, your own culture, and yourself. Write an article for The Campus or other Middlebury publication, or simply keep your own journal of reflections and learning. If you wish you can submit your writing to the Transitions Abroad writing contest. For more information on writing and the study abroad experience, see Writing Across Culture: An Introduction to Study Abroad and the Writing Process in Appendix 2 for full details.

Continue being a multi-cultural person.
Seek out situations in which international experiences and perspectives are appreciated. International Programs can tell you about opportunities to get involved in working on international events on campus, for example. Use your international perspective and skills to work on issues in the United States; there are many volunteer opportunities right here in Middlebury. Appendix 3 has resources on other international opportunities.

In conclusion, re-entry can be a time of stress, confusion, and tremendous personal growth. As you go through this experience, remember that re-entry is just another phase of cultural adjustment, and just as you adapted to your host culture, you will be able to re-adapt to the United States and to Middlebury. Remember to look positively on your re-entry experience, and allow it to help you look at your own culture as if you were discovering it for the first time.
Academic Practicalities
See Academic Matters for full details regarding transfer of credit, receiving major, minor or distribution credit, and other important academic concerns. A brief summary of things you will need to do when you return is provided here.

Transcript
At the end of your term abroad, your program or university should send an official transcript to:
Stacey Thebodo, Assistant Director
International Programs/Sunderland Language Center
356 College Street
Middlebury College
Middlebury, VT 05753 USA

Transcripts must be sent directly from your program or host university to International Programs. Hand-carried delivered transcripts are not accepted.

Independent study or internship
If an independent study or internship is part of your program, you must bring your project/written work back to campus to be reviewed by a Middlebury faculty member. Credit will only be transferred after this faculty member has read and approved your independent study or internship. Failure of the project to meet Middlebury’s standards may jeopardize the transfer of credit. When your adviser (or other appropriate faculty member) has approved your project, s/he should email sthebodo@middlebury.edu or internationalprograms@middlebury.edu indicating that the project is approved for credit.

Evaluation
You must also complete an evaluation of your study abroad experience in order to receive transfer credit. An evaluation form will be made available to you after you return to Middlebury. Evaluating your period of study abroad is one of the most valuable services you can render Middlebury College and future students wishing to study abroad and one of the most important ways you can help us maintain the highest possible standards. For students who studied on an externally-sponsored program, our office is working with Abroad101 to collect your study abroad evaluations online. To complete your evaluation, go to http://www.studyabroad101.com/review-your-program.

Major, minor or distribution credit
If you are seeking major, minor or distribution credit for courses that were not in the Course Information Database before you went abroad,(www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/cid), you can complete a Transfer Credit Application Form (www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/returning/credit). Signatures are required from the appropriate Department Chairs. Transfer Credit Application Forms are NOT necessary to receive general credit.
Appendix 1: Checklists

Before Leaving Middlebury

☐ Provide International Programs with an address, phone, fax, and email where you can be reached abroad.

☐ You must be approved by Middlebury in order to study abroad and to receive credit for your study abroad experience. If you have changed your plans since being approved, you must discuss this with International Programs.

☐ Complete the online pre-departure forms and attend pre-departure orientation meetings. See www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/events for a meeting schedule; to complete forms, login to your application http://studyabroad.middlebury.edu.

☐ If you are on financial aid, call or stop by the Office of Student Financial Services. Tell them that you are a student going abroad, and ask them specifically if your financial aid is in order, both for the semester you are abroad and for the semester you return to Middlebury. Be sure to have your program or university complete a consortium agreement.

☐ Take care of any outstanding financial matters at Middlebury. If you do not take care of these matters you will not be able to register for courses for the semester you return to Middlebury.

☐ If you have plans to change your major and have not yet declared the change, be sure to take care of this with the Registrar’s Office. Failing to declare your major will cause problems with your course registration for the semester you return.

☐ If you are not a U.S. citizen, check with the International Student & Scholar Services to ensure your visa and other immigration papers are in order.

Before Going Abroad

☐ Obtain your passport. If you already have a passport, make sure it is valid for at least six months beyond the date of your return.

☐ Procure a student visa if necessary.

☐ Register with the U.S. Embassy through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (see Pre-Departure Logistics).

☐ Apply for an International Student Identity Card.
☐ Make flight arrangements, on your own, or if you are going on a sponsored program, check with the program sponsor for information on group flights.

☐ Pay any required fees to your program or university.

☐ Plan a budget and arrange to have some local currency with you when you leave. Make sure you have any credit cards, traveler's checks, bank cards, etc. which you are planning to use.

☐ You may wish to arrange for "power of attorney" for the person handling your financial affairs while you are away.

☐ See your doctor and any other healthcare practitioners that you regularly use.

☐ Get any required (and recommended if you wish) immunizations.

☐ Collect any documents you need to take with you, such as medical records, prescriptions, entry documents, etc.

☐ Work with your insurance agent or broker to make sure that you have appropriate medical/evacuation/repatriation insurance and any other travel insurance you wish to purchase, and purchase any needed policies (and make sure you understand your policies).

☐ Discuss any safety issues with your family, and be sure they know how to contact you in case of emergency.

☐ Research the risks and features of your host country.

☐ Arrange to vote absentee ballot for any elections you will miss while you are abroad.

☐ Make sure your program sponsor or university abroad has all of your required paperwork and has answered all of your questions.

☐ Make copies of your important documents, credit cards and medical records. Leave one set at home and bring another set with you.

☐ Check out the resources listed in Appendix 3 of this booklet: Recommended Reading: Before You Go Abroad.

**Upon Your Return**

☐ Attend the gathering for returning study abroad students (contact International Programs for date/time).

☐ Complete an Evaluation Form (made available to you after you return to campus).

☐ Request that your program or university send a transcript to International Programs.
Follow necessary steps for getting major, minor or distribution credit for courses you took abroad (see Academic Matters)

If you did an internship or independent study, be sure the appropriate Middlebury faculty member evaluates your project/internship and notifies Stacey Thebodo (sthbodo@middlebury.edu) that the project is acceptable for Middlebury credit.

Enter your photos and videos from abroad in the Study Abroad Photo Contest and Study Abroad Video Contest.

Promote study abroad! See International Programs to learn about opportunities to talk to future study abroad students about your experiences.
Appendix 2: Recommended Reading

Before Going Abroad

World Newspapers
Read world newspapers to get up to speed on the politics of the country in which you will be studying, as well as U.S. policy affecting that country. This is important preparation as most students find that the rest of the world is much more politically informed than students in the United States tend to be. Many world newspapers are accessible through the LIS web site: www.middlebury.edu/academics/lib.

Interactive Web Sites
“What’s Up With Culture”: Online Cultural Training Resource for Study Abroad. www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/index.htm

“Culture Matters”: Online workbook developed for the Peace Corps for helping participants to acquire the skills and knowledge to work and live abroad successfully. http://files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/T0087_culturematters.pdf

General Cross-Cultural Information


Other Resources


NAFSA: Association of International Educators web site for study abroad resources: http://www.nafsa.org/Find_Resources/Supporting_Study_Abroad/.

Upon your return: re-entry resources


Citron, James. Short-Term Study Abroad: Integration, Third Culture Formation, and Reentry. NAFSA: Association of International Educators (www.nafsa.org).


Appendix 3:
Other International Opportunities

Websites
www.middlebury.edu/international/sa/what_to_know/work_volunteer
www.goabroad.com
www.peacecorps.gov
www.transitionsabroad.com
www.idealist.org

Other Resources
International Programs, Sunderland Language Center, extension 5745, www.middlebury.edu/international/sa

Student Fellowships and Scholarships, Adirondack House, extension 2455, http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/resources/ctlr/students/fellowships

Center for Careers & Internships, Adirondack House, extension 5100, http://www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/cci

Rohatyn Center for International Affairs, extension 5324, www.middlebury.edu/international/rcfia

International Volunteer Programs Association: http://www.volunteerinternational.org