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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your acceptance to the Consortium for Advanced Studies Abroad’s Divisional Program in Cuba. This semester-length program provides you with an unparalleled opportunity to examine, firsthand, the key political, social, economic and cultural issues affecting this island nation and its Caribbean and Latin American neighbors.

This handbook will provide you with a wealth of information that will guide you as you prepare to immerse yourself fully into the academic and cultural context of Havana and of greater Cuba. Use it as a resource but don’t consider it to be your only guide to Havana and the CASA-Cuba program. Dedicated staff at each of the CASA member institutions, together with our experienced personnel on-site, are fully committed to delivering a program that will challenge you to go beyond your comfort zone, to gain an understanding of the subtle – and sometimes not so subtle – nuances that have come to define Cuba.

As you prepare for your experience abroad, heed the advice provided in the following pages, read up on this fascinating island nation, and allow your mind to be open to discovery. The true value of a lengthy and profound sojourn abroad is that it erases the frontier between cultural awareness and cultural experience. Experience Cuba in a way that no short-term wayfarer could ever imagine.
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Consortium for Advanced Studies Abroad is a collaborative initiative involving ten high caliber U.S. universities – Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, the University of Pennsylvania, Trinity College, and Vanderbilt. Each CASA member institution reserves the right to participate in a given CASA Divisional Program.

CASA’s Divisional Program in Cuba provides students with a unique opportunity to have direct access to Cuba’s leading institution of higher learning, The University of Havana, and to Casa de Las Américas, the Cuban government’s premier institution on Caribbean and Latin American studies, Cuban culture and the arts. CASA-Cuba, the University of Havana and Casa de Las Américas have worked together to develop a program of study that will challenge you to achieve a critical understanding of the key issues facing Cuba today and enable you to interact with some of the country’s leading academic experts in the social sciences, arts and the humanities. You will immerse yourself in Cuba, taking credit-bearing lectures in Spanish from recognized experts and interacting with peers who share your intellectual curiosity about Cuba’s past, present and future. CASA-Cuba offers a not-for-credit course to practice and improve your Spanish as well as individual tutorials for specific needs. Your courses will be complemented throughout the semester with special seminars and guest lectures by respected experts from other key research centers as well as actors from Cuba’s civil society and innovative projects. In addition, interested students are encouraged to carry out focused research projects that will engage them with recognized Cuban experts in given disciplines and connect them with local archives, museums, and key cultural organizations.

Mid-semester, the group will undertake an academic field visit to eastern Cuba, usually including Santiago de Cuba, the island’s second largest city, as well as other fascinating places, both urban and rural. In each place visited, students will be guided by academics who will introduce them not only to the history and architecture of the city but also to its leading intellectuals and artists. Santiago has a distinctly Caribbean and Afro-Cuban flavor that is evident in its musical traditions, architecture and, for many residents, its religious practices. The city offers a captivating historical and cultural juxtaposition to Havana. Another weekend trip will be organized to the central part of Cuba. Students will also have the opportunity to arrange for independent travel in small groups sponsored by the program, provided that they hand in a proposal for approval and with
the expectation of a financial report after completing the trip. All of these trips are an integral part of the program.

The program aims to ensure that students will return to the United States with an invigorated sense of inquiry, a better calibrated critical understanding of the complex situation facing Cuba today, and a wealth of newfound knowledge obtained precisely through their in-country learning experiences.
Program Staff in Havana

Rainer Schultz is the Center Director for the Consortium for Advanced Studies Abroad Cuba Divisional Center. He previously worked with the Cuban Studies Program at Harvard University and the Harvard College Program in Cuba. He is a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard and has been an exchange student at the University of Havana himself. His research focuses on education and political culture in republican and revolutionary Cuba with a special attention to US-American and Soviet influence. As the Director, he is charged with the overall responsibility for administering the CASA-Cuba program, including its day-to-day academic and programmatic management, student advising, liaising with CASA’s partner institutions in Havana and supervision of local faculty and staff.

CASA-Cuba is currently in the process of hiring a new Associate Director. S/he will also have ample experience with life in Cuba and study abroad programs. The Associate Director assists in academic programing, extra-curricular activities and provides cross-cultural support and oversees housing. S/he will be your first point of contact for everyday concerns and challenges. Both the Director and Associate Director will be available for students before the beginning of the program and at the pre-departure meeting in Miami.

Adiley Cruz Rosa is Casa de Las Américas’ Assistant Coordinator for Academic Programs with the United States. She will be assisting students with their courses at CASA and as a liaison to Casa de Las Américas. Adiley holds a degree in theology from Universidad Iberoamericana de México Cristóbal Colón and is a trained librarian.

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The Galería Haydee Santamaría

CASA’s academic center in Havana is located in the historic Galería Haydee Santamaría, a spacious art gallery in the Vedado district of Havana. Built in the late 19th century in the Spanish colonial style and restored in 2015 for use by CASA, the Galería provides classroom space, two interior patios and administrative office space for the program. It is outfitted with Wi-Fi access. The current opening times are Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and weekends 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Fall 2016 Academic Calendar

August 27  Student cohort meets up in Miami, Florida (Arrive at hotel, Hampton Inn & Suites Miami/Brickell-Downtown, by 3 p.m. as there will be a welcome dinner that evening). Students are responsible for making their own domestic flight reservations from their home to Miami, and for transportation to the hotel in Miami. The student will be expected to pay for his/her ticket.

August 29  Group departs Miami for Havana, Cuba. (Group travel arrangements from Miami to Havana are made by the OIP through a travel agency specializing in travel to Cuba.)

Aug. 30- Sept. 2  Orientation conducted by CASA-Cuba and Casa de las Américas

September 5  (Approximate date) CASA classes and University of Havana classes begin

October 8-15 (TBC)  Mid-term break; Week-long trip to Oriente

December 9  End of CASA lectures

December 12-16  Finals week, CASA and University of Havana

December 17  Program officially ends; students depart as a group from Havana to Miami. Students are responsible for making their own domestic flight reservations from Miami to their homes. The student will be expected to pay for his/her ticket home.
ACADEMIC OVERVIEW

Upon arrival to Havana, the program begins with a one-week on-site orientation geared toward providing students with an introduction to the city of Havana through both a pre- and post-revolution lens so that students will be prepared to understand basic social, political and cross-cultural elements that will be a part of their everyday lives. Field visits throughout Havana will help students become comfortable navigating their way through their host city. Additional excursions will be structured during the remainder of the semester.

Students will then have an opportunity to enroll in up to four full-time courses with CASA and/or at the University of Havana (UH), where up to two classes can be chosen. The CASA courses are delivered to a combined audience of CASA students and some Cuban students at the CASA Program Center in Havana. A combination of CASA courses and select courses offered at the University of Havana is possible. We encourage students to take at least one and ideally two courses at the University of Havana to enhance the cultural and social immersion into Cuban society. CASA-delivered courses will be taught by a group of carefully selected faculty, recognized experts from Casa de Las Américas and faculty from other academic institutions. They will each meet for a total of 60 hours, the equivalent of four semester hours each.

CASA-Delivered Course Overviews (Subject To Change)

United States-Cuban Relations: A Debate

Professor Rafael M. Hernández Rodríguez is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana “Juan Marinello,” and a professor and researcher at the University of Havana, the Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales “Raúl Roa García.” He is one of Cuba’s most distinguished senior political science scholars of U.S.-Cuban relations. In addition, Hernández is a published poet and playwright, and the chief editor of Cuba’s premier intellectual journals Temas: Ideología, Cultura, Política.

This seminar will discuss the complexities of the U.S.-Cuba conflict, a case-study at the crossroads of North-South and East-West tensions, focusing on its most recent developments since the Cold War to the present, on domestic and multilateral interactions, national interests and international actors, as well as points of convergence and clash in the bilateral, regional and extra-hemispheric arenas. This conflict is explored as an intermestic relationship, considering the roles played by both countries in each other’s internal affairs. (Continued on next page)
The seminar will emphasize the case of US-Cuba relations as a paradigm to understand nationalism and imperialism, the limits of US power and the dynamics of Third World revolutions. It focuses in depth on the major themes that have shaped current U.S.-Cuban relations, their different political values and national interests, ideological and cultural representations, and their current meanings; but also its “ties of singular intimacy”, cultural affinities, mutual images and civic cultures. This special relationship offers a case-study to discuss how a conflict matrix also involves instances of cooperation, actual and potential, where creative policies may thrive.

Cultural History of Cuba

Dr. Ivette García is full professor of history at the Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales, ISRI and President of the Historians Division of Cuba's Union of Writers and Artists, UNEAC. She has previously worked in diplomatic missions for Cuba in Europe. Professor García is also a consultant for academic programs in Central America.

This course examines the moments in the history of Cuba that have been key to its national and cultural formation, focusing on the most important aspects of its history, including its social composition, architecture, religion and popular traditions. The concepts of nation and culture, and the country’s notions of identity, idiosyncracies and Cuban identity will be reviewed by the instructors from a variety of perspectives. Beginning with a review of the principal events of the colonial and republican periods and leading up to the Revolution, the course will focus on those elements that have come to define Cuba in the last 20 years, including its economic development, international relations, social changes and generational conflicts. As a complement to the lectures, students will read a variety of carefully selected Spanish texts, observe audiovisual offerings, observe “in situ” locations of historical and patrimonial importance, visit museums and exchange ideas with specialists on these topics. Field visits associated with the course include the cities of Baracoa, Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, Trinidad, Cienfuegos, Santa Clara and Mantanzas.

Gender, Race and Inequalities in Cuba: Visions from Cuban Scholars

Professor Marta Núñez Sarmiento, Ph.D. with the assistance of Roberto Zurbano Torres. Dr. Núñez Sarmiento is a professor of sociology and a researcher at the Center for Studies of International Migrations (CEMI) at the University of Havana. Her research has concentrated on transition projects for Cuba; women and employment in Cuba; gender studies in Cuba, images of women in Cuban and foreign mass media. At the University of Havana, she teaches courses related to methodology and methods of sociological research, gender studies and contemporary Cuba. She has serve as a consultant for several agencies of the United Nations (1988-2003), for the Association of Caribbean States (1999) and for several NGOs. She is one of the founders of the Cuban Federation of Women.
For more than half a century scholars, journalists and artists from all over the world and basically from the United States have intensely explored Cuba, and their visions have been widely spread by the “mainstream media”. But although Cuban social scientists living in the island have produced their studies while experiencing and being part of the transformations that started in 1959, their works have been scarcely published outside of Cuba.

This program summarizes recent studies produced by Cuban scholars on three of the most relevant challenges to eliminate discrimination in society: gender, race, and inequalities. Although the works refer to historical events explaining the evolution of the present situation in each of these topics, they will basically focus on case studies elaborated since the crisis and reforms of the 90’s in Cuba – following the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist countries as well as the strengthening of the US embargo/blockade on Cuba.

The Imagined Island: Cuban Cinema

Professor Gustavo Arcos is a cinema critic and professor at the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA).

In 1959, following the revolutionary victory, the Cuban Institute of Arts and Industries Cinematographic (ICAIC) was established to oversee a vast array of cultural projects and related work, and well into the 1990s, it continued to oversee nearly all of the country’s film production. With new technologies emerging in Cuba, through digital media and two new schools of cinema and television, productions have been and will continue to become more diversified, as the ICAIC previously controlled all productions. In the last two decades, new generations of filmmakers and audiovisual artists have been emerging who intend to tell stories from a more independent lens. This course uses film as a way to understand Cuba through its own images. We will verify how the artistic discourse of filmmakers interprets, legitimizes, dialogues or generates conflict with the official discourse. Students will learn about aesthetic values, formal and artistic, as proposed by Cuba’s filmmakers in recent decades. This course will also aim to stimulate creativity between the students, encouraging student discussions based on their own experiences during their time in Cuba.

Slavery: Manifestations of Its Legacy in Contemporary Cuban Society

Professor Bárbara Danzíe León is a history researcher and specialist in resources on the African presence and lecturer of the Instituto Superior de Ciencias Aplicadas del Ministerio de Ciencia Tecnología y Medio Ambiente. Several professors have been invited to guest lecture the course as well.
The enslavement of Africans and their forced arrival in Cuba from the 16th to 19th centuries is an important axis around which a significant part of the history of Cuba moves. This course proposes to address, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the African influence and contribution to the shape of Cuba’s nationality, where they are recognized as members of an important part of the values with which Cubans identify themselves. The multiethnic and multiracial state of the country is based on Cuba’s historical memory and diverse contemporary expressions. In the same way, the course will also distinguish the implications of the period of discriminatory and racist ideology based on skin color. Many times this is and has been expressed unconsciously and through colonial systems of marginalization, through which slavery came about.

21st Century Cuban and Latin American Literature

Susana Haug is Professor of Literature, Faculty of Arts and Letters, University of Havana. She is the recipient of a number of important literary awards and her work has been included in diverse anthologies of contemporary literature in Cuba, Spain, Brazil and Mexico. She contributes frequently to Cuban and foreign journals and magazines and her work has been translated into Italian, French and Portuguese.

The Latin American “boom” resulted in an unprecedented revolution in Spanish language literature. The eyes of the world turned to a production of novels and stories by a group of authors who began publishing in the 1960s and constituted (and may continue to constitute) the literary version of “Greenwich mean time.” In this course, we will explore the directions taken by Latin American literature after the boom and focus on the literary production of younger authors, particularly those who began publishing in the 21st century. We will explore their many themes, esthetics, continuities and disruptions.

University of Havana Courses

Students can choose from courses across the disciplines. Most students choose to focus in literature, the arts, Afro-Caribbean studies or music (theory/history) at the University of Havana’s Faculty of Arts and Letters or courses in Cuban history, philosophy and religion, political sociology and Latin American thought through its Faculty of Philosophy and History. However, enrollment is also open to departments and faculties beyond these two. If you wish to enroll at an UH course outside these two schools you should indicate your interest as early as possible to the program directors as this will require special approval by UH. University of Havana courses usually vary in length from 32 to 64 contact hours. You will need at least 48 contact hours for a three-point credit and 64 hours for a full credit. Often, arrangements can be made with Cuban professors for additional work to meet higher requirements. By the end of the second week of classes, students must decide and register for their classes.

Final determinations of semester course load and credit transfer policies are made by the CASA home institutions for their respective students. Keep in mind that, in order to grant departmental credit for a course, some home university departments may require that you show the syllabi, reading lists and your notes and papers when you return from Havana.
Students should communicate with their corresponding home institutions about the transfer of credits as early as possible.

**Academic Standards**

All course instruction will be conducted in Spanish, and students will be expected to attend classes regularly, participate in group discussion and keep up with all assignments and required readings. Evaluations and assessment will be based on a combination of written assignments, oral presentations, exams, and class projects. CASA-Cuba provides an additional not-for-credit Spanish course that focuses on both written and oral expression. The instructor, Professor Susel Gutierrez, also offers individual tutoring. We encourage students to use this invaluable resource from early on the semester for best learning results throughout the semester.

**Co-curricular and Extra-curricular Activities**

During the semester the program will hold weekly meetings with all students to coordinate activities and discuss experiences where attendance is expected. CASA offers also a language learning program with Cuban students which will take place on Friday afternoons. It serves as a unique opportunity to practice Spanish under academic supervision and to get to know Cuban peers in a social setting.

CASA will, over the course of the term, organize a regular series of lectures on a variety of special topics from distinguished academics and representatives from Cuba's civil society capitalizing on CASA’s extended network of contacts throughout Havana. CASA will also inform students about events, exhibitions, concerts and other cultural activities that expose them to the tremendous cultural mosaic of Cuba.

For interested students, extracurricular activities may include community-based volunteer opportunities and working with Casa de las Américas on a project in one of their many branches of activities (publication, exhibitions, theatre, conferences, etc.), as well as other established institutions and novel initiatives, such as the online journals Temas and OnCuba. Internships in Cuba are less common than in the United States and not always possible to accommodate in all realms but CASA will offer some activities and help facilitate others. Additionally, students will be able to find dance and music instructors easily and will have the city of Havana’s free and low cost concert and performance repertoire at their disposition. Each semester, the program will provide students with information to cultural and academic events that will take place in and around Havana.
PREPARING FOR YOUR DEPARTURE

Passport
You must have a passport valid for at least six months from your date of entry to Cuba. If you do not currently have a passport you should start this process as soon as possible. The process can take two weeks to a month depending on which procedure you follow. You are now able to download printable passport applications from the internet as well as consult general Passport Services information at:
http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html

To get your passport you’ll need:
1) a passport application
2) proof of citizenship, e.g. a birth certificate
3) additional identification, e.g. driver’s license
4) photocopy of identification
5) two identical passport photos
6) passport fee of $110 (please verify with the post office)

Remember: Your passport is the most important document you have when outside the United States. Know where it is at all times. When you receive your passport, make several copies of the front pages and keep the copies separate from your baggage. You should leave a copy of your passport with your parents at home. Once in a foreign country, keep your copies in a safe place, and ask your program to keep a copy on hand. This will facilitate replacement if your passport is lost or stolen. Do NOT pack your passport in your luggage as you will be required to show it when you check-in for your flight to Cuba and on your return, and in Cuba to customs and immigration authorities (both entering and exiting).

Student Visa to Cuba
On your behalf, CASA and Casa de las Américas will coordinate with the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, DC to obtain the necessary student visa for you. Once in Havana, usually within the first 2-3 weeks you will receive a Cuban I.D. that will provide you access to local resources and serves as your primary form of identification. Keep it with you at all times.

Vaccinations
None are required for Cuba; however, we recommend that you visit the CDC website for suggested vaccinations.
**Group Meeting in Miami and Group Departure to Havana**

Students are responsible for making their own domestic travel arrangements from their home to Miami, Florida. All students are required to attend the group meeting and should plan to arrive at the hotel (Hampton Inn & Suites Miami/Brickell-Downtown) in Miami no later than 3:00pm, **Saturday, August 27**. The program will formally begin with a welcome dinner the evening of Saturday, August 27 near the hotel. Upon arriving in Miami, you should make your way to the hotel. The CASA program will cover the cost of hotel accommodation for the nights of August 27 and 28, and all meals and excursions related to the program, in Miami.

In Miami, students will be expected to stay with the program group throughout the weekend until departure to Cuba on Monday, August 29. In addition to the welcome dinner, other pre-orientation activities will take place the following day. On **Monday, August 29**, students will depart Miami for Havana as a group, accompanied by the CASA-Cuba Director and the Assistant Director.

CASA is in charge of making group travel arrangements through a travel agency that, for years, has specialized in travel to Cuba. The entire group is required to travel to/from Cuba together. Students will not be allowed to fly to/from Havana separately. **Approximately one month prior to departure, the corresponding cost from Miami to Havana will be billed by CASA to each student’s home university separately from the tuition/program cost, which will, in turn, bill its students. This cost is estimated at $1,000.**

**Baggage- General Estimates Only – Costs are Subject to Change**

The airlines typically charge $25 per suitcase. The first 44 lbs. in that suitcase are included; after that it is an additional $2 per pound. Each piece of baggage may not weigh over 70 lbs. One carry-on item is free; HOWEVER, the weight of the carry-on is ADDED to the weight of the first suitcase. Maximum weight for carry-on is 20 lbs. – if it weighs more than 20 lbs., it will be considered checked baggage. Cameras and laptops can be removed from the carry-on so they are not included in the weight. Costs change without notice. Make sure to carry plenty of funds (in cash) when leaving Miami and Havana (at the end of the program) to pay for your luggage.

Additional suitcases are $20 each PLUS a $2 charge per pound. In other words, a second suitcase weighing 25 lbs. will cost the $20 suitcase fee PLUS $50 for 25 additional pounds, for a total of $75.

**Past students have recommended bringing whatever you need as you may have a difficult time finding toiletries, medicines and other items—it is worth the extra cost of baggage.** Cuba is a much less developed country and, for a variety of reasons, including Cuba’s restrictive market and import policies, as well as continued U.S. sanctions, you will
find very few of the consumer goods in Cuban shops that you are used to in the U.S. There is a scarcity of many basic goods and supplies. If you have special dietary needs, need to take specific medication, or can't live without certain hygienic products or toiletries, make sure to bring plenty of these with you.

**Group Return to Miami from Havana**

The program officially ends on **Saturday, December 17, 2016. Students will return to Miami from Havana as a group on that day.** Please wait to make travel arrangements to return home from Miami until after the return travel time has been confirmed. It would be wise to **schedule a connecting flight from Miami as late as possible** on December 17, preferably a flight to your home leaving Miami after 8:00 p.m. The flight from Havana to Miami can be slightly unpredictable with respect to its departure time. For this reason, it is wise to give yourself ample time for connecting. **Please note: Once you are back in Miami, all hotels, food, and other travel accommodations are the responsibility of the student and are not reimbursed by CASA.**

**What can be Brought Back from Cuba**

Current U.S. government policy regarding U.S. travelers returning from Cuba with Cuban-origin goods are periodically changed. In the past, such goods, with the exception of informational materials, could be seized at Customs' discretion. There are no limits on the import or export of informational materials. Such materials are statutorily exempt from regulation under the embargo and such items as books, films, tapes and CDs may be transported freely. Please check official U.S. government websites for the most recent regulatory changes.

**STUDENT HOUSING IN HAVANA**

Students will share living accommodations in a residence provided by Casa de las Américas or administered by Cuban families in homestay/airbnb-like setting. All residences are safe, clean and secure, located in the Vedado district, within walking distance to Casa de las Américas and the University of Havana. Students will share bedrooms in double occupancy with modern toilets and showers, and will be provided with breakfast and dinner each day; lunch will be on your own*. There are usually no cooking facilities available at the residencies. Laundry will be taken care of by each residence. Safe drinking water will be provided.
Students will be required to sign a written code of conduct for use of the residence and, as part of the on-site orientation, will be provided with clear instructions as to the importance of adhering to Cuban cultural and societal norms and to strictly abide by any and all Cuban policies governing their conduct as visitors to Cuba. **Under no circumstances will students be granted permission for independent housing.** No outside guests are permitted to stay overnight at the residences. If students intend to spend the night elsewhere, they must inform the residence's administrator/guest family beforehand. If students plan to leave the city of Havana for an overnight stay, they will be required to inform the Program Director and/or the Assistant Director beforehand.

*We recommend budgeting approximately $5 to $10 per day for midday meals taken outside of the guest residence.

**HEALTH RELATED ISSUES**

Students will not be permitted to participate in the program without valid U.S. health insurance. Students will either need to demonstrate that they have health insurance independently or purchase continuing coverage through their home university. If you are currently covered by a plan through your home university, you may be provided the option to continue this coverage while abroad. If not, you will need to present evidence of coverage to your home CASA institution before you travel abroad. Check with your study abroad office for additional details.

**Additional Emergency Travel Assistance Coverage through CASA**

All students participating on the program will also be automatically covered by a supplementary travel assistance plan administered by *International SOS*, whose services range from telephone advice and referrals to full-scale evacuation by private air ambulance. *International SOS* has more than 3,500 professionals in 24-hour alarm centers, international clinics and remote-site medical facilities across five continents. Cuba is serviced by *International SOS*.

Cuba’s health system is run by the government, and there are virtually no private facilities. Generally, the standard of medical care in Cuba is good, although the quality of medical facilities and availability of medical supplies may vary throughout the island. Relative to other parts of the country, a higher standard of care is available in Havana, especially at the Hospital Hermanos Amejeiras and Hospital Cira García. This latter facility caters principally to foreigners and is significantly better-equipped than others on the island. English-speaking doctors practice at this hospital. At the beginning of the semester, a visit to the Cira García will be arranged so that you feel comfortable should you need to see a doctor throughout your stay. The Cira García
Clinic is your primary care facility during your stay in Cuba.

Mental health facilities in Cuba for international visitors are very limited and mostly available in Spanish. Should you need access to mental health facilities, contacting your home campus resources is one possibility, although may be limited by the available communication system in Cuba. Program Advisor Michele Frank, M.D. is a bilingual and U.S.-trained Physician / Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist and Neuroscience Researcher available to students throughout the semester upon request.

**IMPORTANT!** If a health concern arises during the program, your first point of contact should be your CASA Center Director and the Associate Director. S/he will work with colleagues on the ground to assist you. All health-related matters will be reported to your respective home university.

**Prescription Medications**

If you require prescription medication, you should bring a supply with you to last the entire time that you will be abroad. Although many medications are available worldwide, they are not always identical in strength or composition to what you take at home. Bring an adequate supply of medications in your carry-on luggage, in their original containers, along with a letter from your doctor explaining the dosage, why the medication has been prescribed, and why you are traveling with a large quantity. Hospital Cira García in Havana has a pharmacy with basic medications and imported drugs. International or very specialized drugs may be difficult to obtain. Since brand names vary, know the generic (chemical) names of your medications.

**SAFETY & SECURITY**

Havana, and Cuba more broadly, remains a safe destination for travelers, though petty crime is on the rise in urban centers. It is important to observe caution when traveling alone or at night, as many streets are not well-lit. Never accept rides from strangers, and stick to established collective taxi (also known as máquinas, almendrones, boteros, and colectivos) and bus routes.

As in any major city in the U.S. or elsewhere, one should be careful about wearing or displaying expensive electronic equipment or jewelry. Pickpocketing is an annoyance confronted by foreigners and Cubans alike, and the best approach is always to relinquish items rather than engage in a struggle.
Women, both foreign and Cuban, and (less often) foreign men are likely to be the object of unwelcome advances. These practices include catcalls, known in Cuba as *piropos*. Younger men are less likely than older ones to make such approaches, and recent public campaigns in Cuba have drawn attention to street harassment as a social problem. Nonetheless, the best strategy when confronted with such attention is simply to ignore it.

In recent years, it has become more common to see public displays of sexuality in Havana, ranging from relatively benign kissing and necking among couples to occasional public masturbation. The roots of this phenomenon are complex and multifaceted, but it is best regarded as unpleasant rather than dangerous. Cubans tend to react to instances of public sexual behavior with humor, but the most effective response is to simply avoid and ignore. Anything that feels threatening should be immediately reported. Nevertheless, rape and sexual assault remain quite rare, and all Cubans are aware of the consequences that would arise from a physical attack on a foreigner. In short, women should approach travel to Cuba with the same caution as they would any other major urban center, but without trepidation.

Similarly, prejudice and discrimination on the basis of ethnic or racial identification or sexual orientation are not uncommon in Cuba. Especially in everyday life and out on the street comments and identification based on perceived physical features (negro, rubia, chino, gorda, etc.) are very common. The discourse and terminology on race, gender, and sexual orientation are very different from the United States and some students in the past have perceived this as discriminatory. Over recent years, there has been an increasing awareness about these issues and there are various academics, as well as state and civil society institutions, that address these issues. The program will introduce you to some of them, facilitate debates and awareness of these issues and will do its best to provide you with a safe learning experience. However, students should be prepared for very different discourses and practices as they relate to gender, racial, and sexual orientation. To understand and navigate these topics can be at times be challenging but ultimately also insightful and provide useful experiences.

**MONEY MATTERS**

The Cuban peso is the official currency. The Convertible Peso (CUC, acronym in Spanish) equals the U.S. dollar and comprises the same strength inside the national territory. Since November 8, 2004, only CUC are accepted as payments for goods and services. It is possible to exchange any currency, even U.S. dollars, in convertible pesos (CUC) at airports, banks and hotels, and re-exchange them when leaving the country. In the main towns, there are Casas de Cambio (CADECA S.A.) for the exchange of hard currency in Cuban pesos and convertible pesos (CUC).

Euros, Canadian dollars, British pounds sterling or Swiss francs can be exchanged for convertible pesos and there is no service charge. \(\text{US dollars can be exchanged for convertible pesos, but a service charge of 10 percent will be levied.}\)

Traveler checks are an alternative to carrying cash but may incur up to a 10% surcharge.
Please check with the Resident Coordinator before departure about money matters as exchange rates and charges are variable and fluctuating.

There are ATMs in Cuba, particularly in the larger cities, but despite recent announcements they still do not accept any U.S. issued credit or debit cards. Visa, MasterCard, Access, Diners and Banamex are generally accepted but they must not be drawn on a U.S. bank. American Express credit cards are not accepted.

OTHER HELPFUL TIPS

Cell phones

Some cell phones providers by U.S. operators do now offer roaming in Cuba for considerable costs. The program will provide each student with a simple Cuban cell phone upon arrival for a deposit of 20 CUC, and you will be given a credit of 10 CUC. It is your responsibility to always maintain a credit balance of 10 CUC for emergencies. The cell phones are the best and most immediate form of communication and students should always carry it with them. Cuban cell phones are pre-paid; pre-paid cards are available at hotels and most Etecsa offices in the amount of 5, 10 or 20 CUC, or through private resellers for a surcharge. An alternative is to put credit on your cell phone via certain internet platforms. Incoming international calls are free, outgoing calls to the U.S. are 1 CUC; you may receive phone calls from the U.S. through your cell phone, but calls within Cuba are 60 cents a minute, and text messages 14 cents. If a person calls you from a landline, you as the receiver on the cell phone will bear the costs of the call.

Postal Service

Postal service between the U.S. and Cuba have recently been re-established but they are still not very frequent or reliable and may take several weeks, so you should not count on this as a means to communicate effectively with stateside family and friends. DHL is a more expensive carrier service that you may use to ship or receive documents or small items, but packages from another country are sometimes held up at Cuban customs.

Electricity

In general, you should not have trouble using small electrical appliances brought from the U.S. (hairdryer, electric razor, etc.) as the standard electric current in Cuba is the same as in the U.S. (110 V).
Internet and Laptop Use

It is strongly recommended that you bring a laptop with you as you will need it for completing course requirements. Be advised that if you have a Mac computer, it will be very difficult to have it repaired if necessary.

Internet access will be limited and not as easily available as students are accustomed. The CASA gallery space will have Wi-Fi available during its daily operation times (currently 8:00 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekends), but keep in mind that, even in the best of circumstances, Wi-Fi connection in Cuba is sporadic and oftentimes slow. Downloading or updating of software, videos, music etc. will most likely not be possible. Voice-over IP programs and video-chat occasionally work but are not always reliable.

You will not be able to access some internet sites restricted on the island, including Skype and many .edu websites. We encourage you to check to see that your email account is current and learn to access it before you depart the U.S. It is the best way to communicate with academic advisors, friends and family. More information about email use in Cuba will be provided to students shortly before departure and on-site. We recommend opening a gmail account before departing for Cuba and having your campus email forwarded to this account. We also recommend downloading the video application for gmail before arrival as well as the voice-over IP program IMO which tends to work relatively well in Cuba. Finally we recommend obtaining a secure VPN connection through your university or download OpenVPN to your mobile devices that may help you access certain US websites from within Cuba.

Shopping

Under revised U.S. travel restrictions from 2015, travelers to Cuba are authorized to purchase and import merchandise into the United States as accompanied baggage, as long as the value does not exceed $400 per person, and provided that no more than $100 of the merchandise consists of alcohol or tobacco products and the merchandise is imported for personal use only. For more information on US government sanctions pertaining to Cuba, please refer to the official government website: https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/cuba_faqs_new.pdf
What to Bring

Students should plan to bring the following personal items*:

1. Clothes for a range of seasons:
   a. Light and comfortable summer clothes are the most important (linen is very comfortable in tropical climates; from late August through November, it will be very hot and humid)
   b. Fall weather jacket and 1-2 sweaters (it will get cold at the end of the fall semester and the beginning of the spring semester)
   c. Rain gear and/or umbrella (it rains a lot!)
   d. Swim suits

2. Sports shoes or walking gear for hikes and muddy terrain

3. More “formal clothes” for visits or work in more formal environments (Casa de las Américas and UH expect their students to wear non-revealing clothes as part of their dress code for all students and staff)

4. One or more USB flash drives – a very common way to exchange data in internet-scarce Cuba**

5. Toiletries*** (including, but not limited to: toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, face wash, razors, sunscreen, and mosquito-repellent)

6. Common pain medication and/or prescription medication

7. Contraceptives

*Linens will be provided to students

**Brown students completing GLISPs or students working on other independent research should collect their reading materials beforehand and bring them; library access and printing facilities are extremely limited.

***For female students traveling to Cuba:

Women will be able to find any feminine hygiene products they need, but will most likely prefer their U.S. brands and should stock up. It is also recommended that female travelers bring makeup products they plan to use and any face wash or creams.
SUGGESTED READING BEFORE YOU TRAVEL


IMAGE CREDITS

In order of appearance in handbook.

1. Front Cover:

2. Introduction: Vedado District. Rainer Schultz


5. Program Overview: American car from 1950s. John Tansey

6. Galería Haydee Santamaría, CASA Center. Kendall Brostuen


10. Group Meeting in Miami: Courtyard at Galería Haydee Santamaría. Kendall Brostuen


15. Shopping: 55 years of Revolution. John Tansey
USA CONTACT INFORMATION

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www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad  
For health-related and/or safety/emergency outside of business hours, call the Northwestern University Police at (847) 491-3456. For administrative and academic questions, contact Assistant Director Jessica Fetridge at (847) 467-6401, jessica.fetridge@northwestern.edu. For program payment and financial matters, contact Assistant Director of Study Abroad Financial Services, Krista Buda Bethel at (847) 491-7400, k-buda@northwestern.edu

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