SPEA ABROAD PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Congratulations on your acceptance into a SPEA Abroad summer program! SPEA’s Office of Overseas Education staff and graduate assistants work year-round to provide support to students desiring a unique international component to complement SPEA coursework at Indiana University. Through your participation in a SPEA Abroad program, you have the unique opportunity to study across the world, in topics ranging from health policy to environmental management.

SPEA professors partner with colleagues at world-renowned institutions to teach SPEA-approved courses in English with an international focus. SPEA’s Office of Overseas Education offers competitive international programs that range from National Security in London to an environmental science class in Vietnam. Each year new programs are added to fit diverse student interests in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors within the international arena.

All of the courses offered through SPEA Abroad programs count toward grade point averages (GPA) and credits required for SPEA degrees, majors, and minors. Accommodations for students, covered by program fees, are safe, comfortable options often closely located to the sites where students complete their studies. We take meticulous care by visiting sites and using reputable companies to ensure that students are safe and comfortable during their overseas experience. Specific costs for each program can be found on the SPEA Office of Overseas Education website (spea.indiana.edu/student-experience/overseas). Because this is a SPEA-administered program, SPEA Office of Overseas Education selects and orients students before departure, and we arrange housing, classes, and facilitate administrative services abroad for accepted students.
FIRST STEPS

Apply for a passport immediately. If you already have a passport that is within six months of expiration, give yourself sufficient time to renew your passport prior to departure. Pick up an application at your local post office, at a county clerk's office, or download it from http://travel.state.gov/. You will be instructed to submit the completed application with two recent photos, a certified copy of your birth certificate, another ID with photo and a signature (such as your driver's license), and fees for either a first-time applicant or renewal. Visit http://travel.state.gov/ to check for specific passport requirements.

Sign your passport as soon as you receive it. Make two photocopies of the passport page that has your name on it. Leave one copy with your family when you go abroad and take the other copy with you to your destination. The copy will make it much more convenient for you to replace your passport if you should lose it or it is stolen while abroad. You may also send a scanned copy via e-mail to the SPEA Overseas Education Programs office before you leave.

VISA AND RESIDENCY PERMIT

A visa is an authorization, often a stamp or sticker in your passport, which permits you to travel into or reside in another country for a set period of time. If you hold a US passport and are traveling to Europe, you will not need to apply for a visa in advance of your trip unless you will be staying in Europe for more than 90 days. Tourist visas may be required for countries outside of Europe, such as Vietnam. The SPEA Overseas Education Staff can provide you with the necessary trip confirmation documentation. The application process for some visas will require that applicants obtain supporting materials from other agencies, possibly including translated and/or notarized copies of official documents such as birth certificates, high school diplomas and official transcripts, and may require submission well in advance of travel dates. Some applications must be submitted in person. If you hold a passport from a country other than the U.S., you will need to check your country’s requirements.

Research specific information on your destination country and its specific visa requirements on the State Department’s website at www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html. Depending on the
country and type of visa, most visas have short-term expiration dates. Ensure that your visa will cover all your program and personal travel dates. If you attempt to travel with an expired visa, you may be subject to strict fines and/or other serious penalties, including arrest or jail time.

Visas are granted at the discretion of the consulate and may be denied for any reason including pending inadequate documentation, legal action, past criminal history, etc.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you are responsible for contacting the embassy of the country where you will study to determine its entry and visa requirements for citizens of your country. You are also responsible for arranging to remain in compliance with U.S. immigration regulations regarding an extended stay abroad and re-entry into this country.

**TRAVEL TO PROGRAM SITE**

You are responsible for making arrangements to arrive in the host city on your program’s official arrival day. Travel agencies and Internet discount travel sites can be excellent resources, such as Kayak and Expedia.

Travel agents or airlines may offer a flexible return ticket, meaning you can change the date of your return, although this may incur an additional charge. Check with the airline or travel company to review conditions and possible fees associated with flexible return tickets.

**PROOF OF ONWARD JOURNEY**

Before boarding your flight to depart the U.S. and/or upon entering the country, you will be expected to show proof of return transportation to the U.S. or onward travel to a third country (a round-trip ticket, even if the return date has not been finalized, or written confirmation of travel reservations). Failure to produce some confirmation of arranged departure may result in your having to purchase a return ticket on the spot, which could be very expensive.

**MEDICAL CHECKUP**

You are strongly encouraged to schedule a medical exam at the IU Student Health Center (812-855-4011) or with your family physician. A thorough dental exam is also strongly recommended.

For information on necessary or suggested vaccinations for travel abroad, consult your family physician or the IU Student Health Center’s Travel Clinic (812-855-7688 or
The IU Student Health Center’s Travel Clinic is especially helpful for students traveling outside North America and Western Europe for information on necessary vaccinations, prevalent diseases, and medical handbooks for travel purposes. The Health Center receives up-to-date information from the Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) and the World Health Organization (www.who.int/en).

Living abroad can create stress. Any untreated illnesses or conditions may become bigger problems once you leave the U.S. If you are currently under medical care, talk frankly to your counselor, health provider, or SPEA Office of Overseas Education staff about the support you might need abroad.

The Medical History form is important for your health and safety. It will keep the Office of Overseas Education up-to-date on any minor or serious medical conditions you may have in preparation for your participation in an overseas program, and it will also help the staff on-site get assistance for you in case of accident or illness. Language barriers and incomplete medical records can delay treatment. For your own safety, provide full information about medications you take regularly, drug allergies, and chronic or recurring conditions, including eating disorders.

**MEDICATIONS ABROAD**

If you currently take any medications, talk to your physician or nurse practitioner about arrangements for continuing the medications abroad.

Any medications carried overseas should be left in their original containers and be clearly labeled. You should also carry a letter from your physician describing the medical condition and any prescription medications, including generic names of prescription drugs.

Throughout your travel, you will likely have your bags searched in security at airports and may subsequently be required to show proof of prescription for over-the-counter medications. Be prepared for the possibility of having to see a physician abroad in order to authorize continued treatment during your time overseas.
INSURANCE

HEALTH INSURANCE

All students on SPEA-administered programs are covered by a group medical insurance policy whose cost is included in program fees. The IU-SPEA policy is valid worldwide, except in the U.S., during the program period.

Should you require medical treatment, you pay for services when they are performed and then file for reimbursement from the U.S. insurance carrier. Send receipts from your physician and pharmacist together with the claim form available on the insurance company website at https://www.hthadvisors.com/claims/claims.cfm to the insurance company.

OTHER INSURANCE

You may also consider purchasing supplemental insurance to reimburse you for theft or loss of personal items (personal property insurance), lost expenses due to travel cancellations (traveler’s insurance), or enrollment in a travel assistance plan (assistance to help you replace lost or stolen travel documents, to locate medical assistance while traveling, etc.).

Some student may already be covered for these expenses by their existing or their parents’ current insurance plans. Additional plans, specifically designed for overseas travelers, are available through some travel agencies, frequent flyer programs, and even credit card companies.

If you plan to travel before your program begins or after your program ends, you may consider purchasing supplemental medical insurance to cover the additional time you stay abroad. The insurance provided through program fees for SPEA Abroad programs only covers the program dates.
ACADEMICS

ACADEMIC CREDIT

All SPEA Abroad summer, semester, and academic year courses carry credit hours for various SPEA major, minor, and degree requirements and count toward the student's GPA. Prior to departure for the program, meet with a SPEA advisor or SPEA faculty member to determine how SPEA Abroad coursework will fit with major, minor, or degree requirements.

Non-SPEA students should meet with their academic advisor in their host program or department to determine how SPEA coursework will fit in with a non-SPEA program at IU or consider adding a SPEA minor.

REGISTRATION

You will need to register for this class. You do this by going to your OneStart and registering just like you would normally do for a class. You will be informed as soon as permission has been granted for this class.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

While abroad, you must adhere to the same IU academic policies and regulations that you are subject to on your own campus.

DROPPING A COURSE

SPEA Abroad summer courses can only be dropped in consultation with the SPEA Office of Overseas Education (soep@indiana.edu).

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM

No student should withdraw from a program without first consulting SPEA Office of Overseas Education (soep@indiana.edu) and the program director of your program.

PASS/FAIL

Students must take all courses for a grade that will be factored into your IU and SPEA GPA. P/F is not an option on SPEA Abroad summer programs.
**CREDITS AND GRADES**

At the conclusion of the program, the program administration will report grades for the SPEA Abroad summer courses (E482/E582 or S482 or V482/V582) to SPEA administration for review and approval. Grades will be displayed on OneStart one month after completion of a SPEA Abroad program.

All SPEA Abroad credits and grades are direct SPEA credit, not transfer credit. Consequently, grades are included in your cumulative GPA and count toward completion of a SPEA degree.

**GRADE INQUIRIES/PETITIONS**

The SPEA Office of Overseas Education recognizes the professors as the primary authorities in matters of grading. SPEA Office of Overseas Education will NOT adjust grades; only corrections for calculation or recording errors will result in a grade change.

Should students believe there has been professional misconduct, they should file a formal petition. Evidence about such misconduct must be provided to support such petitions, not hearsay, subjective impressions, or remarks of a personal nature. Dissatisfaction with a grade, based on the student perspective of his or her own performance, will not constitute acceptable grounds for an appeal.

**INCOMPLETES**

All course work must be completed and submitted by the date stipulated on your program’s syllabus. No incomplete grades are permitted for SPEA Abroad courses. Unfinished course work will result in a grade of F for the course. Only documented illness is considered a legitimate excuse for missing a final examination.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All students must respect and abide by the academic regulations of IU. Any acts of academic misconduct, including cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, interference, violation of course rules, or facilitating academic dishonesty, will be adjudicated by local academic officials and then be referred to the judicial process on the student’s home campus.

**PERSONAL CONDUCT**

All students must respect and abide by the laws and customs of the host country, the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct (www.iu.edu/~code), and any rules and regulations for student conduct made or adopted by IU, its employees, agents, and partner institutions abroad, from the published official program arrival date through the official program completion date, including but not limited to host institution rules and regulations for student conduct designed to safeguard health, well-being and safety.
GRADUATION

If you plan to graduate at the end of the term abroad, file an application for graduation prior to leaving your home campus. For most summer programs your grades will not arrive in time for you to be included on the graduation list for August. Notify your SPEA academic advisor of your anticipated graduation date. Check with your SPEA academic advisor after your return to confirm that your courses and grades are in order.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

By your signature on the Agreement and Release form, you have agreed (1) to respect the laws and customs of the host country, the Indiana University Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct (www.iu.edu/~code), and all other reasonable standards of conduct promulgated by IU, its agents and consortium partners, and (2) to participate fully in the academic program by attending classes, remaining at the host institution for the full length of the program and completing examinations. You have acknowledged that if the program staff, with the concurrence of the Associate Vice President for Overseas Study and the SPEA Office of Overseas Education, determines that your conduct is detrimental to the best interests of the program or of Indiana University, your participation in the program may be terminated.

The host institution and program directors have primary responsibility for discipline in connection with violations of its regulations, and in extreme cases may also become a matter of concern to the host government. For example, student demonstrations that start out on a peaceful basis can rapidly escalate into confrontations with the police.

In criminal matters (which may be defined differently outside the U.S.) neither IU nor U.S. consular officials can intercede effectively on your behalf. In some countries the burden of proof rests with the defense and not with the prosecution.

E-MAIL

You will have e-mail access abroad. It is important that you maintain regular e-mail contact at your IU e-mail address. Students who want to use gmail or other e-mail services should have their IU e-mail messages forwarded to their preferred account.

IU LIBRARY SERVICES

Online IU Library resources, including the IU catalog, library instruction pages, and journal indexes with full-text articles, are available to all IU students via www.libraries.iub.edu
SAFETY

When traveling abroad American visitors are generally safe and are not singled out or targeted based on their nationality, but rather for looking like a tourist. Americans tend not to experience crime in any large numbers. This does not mean that Americans are immune from crime. Most of the crimes committed against American tourists and visitors fall in the category of petty theft, such as pickpocketing and purse snatching. General advice for safeguarding valuables is as follows:

WHILE ON FOOT

Be cognizant of your surroundings. Know where you need to go and walk with a purpose. Do not give the impression that you are off balance in your walking style or appear to be lost or wandering. There is evidence that criminals will observe these vulnerabilities and target these types of individuals. Also, do not walk close to the street or too close to the buildings and utilize crosswalks when crossing the street. Whenever possible, walk against the traffic.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Be attentive to your surroundings and keep control of your personal items. While waiting in line, keep your luggage close to your person, or put the luggage straps through your arm or one of your legs to keep control of your personal belongings.

AIR TRAVEL

Security measures at airport facilities and on aircrafts will require that you take additional precautions when flying. You should be prepared to comply with multiple document checks, baggage searches, and inquiries. Be patient – these steps are being taken for your protection. Check your airline’s website for luggage and ticket policies within 24 hours of your departure. More stringent size and weight restrictions often mean the providing excess and/or overweight baggage will result in additional (and often high) fees.

Arrive at the airport early, at least two to three hours before scheduled departure for international travel. Be sure to have your ticket, paperwork, and passport available.
PACKING
Examine everything that you normally pack in your suitcase and evaluate whether an object could be scrutinized by airport security (this includes items found in manicure kits like nail clippers and scissors). No knives of any size will be accepted. Avoid over-packing so that carry-on luggage and checked suitcases can be opened and closed with ease. Consider purchasing TSA-approved travel locks for your suitcases to prevent theft during travel. Such locks will also be an extra safeguard for packing valuables and leaving suitcases in a hotel room or hostel.

IN TRANSIT
Maintain your sense of awareness and keep your possessions with you at all times. Do not leave your bags unattended or ask a stranger to watch your luggage.

UPON ARRIVAL
Have your luggage receipts available for verification when retrieving luggage. You should also arrange for travel between the airport and your place of residence before leaving the U.S. Find a reputable taxi company in the city beforehand to determine rates and time of pick-up in advance. Depending on the country, regulation for taxis and forms of public transportation may differ from the U.S.; it is common in some countries to find that unmarked taxis are the norm for transportation. Research in advance the travel options available between the airport and your place of residence.

CAR TRAVEL
No matter where you travel, you will face threats with car travel. Road safety standards and risks are comparable between the U.S. and Western Europe, but in developing countries, you may be exposed to narrow, winding roads with no guardrails on hairpin turns, poorly maintained vehicles, and dangerously overcrowded buses. Even in developed countries drivers may be more aggressive than in the U.S., and speeding and passing may be more common.

✔ Keep track of local holidays that increase traffic and exercise the same caution you would on a holiday weekend in the U.S.
✔ Do not ride in a car without wearing a seat belt.
✔ Demand that taxi and bus drivers drive safely. “Slow down,” “Stop,” and “Let me out,” are three of the most powerful phrases you can learn in the language of your host country.
✔ Do not hitchhike under any circumstances.

The Association for Safe International Road Travel (www.asirt.org) offers statistics, tips, and articles about road safety around the world.
PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL

✓ Avoid crowded areas where you are most likely to be robbed: crowded bus stations, market places, festivals. Do not use narrow alleys or poorly lit streets.

✓ Avoid traveling alone at night.

✓ Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will jostle you, ask for directions or the time, point to something spilled on your clothing or distract you by causing a disturbance. Beware of groups of vagrant children who create a distraction while picking your pocket.

✓ Try to seem purposeful while you walk about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know what you are doing and where you are going.

✓ Pay extra attention to traffic signals when traveling by foot, especially in crowded areas as drivers may not obey that pedestrians have the right-of-way.

HOTEL and HOSTEL STAYS

✓ Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby. Do not give out information about your room number. Leave valuables at the front desk, as many will have secure lockboxes for valuables.

✓ Request a room on the second floor or above to reduce potential access through ground-level windows. Be sure windows are securely shut and locked.

✓ Be aware of your surroundings. Take note of exits and stairways for use in case of emergencies.

✓ Choose places to stay that offer a locker or safe. Buy padlocks for your backpack and other luggage items.

✓ If a place you are staying at makes you feel uncomfortable and/or unsafe, find a new place to stay.

✓ Be wary of sheets and comforters in hotel rooms, particularly when staying in low-budget hotels or hostels or in developing countries. Consider buying a sheet to travel with if planning on staying at budget hotels or hostels.

It may prove helpful to research hotels and hostels before you leave the U.S. Many websites have information on rates, services, security, location and reviews by other travelers. Reputable travel guidebooks provide information on various hotel options and often rank these hotels based on prices and security.
TELEPHONE, LAPTOP, AND PDA SECURITY

Do not leave electronic devices unattended. Do not transport them in your checked baggage. Shield passwords from view. Avoid public wireless networks if you can; they are insecure. In most countries, you can have no expectation of privacy in Internet cafés, hotels, airplanes, or public spaces. All information you send electronically can be intercepted, especially wireless communications.

Sanitize your electronic devices prior to travel and ensure no sensitive contact, research, or personal data is on them. Back up your computer with an external hard drive before you leave the U.S. in case of loss or damage to your personal computer while abroad. IU students can download free software including antivirus software and privacy protection programs such as Identity Finder from University Information Technology Services IU Ware site to provide security and prevent identity theft. Cyber criminals from numerous countries buy and sell stolen financial information including credit card data and login credentials (usernames and passwords). Regularly change your passwords and check devices for malware.

DRUG-SPIKING CRIMES

Recently the U.S. Department of State has reported an increase in drug-spinging crimes. Motives include theft or robbery, kidnapping, extortion, sexual assaults and even amusement. There are reportedly over 60 different drugs recognized as “spiking” agents. Many of them are cheap and readily available. These drugs, for the most part, are odorless, tasteless, and colorless, and most will leave the body before 72 hours of gestation. The following steps can help to avoid becoming a victim of drugs and/or alcohol:

✓ Try not to go out alone. If possible, go to clubs, parties and so on with a group of friends and plan to leave together.
✓ Before going out, bring a cell phone and make sure it is fully charged.
✓ Never accept a drink from a stranger.
✓ Never leave your drink unattended.
✓ If a drink looks or tastes different or has been moved or topped off, do not drink it.
✓ If an individual begins to feel sick, woozy, or intoxicated they should tell a group member/friend or someone behind the bar, go somewhere safe, and call for help if needed.
✓ If someone collapses or becomes unconscious immediately call an ambulance, advise the management of the establishment, and do not leave the friend alone.
✓ If sent to the hospital, tell the staff of the suspicion so they can run the proper tests.
✓ Do not think only alcohol drinks are spiked; food, soft drinks, and cigarettes can be spiked as well.
PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

MONEY MANAGEMENT

Major credit card and a 4-digit PIN permits a cash advance on your credit card. This is a fast and simple option, but it involves a fee, and interest is charged. VISA, MasterCard, and American Express are widely recognized throughout the world, but some regions favor one over the others. Check an up-to-date guidebook to find out which card is most commonly accepted in your host country.

Use your card at least once before you leave the U.S., and find out your bank's overseas ATM fees as well as limits on withdrawals. ATMs are plentiful throughout most areas of the world, but students going to non-traditional study abroad destinations should check a reliable guidebook for more information on availability of ATMs.

If planning to use ATM debit or credit cards be sure to check with your bank(s) to confirm that you can do so in the country or countries in which you will be traveling. Some banks, if they received no notice of your travel abroad, will block purchases in a foreign country. It is a good idea to keep contact information for your bank in the U.S. on hand in case of an emergency. (If your wallet is misplaced or stolen, have contact information handy in order to cancel and clear unauthorized charges.)

Be prepared in case of loss or theft of financial resources. Keep important information such as check serial numbers and credit card phone numbers separate from original documents. When withdrawing money from an ATM, preferably go with someone you know and never count money in front of the ATM. Quickly stow money in a safe place (e.g., a money belt) to ensure you are protected from theft or pickpocketing. Even in Western European countries, foreign students regularly experience pickpocketing and theft if not careful and attentive to their surroundings.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY CARD

You can often get student discounts while studying abroad or traveling (e.g., hostel accommodations, museum entrances, theater tickets) with your own IU student identification card or a student identification card issued by your local host institution. Other international ID cards such as ISIC and iNext will also garner discounts and other benefits.

The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) can provide discounts on international and local transportation, accommodations, and admissions to museums, theaters, historical sites, etc. For more information, see the STA website (www.statravel.com).
The iNext card can make you eligible for travel, accommodation, entertainment, and cultural discounts worldwide. Cards include both health and travel insurance coverage – accident, sickness, hospital, transport, repatriation, baggage, and document replacement benefits. For more information, see the iNext website (www.inext.com).

TELEPHONING

On most programs students find that having a cell phone is a convenient way to stay in touch locally, and some program sites now require every student to have a cell phone to facilitate communication. Many of the newer U.S. cell phones can accommodate a SIM card that you would purchase from a country abroad. You should contact your cell phone service provider to inquire if that would be an option, although it may be more costly than purchasing a pay-as-you-go cell phone abroad. Program providers very often provide detailed information about cell phone options.

Connection, maintenance, and surcharge fees often apply to cell phones being used internationally – even to countries within the same world area – and the charge for minutes can vary significantly from provider to provider and vary based on the registration location of the SIM card. Check these details carefully before purchasing a costly service. All major U.S. carriers issue international calling cards that permit you to bill calls to a charge card or a U.S. telephone number. Calling cards work from public phones and cell phones.

Some students stay in touch with friends and family via services such as Skype (www.skype.com). Note that these require computers and highspeed Internet connections. Skype is a popular choice because its program is free to use and can be downloaded onto some cell phones (download before leaving the U.S.).

TRAVEL RESOURCES

Should you plan to travel around from your program on weekends and breaks, plan ahead by bringing travel guidebooks for those destinations (Lonely Planet, Rough Guides, etc.). Also, prepare and bring a list of useful travel websites (e.g., lonelyplanet.com). These may include listings for cheap hotels and youth hostels as well as discount airlines. Be flexible with your travel plans, and always carry contact information for hotels, reputable taxi
companies, airlines, etc., in case of an emergency or to prepare for travel to areas with limited internet access. Please inform your program director of any travel plans outside of the program so that they know where you are and your specific plans in case of an emergency.

ILLEGAL DRUGS

DO NOT USE illegal drugs. Drugs can impair your judgment in situations that require increased awareness. In addition, penalties abroad can be very severe if you violate local drug laws. Remember that you will not be eligible for U.S. legal protection, and you will be held to the laws of the country where you are living. If you are caught with illegal drugs as a participant of a SPEA Abroad program, you may face expulsion from the program.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ABROAD

Indiana University will work to protect your health and safety overseas, but you must take responsibility for the results of your decisions, choices, and behavior. Before the program, read carefully and consider the information given to you by the SPEA Office of Overseas Education regarding your health and special needs; and together with your family, review the Overseas Study safety and responsibility guidelines (www.indiana.edu/~overseas/).

You are also encouraged to consult the State Department Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html and the Centers for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov. While IU can provide information about health and safety issues, we cannot eliminate all risks from a study abroad environment or ensure that U.S. standards of due process will be applied in legal proceedings outside this country.

Please be especially alert to the following aspects of living abroad:

ALCOHOL

One of the best ways to protect yourself abroad is to avoid excessive drinking. Although alcohol may be more accessible at your program site than in the U.S., if you drink alcohol at all, do so in moderation. Not only may inebriation be culturally offensive, more importantly, it can impair your judgment in critical moments when you most need to be alert (e.g., driving, finding your home late at night, socializing with strangers). Drunken behavior that disturbs other students or residents at your housing location will not be tolerated and may result in penalties to the student imposed by program directors and staff.
HAZARDOUS ACTIVITIES

Students abroad sometimes participate in new activities in which they are not well-practiced or proficient. Be cautious if you are attempting any activity that has an element of danger or risk, particularly if you are far from assistance. These activities can include but are not limited to rock climbing, cliff jumping, snorkeling, bungee jumping, skydiving and skiing. Many insurance companies will not cover accidents that occur during engagement in sports or activities deemed to be dangerous, including those listed above.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

You are likely to experience some form of culture shock during your time abroad, but this should not be confused with a real emotional crisis. If you feel withdrawn or detached and cannot cope with your environment, ask the program director on site for guidance and/or a recommendation for a skilled health care provider.

If your problem involves an eating disorder, share your situation with someone before you become seriously weakened. Any medication that you take for a mental health condition should be continued during your time abroad since an interruption in medication can produce serious consequences.

PUBLIC DISTURBANCES

Keep a low profile during political events abroad that may be anti-American in nature. At such times, avoid places that attract Americans and dress to fit in with the local culture. Be wary about unattended packages or backpacks in public places like subways, trains, and buses and report such unclaimed objects to a local authority.

In the event of public disturbances abroad – including violent demonstrations, terrorist acts and natural disasters – do not get involved; get in touch with your program staff to report on your own situation and to find out how the event may impact you as well as others around you. Also contact your friends and family, if possible, since they may hear about the disturbances on the news and will be concerned about your safety.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

If you feel you may be the victim of sexual harassment, consult the program administration immediately. They can help you sort out the difference between unacceptable harassment and culturally acceptable behavior which is nonetheless uncomfortable for you. Note that some cultures view gender and relationships in a very different way from the U.S. that may make you uncomfortable. In the case of
sexual harassment, you may need to file a report at the local police station with the assistance of the program administrator on-site.

PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

Part of your success abroad will depend on how well you have prepared the logistics covered earlier in this handbook, but even more depends on how you prepare yourself for cultural adjustments and personal growth abroad.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR HOME COUNTRY

Every student abroad is inevitably put in the position of having to explain (or even defend) the home country’s political or economic system or its stance on global issues. Continue to keep abreast of your home country’s role in the global arena, as you will often be asked about your viewpoints and the current events of your home country. Students often report that they wish they had brushed up on such basics as how a bill becomes a law in the U.S. or the composition of the European Union before going abroad.

Remember, however, that you probably don’t want to get into a hostile debate with questioners or automatically defend everything that is American. What are some strategies for deflecting potentially hostile questions so that they lead to conversations in which everybody listens and everyone learns? It is important to be sensitive to cultural differences and potential conflicts based on your views and your home country.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR HOST COUNTRY

Learn as much as possible about the country to which you are traveling, since understanding the culture will facilitate your adjustment to living there. How do you plan to inform yourself about the host country before arrival? Taking courses is one method, but you can also independently explore histories, periodicals, novels, travel books, videos, and tapes that inform you about the differences in daily life you will encounter overseas.

Prior to departure from the U.S., it may be helpful to read up on current events of the host country in the weeks and months before arrival. This will give you an opportunity to better understand the political, economic, and social environment of your host country; you will be more knowledgeable and interested in your host country if you do some research beforehand.
YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Take a personal inventory of your expectations. What do you hope to gain from your overseas learning experience? What expectations do you have of yourself? Identify your goals – linguistic, academic, and career. How are you going to achieve them? How will you track your personal growth throughout this overseas experience? Outlining your goals now and then keeping a journal while abroad will help you map both your inner and outer journeys. Indeed, daily writing, which attempts to interpret the cross-cultural meanings of your experiences, may be your most powerful learning tool. If you are intending to blog about your experience and would like to share your blog with other students, then please contact the SPEA Overseas Program Office to link it on the SPEA Abroad website.

You should also clarify your external expectations; what expectations do you have of your peers? What expectations do you have of the locals in your host country? Be wary of your expectations of others and try to empathize with the people around you. Having an open mind and a positive attitude throughout your overseas experience will have a significant impact on your peers. Remember, you can serve as a positive role model and make friends in your host country based on your perceptions and actions throughout your stay.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

You will adjust in many small ways over a period of time to the new culture, even though the familiar term “Culture Shock,” leads you to expect a jolting and immediate clash of values. While there are many differences between the U.S. and your host country to which you will have to adjust, the following are particularly significant. You can access additional information at http://overseas.iu.edu/living/index.shtml.

GENDER ROLES

Both male and female students abroad will discover that growing up in the U.S. has prepared them for different roles in society than the ones their contemporaries in other countries expect. Many events in recent decades have heightened U.S. awareness of gender stereotypes, sexism, and the limitations of traditional male-female roles. However, it may not be politically correct to suggest to your host country friends that U.S. patterns are appropriate for their culture. Instead, look at gender differences in the host culture from its historical and sociological perspective. Since you will be viewed according to the gender expectations of the host culture, you may feel uncomfortable at times. This is particularly true for female students who may find themselves the targets of unwanted attention. Again, this is an important instance in which prior research will prove helpful to adapting to differences in gender roles and to gain a better understanding on why the gender roles in your host country differ than those in your home country.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Just as traditional gender roles have been questioned in the U.S., we also have had extensive dialogue regarding sexual orientation in recent years. It is highly important to conduct research on your host country's political and social stance on sexual orientation, particularly if you are a LGBT individual. These stances range from complete freedom in some countries in Western Europe to strict illegality of homosexuality in many developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. For safety and security purposes, prior research and preparation is essential when traveling to a more LGBT-hostile country.

DIFFERENT ABILITIES

The passage of legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act has spurred schools in the U.S. to accommodate students with varying abilities. Other countries are not bound by U.S. legislation, of course, and physical facilities and academic resources vary significantly from one overseas site to another.

The SPEA Office of Overseas Education endeavors to provide reasonable accommodation for students with documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, etc.), but only if you disclose your needs to us well before the program begins. If you are currently receiving disability-related accommodations at IU or anticipate needing them at your program site, send the SPEA Office of Overseas Education documentation that confirms the disability, information about the accommodation currently provided, and details about accommodation requested abroad. SPEA Office of Overseas Education will then be in a position to work with you, Disability Services for Students and other relevant offices to seek appropriate responses for your needs.

RELIGION

Few countries have the religious diversity and pluralism that you find in the U.S. and few have such a strong tradition of separation of church and state. As a result, you may be struck by the number of public holidays that are based on a religious calendar and the extent of public prayer and public religious ceremonies. You will have to probe to understand the relationship between external, ritual manifestations of religion and individual beliefs or the role of religion as a political element or an active social force. People in your host country may ask you about your religious beliefs and the role of religion in your home country; do not be offended if such questions arise. People in your host country are curious to learn more about you and your culture and often view religion as a significant aspect of society. This is a great opportunity to exchange cultural information and gain insight on the intersection of religion, culture and politics in other parts of the world.
ETHNICITIES

U.S. citizens often identify strongly with their family’s cultural and ethnic heritage and refer to themselves as Asian-American, Italian-American, African-American, or Hispanic-American. In other countries such ethnic differences are often overlooked, and U.S. students report that for the first time they have been identified (and have identified themselves) as simply “American.” Students may find that physical features that distinguish them from the host population may result in stares, comments or overt prejudice. Consult the SPEA Office of Overseas Education regarding these matters, particularly if there are certain areas to avoid and steps to take to minimize negative interactions.

CULTURE SHOCK

“Culture shock” is the term used to describe the disorientation that every student experiences to some degree when spending an extended period in a new culture. The common symptoms include homesickness, boredom, withdrawing from the culture by spending excessive amounts of time alone or with other Americans, excessive sleeping, compulsive eating, irritability, stereotyping or hostility toward host country nationals, weepiness or even some psychosomatic illnesses. Although you will inevitably experience some degree of culture shock, you certainly won’t have all these symptoms. If you recognize what is happening, keep busy, and ask friends and the program office staff for help when you need it; culture shock will not last long. This is a completely normal and expected experience for students while studying abroad. During your period abroad, you may experience several normal stages of cultural adaptation. These include:

1. *Initial euphoria.* When you first arrive in the new culture, everything seems wonderful and exciting, and you are struck with how similar people around the world can be.

2. *Irritation and hostility.* Your focus changes from the similarities between cultures to the differences, and the differences become irritating and frustrating. Small problems loom as major catastrophes.

3. *Gradual adjustment.* The crisis of adjustment passes. The new culture seems more familiar and you move more confidently in it. You make friends. You learn to interpret some of the subtle cultural clues and cues.

4. *Adaptation and biculturalism.* You are able to function in two cultures with confidence. You are so well adapted to the new culture that return to the US will provoke “reverse culture-shock.”
There are several ways you can minimize the impact of culture shock:

1. Learn as much as you can about your host country before you go.

2. Keep an open mind. Combine the best of your host country's culture and life with all the good things in American culture. This “best of both worlds” approach will help you get the most out of the full cultural immersion you experience.

3. Be flexible. There will be many surprises, and the more open you are to that, the more exciting and wonderful your experiences will be.

4. Pay attention to wall posters and read a local newspaper to learn what is going on in the city (i.e. festivals, exhibits, concerts). Visit local student hangouts – cafes, pubs, and movie theaters.

5. Look into local volunteer opportunities through a social service agency, a school or a church.

RE-ENTRY: REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

Once you have adapted to life abroad, coming home will require readjustment to U.S. culture. You will have to integrate what you have learned abroad into your U.S. life. You will cope with reentry at various levels:

Family: You may be expected to fit back into your family but find it difficult to communicate effectively because they have not shared your international experiences. They may have difficulty adjusting to your new independence and changed values.

✓ Strategies: Try to share your experience with your family (photos, stories, etc.) and let them know how much you appreciate the chance they have given you to grow in new ways by studying and traveling overseas.

Friends: You and your friends may no longer be as close. Be sensitive about discussing your experience with them. You may also miss the new friends you made abroad.

✓ Strategies: Ask and listen to what your friends experienced while you were away. Ask them to bring you up to date on local events. Try to do new things together to get the relationship on a new footing. Maintain contact with friends you met on your program.

School: You are likely to look at your home campus in a new light, and you may miss being part of a close-knit group of American students.

✓ Strategies: Talk over your academic experience with your advisor, especially if you are considering new career goals. Make contacts with international students on your campus through the International Center. SPEA is home to a diverse group of international students and are often involved in international student groups on campus. Contact the SPEA Office of
Overseas Education and volunteer to talk to students who plan to study abroad. Seek out other students on campus who have studied overseas. Investigate the possibility of living in an international dormitory or take part in activities for international students.

Country: Aspects of the U.S. may no longer be entirely to your liking and you may have the sense that you no longer fit in. You will probably evaluate ideas and events the context of the broader cultural perspective you acquired abroad.

✓ Strategies: Recognize that we all tend to look past the shortcomings of our home culture when we are away, and to criticize it on the basis of changed perceptions when we return. Seek out others on your campus who are interested in international and intercultural matters. Keep up your interest through newspapers, literature, music, friends, etc.

Self: You have become accustomed to a level of activity and anticipation that your home and campus probably cannot match. It is natural to feel a little restless or a bit depressed for a while after your return.

✓ Strategies: Recuperate from the physical journey. Think over the ways you have changed: Which of those do you like? What did you learn about yourself? How have your family and friends reacted to the new you? Keep a journal so you can see your thoughts evolve. Talk with other returning students. Get involved with student organizations on campus with a specific focus on your host country or international travel and learning. Take lessons in the language of your host country or attend Language Conversation Hours on campus or in Bloomington. Keep regular contact with friends from the host country over the phone or through the internet.

Feel free to contact the team at the SPEA Overseas Education Programs office with any additional questions or concerns you may have!

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