

**Associated Colleges of the South (ACS)  
Study Abroad Module**

**Learning Goals:**

- Develop new skills and insights that will be useful for you while abroad and in the future.
- Explore your expectations, cultural identity, and worldview.
- Recognize cultural adjustment/transition processes.
- Develop strategies for engaging with the host culture.
- Articulate the skills and qualities that come from effective education abroad; recognize how these skills develop through actions during preparation, engagement, and re-entry.
- Tell an effective story about your personal and professional growth as a result of your international experience.

**Final Assignment:**

Using your choice of a storytelling method, you will produce a reflective summary or project about your experience that you can use in a variety of ways both personally and professionally. This assignment may differ depending on directions from your home institution, however, most projects should result in a digital file that includes a narrative with video or slides lasting 2-5 minutes.

**Preparation:**

Each phase of the course will build upon your knowledge of yourself and your host culture and will culminate in a final project in which you communicate your experience. Each phase of the course invites you to explore and implement various storytelling methods (see appendices for ideas). Your project may focus on a single topic about which you hope to gain a better understanding at your study abroad destination, or it may be more general about your overall experience.

**Assessment and Evaluation:**

This course will be assessed based upon a rubric found in the appendices. Individual institutions are responsible for determining how this course will be evaluated. Please check with your Education Abroad Office for details.

## **Before You Depart**

### **I. Introduction**

While it can be dangerous to stereotype about a diverse group of people “Americans,” it is worth exploring our cultural values and norms. The list below generalizes about US culture. You might identify with some of the “rules;” while others might not agree with your own experience or feel like rules at all. Still, reflecting on these cultural markers will help you answer questions that relate to your sense of identity and your time abroad.<sup>[1]</sup>

- Time matters and efficiency is very important.
- Clothing and body posture are not important; it’s who you are inside.
- Honesty about your feelings is always good.
- Let’s be practical—assess the situation; see what works and what doesn’t and change things accordingly.
- Change is always possible and almost always good.
- It’s good to speak out about what is wrong and make it right.
- Egalitarian relationships are morally preferable to hierarchical ones.
- Polite conversation avoids politics.
- American politics is politics.
- Being loud as a group in public is cool.

#### ***The Hidden Rules of Americans***

You may wish to read the following to explore American identity further at the link below:

[Glimpse- Study Abroad Acclimation Guide: American Identity Abroad Guide](#)

### **II. In addition to the Hidden Rules of Americans reflection, answer the following questions:**

1. How do you anticipate your identity will affect how you view and live within your host country or destination(s)?
2. How do you feel about the place and people where you will live and study? Why?
3. How would you characterize a successful study abroad experience? How do you envision yourself having a successful study abroad experience?
4. What challenges do you expect to encounter when you are studying abroad and how are you preparing yourself to handle them?

### **III. Based on your answers, follow these steps:**

1. Compose a reflection paper (at least 500 words) by answering the question(s).
2. Turn your reflection paper into an interview “script.” Your script should be comprised of a series of questions and the corresponding responses.
3. Using your phone or another device, create a video of the interview. You can do this by yourself, or have a friend or family member ask you the questions you developed. You could also film with another student preparing to travel; in this case you may find it more effective to have a conversation with your partner rather than an interview. It does not matter if the other student is going on the same program or not.
4. Save the video.

<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Ruby K Payne, 2019, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty - A Cognitive Approach* (Sixth Edition), aha! Process, Inc.; Gary Althen, 2003, *American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States* (Second Edition), Intercultural Press; and personal experiences and observations.

## While You Are Abroad

**Now that you are abroad, capture your experiences through image or video and reflect again on your identity and the transitions you may be experiencing.** Capture images or video moments that stand out to you as important for use in your final project upon completion of your program abroad. For example, capture moments from visits to historical and cultural sites and events, performances, natural or man-made sites. Think also about social occasions and interactions or transactions with local individuals (always ask permission before filming or taking photos). You may wish to include everyday things such as the bus commute to class, daily shopping, or a group project. The point is to capture those moments that are meaningful to you as they occur, and that are representative of your experience. (Consider resources listed in the appendix about ethnographic approaches cultural study.)

### While Abroad: Midpoint Reflection

- I. Directions: answer all prompts, using your medium of choice (written, voice recorded, images and video)**
  1. How is your identity influencing what you are seeing and experiencing in your host country?
  2. How are you feeling about the place and people where you are living and studying? Why?
  3. Are you having a successful study abroad experience? How do you know? What would you like to do differently, if anything?
  4. What challenges are you encountering? Why? How are you reacting to these challenges?
  
- II. Based on your answers, follow these steps:**
  1. Compose a reflection paper (at least 500 words) by answering the question(s).
  2. Turn your reflection paper into an interview “script.” Your script should be comprised of a series of questions and the corresponding responses.
  3. Using your phone or another device, create a video of the interview. You can do this by yourself, or have a friend or family member ask you the questions you developed. You could also film with another student preparing to travel; in this case you may find it more effective to have a conversation with your partner rather than an interview.
  
- III. Save your midpoint assignment.**

## When You Return

### **I. Final Project Directions**

Using your pre-departure interview or conversation, your midpoint reflection assignment, and additional images and video you have collected, create **your final project**. **This project should build upon** the questions you answered before departure and while abroad plus the summative questions listed below: This assignment may differ depending on directions from your home institution, however, most projects should result in a digital file that includes a narrative with video or slides lasting 2-5 minutes.

1. What are some important things you discovered and learned while abroad? Why?
2. How did your attitudes about your own culture and that of the host country change during your time abroad?
3. What did you learn about yourself and your own identity during your time abroad?
4. How are you different because of your experience abroad?

### **II. Final Project Tips**

You may find it important to include images and video of your home environment and culture as a way of comparing and contrasting your experience. Using the medium of your choice, your final story should explain in some way how your experience abroad changed you. You might benefit from pairing with another student during the production process. Consider friends from abroad or from the ACS Study Abroad *slack* network or your education abroad or faculty advisors. Strategies for pairing might include brainstorming the best medium for you to explore this story, writing your story as a creative work for review, seeking feedback on your project. See the list of resources below for ideas.

## Resources

### Networking with Study Abroad Students:

Slack Network/ACS Study Abroad (login using your ACS college/university.edu e-mail and it will pop-up - <https://slack.com/signin>)

### Digital Storytelling Resources:

How to Tell a Great Story <https://hbr.org/2014/07/how-to-tell-a-great-story>

Writing to explore: a journal writer's guide for students abroad

[https://www.hws.edu/academics/global/pdf/journal\\_writers.pdf](https://www.hws.edu/academics/global/pdf/journal_writers.pdf)

Digital Storytelling Links-Felix Kronenberg's excellent collection of links to digital storytelling tools

<http://www.languagetechnologybootcamp.org/links/>

Pecha Kucha: <https://www.pechakucha.com/>

Story Maps: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/>

Seven Student-Tested Digital Storytelling Tools (includes some video-editing alternatives iMovie), by Susan Lucille Davis

<https://www.gettingsmart.com/2013/04/7-student-tested-digital-storytelling-tools/>

Microsoft Photo Story (helps you edit still photos into a slide-show)

<https://microsoft-photo-story.en.softonic.com/>

VoiceThread (Cloud Application) <https://voicethread.com/>

Adobe Spark video: some universities have institutional access. Check with your college/university.

### Music, Sound, Image Archives

Creative Commons-an archive of artistic work and a source for Creative Commons licenses

<https://creativecommons.org/>

### Royalty-Free Music:

Incompetech.com: <https://incompetech.com/music/>

Jamendo <https://www.jamendo.com/> or Internet Archive for "legal" music, videos, etc.

### Cross-Cultural Resources:

What's Up With Culture? School of International Studies, University of the Pacific, Bruce LaBrack, ed. (2003)-<https://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

Watch: TED.com video: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story"

(2009)[http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)

What is a Global Citizen: UNESCO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVSgbU6WVSk>

Paige, R. Michael. [Maximizing Study Abroad: A Students' Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use](#)

Bergan, Stacie, Goodman, Allan, Taylor, Cyril (2013). [A Student Guide to Study Abroad](http://www.iiebooks.org/stgutostab.html). IIE Publications.  
<http://www.iiebooks.org/stgutostab.html>

### [Glimpse- Study Abroad Acclimation Guide: American Identity Abroad Guide](#)

Diversity and Inclusion Guide:

<https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/diversity-guide-to-study-abroad>

Benefits and Challenges of Diversity in Academic Settings:

[https://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Benefits\\_Challenges.pdf](https://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Benefits_Challenges.pdf).

What to Know About Studying Abroad as a Minority: <https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/studying-abroad-as-minority>

### **Travel and Safety Suggestions:**

U.S. Students Abroad Students <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go.html>

LGBTI Travelers <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/lgbti.html>

Travelers With Disabilities <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/traveling-with-disabilities.html>

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program STEP

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/step.html>

Exploring the "Ten Top Immediate Reentry Challenges" <https://www.gettysburg.edu/dotAsset/0bfcd1fb-554e-4adb-80de-3068e54c9bb6.pdf>

Digital storytelling with Powerpoint: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2MbBSc6930>

[How to create a digital story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVKeO5IIR\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVKeO5IIR_A)

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Telling research data through a story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSi0kmqOBu4>

