Learning Abroad
Pre-departure Orientation
# Session Outline

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Before You Go
Visa/Passport

- Visa - necessary for extended periods of stay in most cases
- Passport - necessary for international travel
  - Keep copies in various places
Travel Basics

- Carry-ons and luggage
- Keep travel/flight info on hand for both directions
- Medication abroad
- Research weather & culture
- Jet Lag – stay hydrated, get on local time
Finances

- INFORM YOUR BANKS!
  - Let any financial institutions know where and when you’re traveling
  - Check on international fees for purchases and cash withdrawals
- Currency Exchange
- Remember: some locations may only take cash
- Don’t carry large sums of cash on you
Technology

- Cell phones
  - CONTACT YOUR PROVIDER!
  - Consider purchasing a pre-paid card and phone upon arrival
- Laptop & other electronics
  - You’ll likely need an adapter
  - Consider buying small appliances like hair dryers or alarm clocks when you arrive
While Abroad
Immigration/Customs
Culture Shock

culture shock

noun

the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.
Culture Shock - Asian Countries
Culture Shock—Asian Countries

- Religion (or lack thereof), spirituality
- Cities may be congested, heavily populated
- Traffic, public transit, travel may take longer than expected
- Languages, dialects, speed of speech, colloquialisms/slang
- Eye contact may be seen as confrontational
- Expectations for lines/queues may not be the same (depending on country/city)
Culture Shock - Oceanic Countries
Culture Shock-
Oceanic Countries

- Time difference of over half a day
- School terms usually follow the calendar year
- Their summer is opposite our summer
- Different English- colloquialisms, slang, etc.
- Prices are often higher than in the US
Culture Shock - European Countries
Culture Shock - European Countries

- There may be more or less religious diversity
- Less emphasis on customer service
  - Typically little to no tipping (check with provider)
- Dress is typically not as casual as in US
- Dinner is much later in the evening
- Meals are family/social time and may last long
- You will walk a lot
- Public transportation is easily accessible
Culture Shock-
Latin American Countries
Culture Shock -
Latin American Countries

- Less emphasis on punctuality
- Dinner is much later in the evening
- Meals are family/social time and may last long
- Family is more important than many things
- Men may stare or flirt with women without invitation, be aware of your body language
- Poverty is more visible in many areas
- People may be bluntly honest
Toilets Abroad

- Squat toilets
  - Watch a video on how to use them
  - Don’t be scared
- Toilet Paper
  - Sometimes it is not meant to be flushed
  - Use supplied waste bin
  - Might not be available - carry your own
- Carry change with you for public restrooms
Culture Shock - Coping Strategies

- Admit your discomfort, confusion, or frustration
- Learn the rules and norms
- Be engaged in the new culture
- Stay healthy and well: physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.
- Get out and explore
- Make friends - both locals and other international students
- Maintain an appropriate level of contact with friends and family at home
- Keep an open mind and avoid judgment
Safety & Emergencies

- Know the location and contact information for:
  - US Embassy/Consulate
  - Local law enforcement, emergency response
- Ask provider for clarification on local/national laws
- Keep local contact info on you and know how to contact them at all times
- Enroll in the US Dept of State’s STEP Program
Safety Abroad

- Stay in groups when possible
- Dress like a local where appropriate
  - Avoid clothing and accessories that indicate you are an American tourist
- Keep valuables hidden, don’t discuss them
- Leave irreplaceable items in U.S.
- Avoid going out at night alone

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY
Call 911
Emergencies Abroad

- UHPD Emergency Line (24/7) – 001-713-743-3333
- Affiliated - Get in touch with local contact
- Faculty-Led - Get in touch with faculty leader
- Exchange - Get in touch with host university contact
- Other tips:
  - ISIC – Keep ISIC Card on your person
  - Contact Learning Abroad
  - Check your email daily & respond
Alcohol & Other Drugs

- Drinking ages abroad vs. as a UH Student
  - You must still adhere to the Student Code of Conduct while abroad – no drinking under the age of 21
- Drug laws may be much more strict in other countries
- If you get arrested for any reason, your first call should be to the US Embassy in that country
Pickpocketing

- Avoid putting valuables in coat pockets or in bags that may be easy to reach into.
- If someone physically bumps into you, check your pockets.
- Pickpocketers sometimes work in pairs or groups.
- If something seems suspicious, apologize and walk away.
- If someone tries to give you something for free, don’t take it.
Staying in Touch

- It may not be a good idea to stay in constant contact with friends and family
  - Can lead to homesickness or unnecessary worrying on either end
- Use social media if possible
  - Blogs are great!
- Let people know if you might be without internet for a while so they don’t worry
- Clarify perceived emergencies
Academics Abroad

- Take your academics seriously!
  - Grades come back to UH and affect your GPA
- Teaching styles can be very different overseas
- Grading can be very different or more difficult
- Language Placement Test info reminders
Placeholder Courses

- xxRE/xxAF courses may appear on your account
  - Don’t drop them!
- The only digits that matter are the first two
  - 15xx/23xx/33xx, etc.
- Courses will always appear this way on myUH, but actual course name will appear on transcripts
Things to Consider While Abroad

- Course registration for term you return
- Securing housing for your return
- Bills to pay while you’re gone
- Holidays (home & away)
- Checking UH email
- Frequent Flyer Miles
- Send us photos while you are abroad! #CoogsAbroad
Reverse culture shock, or re-entry, is simply a common reaction to returning home from studying abroad. It is an emotional and psychological stage of re-adjustment, similar to your initial adjustment to living abroad.
Reverse Culture Shock Coping Strategies

- Have a 1 minute and a 5 minute recap of your time abroad
  - Be patient with yourself and others
  - Not everyone will understand or be interested in the things you learned
- Keep in touch with others from your cohort
- Get involved!
Getting Involved

- UH Learning Abroad events
  - Pre-Departure Orientations
  - Open Houses
  - LA Fairs
- Global Guides
- Conversation Partners
- Engage with international students at UH
Learning Abroad provides you the opportunity to gain transferable skills to use in your job search and career goals.
Plans after your time abroad

- Keep your eye out for special Learning Abroad opportunities:
  - Global Guides
  - Career Development Workshops
  - Affiliated provider job opportunities
  - Learning Abroad Alumni Events
  - Go abroad again!
#CoogsAbroad Blog

- Contribute to our new blog!
- Submit a one-time post or contribute often as you’d like.
- See our blog page for inspiration.
- Submissions from all students welcome!
Join Global Guides

Share your story and work with the Global Guides to encourage your peers to go abroad!
Questions?

Use the hashtag to share with others!

#CoogsAbroad

SHARE PHOTOS FROM YOUR TIME ABROAD!

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