

For answers to questions regarding application procedures, program information, responsibilities of participants, pre-departure orientation materials, departure and post-departure information, registration, financial matters, grades, credits, withdrawals, cancellations and expulsions, please read THE HANDBOOK FOR STUDY ABROAD.

General Program Overview

Thanks for your interest in the study abroad program to the Universidad de La Habana, Cuba. At SUNY Oswego, we have brought students to study at the Universidad de La Habana, Cuba since the spring of 2004. We welcome your interest in this program and we look forward to working with you should you choose to pursue studies in Cuba.

This is a direct enrollment program to the Universidad de La Habana. Students take their courses at the UH alongside Cuban students with Cuban professors teaching the courses. This program requires students to be mature and have a willingness to be self-driven and motivated.

Students who apply for this program will be chosen carefully. The choice will be based on your education, maturity level, language preparation, and ability to handle a program that requires a strong and mature student. With the above is a very high expectation that you will represent yourself, the USA, your university/college with the highest of respect and maturity. We also expect that you will also have the highest of respect for Cuba. This means that you will be a student in Cuba and that is it, a student.

1) Can people with no language experience apply?

People without Spanish language experience cannot apply to this program. It requires a high intermediate to advanced level of Spanish.

2) What college/University will I be studying at?

Students accepted to this program will be directly enrolled at the Universidad de La Habana, Cuba in the city of Habana. The university is located in the Vedado area of Habana.

3) What is the required GPA to apply?

Students are required to have a 3.0 GPA or above.

4) Does the University provide any trips?

Yes, there are two educational excursions organized by SUNY Oswego's Office of International Education and Programs. There is one excursion during orientation as well as a mid-semester excursion. The educational excursions are usually to Santa Clara, Trinidad, Cien Fuegos, Pinar del Rio, and Viñales. Note that excursions can change from semester to semester and that your flexibility is very important for this program.

5) What are the exact dates of the program?

The departure date for fall is usually around August 20th to August 25th with a return date scheduled for the 3rd week of December. For the spring semester the departure date is usually the second week of February with a return date scheduled for the third week of June.

6) Will there be a pre-departure orientation/ orientation when I get there?

There will be an orientation at SUNY Oswego. Details on the orientation will be provided to students accepted into the program on the Studio Abroad website. You will be able to sign up for the orientation and let us know who will come with you to orientation. You may invite your parents, relatives, or significant other.

Although orientation is not mandatory, we ask that you do your best to attend. If you are a SUNY Oswego student, we would definitely like to see you at orientation. If you are from very far away, we understand if you can't make it. All the students will receive pre-departure information at orientation and if you are not able to attend, information will be provided to you on Studio Abroad.

There will also be an orientation starting upon arrival to Habana at the airport, José Martí. Everything will be a learning experience, so you will need to relax and enjoy the ride. The orientation in Cuba is mandatory. This means that unless you are sick, you will attend all orientation meetings, activities, and educational excursions. We have been running this program successfully since 2004 and the participation of all students is imperative for a successful program as well as your preparation for the semester.

7) What if I arrive earlier than the group or stay on after the end of the program?

The program does not allow arriving early or staying longer than the program dates. All students in this program arrive to Habana as a group and return to the United States as a group. Flights for this program are out of Toronto, Canada and will be arranged by the SUNY Oswego Office of International Education and Programs.

8) Is housing provided?

Students in this program will be residing at a residence that belongs to the Cuban Institute for International Journalism. The residence is known as “El Costillar”. It is located about 7 to 8 blocks walking distance from the Universidad de La Habana, which means that you will walk to the UH. The residence has 21 rooms; at the present time only American students stay at the residence. There will likely be students from other American universities staying at the residence.

Apart from students, the residence also receives visiting journalists (primarily from Latin America) who will stay at the residence for a week or two.

We don't have a housing preference form for this program. Upon arrival to the residence you will already be assigned a room and a roommate from the program. This residence has been

hosting our students since 2005. The residence is centrally located. It is in the Vedado area of Habana, close to the UH, Centro Habana, Habana Vieja, walking distance from the famous Malecon, and Plaza de la Revolucion.

Housing Address:

Instituto de Periodismo Internacional "El Costillar"
e/ 21 y G, Avenida de los Presidentes
Habana, Cuba

9) Who will I be living with?

You will have a roommate from our SUNY Oswego group program. Only American students stay at the residence for a full semester. The residence also receives visiting journalists primarily from Latin America. The residence has 24 hour security and there is always someone working the front desk (carpeta).

10) Is the cost for housing included in the program fee?

The cost for housing and two meals (breakfast and dinner) are included in the program differential fee. View or download the Budget Sheet online at www.oswego.edu/intled.

11) Are there phones in the residential facilities?

There will be a phone in your room. You cannot call internationally, but you will be able to receive international phone calls. You may make local phone calls.

12) Should I bring a cell phone, or buy one once I get there?

We advise students to purchase a cell phone once in Habana. They tend to be costly so the best way to communicate out of Cuba is internet and via communication lines such as Skype. The residence has three computers that the students share. The computer room is open 24 hours per day. Bring your laptop!

13) Do I make my own flight arrangements?

Flight arrangements will be made by the Program Specialist for Cuba at the SUNY Oswego Office of International Education and Programs. Flights will depart from Toronto, Canada (Pearson International Airport). Once the group flight is arranged, the students will be informed of flight details via e-mail and advised to purchase the ticket.

Everyone will travel as a group to and from Habana, Cuba. No one will be allowed to stay in Cuba past the scheduled return date. There will be no exceptions to this program policy.

14) Will I be met at the airport?

The group of students will be traveling to Cuba with a representative(s) of the SUNY Oswego Office of International Education and Programs. He or she stays for about one and a half weeks in Cuba and helps lead the orientation program. The orientation program in Cuba will be led by

the representative from SUNY Oswego and a representative of the University of Habana's Office of International Relations.

15) Where are the classes held and how often per week?

Students take 12 credits (4 courses). It is mandatory to be full-time. All of your courses will be in Spanish taken alongside Cuban students with Cuban professors teaching the courses. Your courses will take place in the *Facultad de Filosofia e Historia*. Please review the course listing and come up with at least seven courses that you are interested in taking. Meet with your academic advisor and get approval for the courses.

Although you will only take four courses, we ask that you choose seven in case that the primary courses you are interested in are not offered. You will need to have some flexibility on the courses. Final decision on courses and registration takes place in Cuba.

During orientation week, a day will be taken to visit the Universidad de La Habana, have a university tour, meet with the Dean of the Facultad, (Dr. Jose Carlos Vazquez), meet with the Registrars (Julia Piloto- known as Julita) and choose the courses that are available and that you plan to take. This can be a little stressful, but I ask that you go with the flow, have PACIENCIA, and you will finalize the course registration process.

Once classes begin at the UH, you will have two weeks to visit as many classes as you would like and then make a final selection. You will need to provide the final selection of courses to Julita and in consultation with Carmen Castillo (Carmita) from the Office of International Relations at the UH. Please note that Carmita and Dr. Vazquez will be your primary contacts at the UH.

16) Are the classes different than those in the United States?

Due to lack of resources such as computers and internet, Cuban professors use the lecture teaching method to teach their courses. Therefore, be prepared to listen, take lots of notes and enjoy the ride! Class attendance is very important. Your final project for the course will be a paper and/or presentation.

17) Will my credits be accepted at my home school?

Yes, but you will need to do your "homework". This means that you will have to meet with your academic advisor and have him or her sign off on the classes you will be taking. Once accepted to study abroad in this program, one of the forms you will need to complete is the Overseas Course Approval Form which you will complete with your academic advisor. For SUNY Oswego students this form is mandatory. For non-Oswego students, I highly advise that you meet and get this form completed and signed by your advisor.

18) How do I do my laundry?

There are cleaning ladies that clean the residence hall, including your room. You can request for one of them to do your laundry; the charge is about 4-5 CUCs per load. You can also choose to wash by hand; there is a Laundromat in Miramar that requires you to take a taxi or bus (15-

20 minutes away). You may want to consider doing your own laundry by hand. Bring light clothing and twine to hang your clothing to dry.

19) How will I get to class?

Your primary mode of transportation to get to class will be your feet. The UH is only 7-8 blocks from the residence hall. In Habana everyone walks and you will find yourself walking everywhere and enjoying getting to know your new community.

20) What are the public forms of transportation?

Public forms of transportation include buses and taxis. There is a train for long distance travel.

21) What form of currency should I bring?

It is necessary that you bring U.S. dollars. You will exchange the U.S. dollar for Cuban Convertible Pesos (CUC or Convertibles) at the airport upon arrival in Habana or at a bank in the city of Habana. There will also be (cadecas) where you will be able to exchange money. During orientation in Habana, we will provide you with details on how and where to exchange money.

22) How much money should I bring?

Bring at least \$1,500 (U.S. dollars) for spending money, your lunch, travel, and personal expenses. Please note that your housing and two meals a day are provided at the residence hall.

Your U.S. credit/debit card will not work in Cuba due to the US Embargo. Therefore, you need to have at least \$1,500 in HAND upon your arrival to care for your daily expenses. You will need to develop a budget for yourself.

Mid-Semester Visit:

At mid-semester, a representative of the SUNY Oswego Office of International Educations and Programs will travel to Cuba for the purpose of meeting with the students, ensuring all is going well on the program and to bring any necessary items or money the students may need to complete the semester in Cuba.

23) Should I open a bank account?

Students cannot open a bank account in Cuba.

24) What about using a credit or debit card?

Due to the U.S. embargo against Cuba, US credit or debit cards cannot be used in Cuba. If you happen to have a credit card from another country, you may be able to use the credit card in Cuba.

25) Are there internet facilities? Should I bring my laptop?

We highly advise you to bring your laptop. There are three computers at the residence hall that you will be able to use. There is Wi-Fi in the hall, but not on campus.

26) What happens if I get sick?

If you get sick you will go to the *Cira Garcia Hospital*. It is the primary hospital in Habana for foreigners and it is located in Miramar. We highly advise students that when they are sick or hurt to go to this hospital. Also, we request that you contact one of your primary contacts at the Universidad de La Habana to inform them that you are going to the hospital and/or if you require their assistance.

27) How can my parents get a hold of me in case of an emergency?

- a) Call Lizette Alvarado, Program Specialist for Cuba at (315)312-5697 or (315)312-2118. If Lizette is not available ask to speak to Dr. Joshua McKeown, Director of the Office of International Education and Programs at SUNY Oswego.
- b) Call Carmen Castillo or Dr. José Carlos Vasquez at the Facultad de Filosofia e Historia or at the Universidad de La Habana, Office of International Relations. Their contact details will be provided to students accepted for the program.

28) Will meals be provided for me? If so, how many per week?

There are two meals a day provided at the residence hall, breakfast and dinner. Lunch is on your own; you can eat at the UH or at nearby kiosks or restaurants.

29) Will I need a passport and a student visa?

Yes, you will need a passport and a student visa. The Office of International Education and Programs applies for your student visa through the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, DC. After being accepted to study abroad in this program, you will need to provide a color copy of your passport which you may send via e-mail attachment. If you do not have a passport, please apply for one as soon as possible.

30) Can I receive financial aid for Study Abroad?

Yes, you can receive financial aid for study abroad. If you're a student that receives financial assistance you are to meet with your financial aid advisor to discuss how much financial assistance is available to you for the program. Start early! Once accepted for this program you will need to bring the Financial Arrangements Form, copy of the letter of acceptance, copy of program invoice, and program budget sheet to the Financial Aid Office at your home campus.

31) What kinds of classes are offered during the semester in Cuba?

Students take all their courses in the *Facultad de Filosofia e Historia*. Courses are in culture, history, political science, anthropology, social sciences, psychology, sociology, religion and Politics.

32) Is there an application process in addition to the SUNY Overseas Study Abroad Application?

No, you will not need to complete a separate application for this program.

33) Are there Universidad de La Habana Cuba specific forms to complete?

There are two specific Universidad de La Habana forms to be completed after acceptance:

1. Seguro Medico (Medical Insurance Form Cuba)
2. Medical Insurance Waiver Form (Cuban)

Apart from the above named forms, students will need to complete OIEP mandated forms upon official acceptance to the program.

34) Receive mail?

Yes, you can receive mail at the residence hall. Mail can take a while to arrive to Cuba. You may also send mail home.

Lastly, if you are serious about studying abroad at the Universidad de La Habana, begin to prepare by reading on Cuban history, politics and culture. Call Lizette M. Alvarado at 315 312 5697 with any questions or e-mail her at lizette.alvarado@oswego.edu.

Try to have some background on the island, the people, and the environment.

Although, you are not expected to know and understand Cuba entirely, we would like for you to have some general understanding of Cuba.

Here are some books to begin your preparation:

First two books are suggested readings from SUNY Oswego Political Science professor, Dr. Lisa Glidden:

1). **Trading with the Enemy:** A Yankee Travels Through Castro's Cuba- Tom Miller. According to Dr. Glidden of the Political Science Department at SUNY Oswego, the book "is comprehensive, although it was written in 1990s before the Special Period began. But that it is a very readable history up to that point."

2). **Cuba: What Everyone Needs to know**, by Julia Sweig, Published by Oxford University Press.

3). **Cuba Moon Travel Handbook**, by Christopher Baker

Cuba News

Useful Websites

www.uh.cu, University of Habana website

<http://www.cubagob.cu/>

www.cubanculture.com, Links and travel information relating to Cuban culture

www.cubatravel.cu

<http://www.granma.cu/ingles>, Will take you to the English edition of the Granma newspaper

<http://afrocubaweb.com>, a treasure house of information on African derived culture influences in Cuba

<http://www.cubacentral.com>, Features news from Cuba

<http://www.ffrd.org/cuba>, a new site of the US-Cuba Reconciliation Initiative

<http://www.nlg.org/cuba>, The National Lawyers Guild's site focusing on the legalities of travel to Cuba

<http://www.lawg.org>, the site of the Latin America Working Group. It has a Cuba page with up to the minute information on Cuba related legislation before Congress

<http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/cuba/castro.html>, Archives the speeches of Fidel Castro

<http://filosofia.cu>, The site of the Instituto de Filosofia, it houses the complete works of Jose Marti, speeches and articles of Che Guevara and many other Cuban Thinkers. Also links to other Cuban intellectual sites. Spanish only.