

# SPANISH STUDIES ABROAD

The Center for Cross-Cultural Study



# Student Handbook

For students studying in  
*Havana*



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## Mission Statement

The mission of SSA is to promote in-depth understanding of Spanish-speaking countries for our students, through specifically designed academically rigorous university-level and cultural travel programs. We consider all of our students to be willing to cross cultural boundaries, to live as members of another culture, and to thus learn about others as they learn about themselves.

In accordance with our mission, SSA promotes equal opportunities within our programs and does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, age, physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. We believe in educating students on cultural tolerance and sensitivity, acceptance of differences and inclusiveness.

## After Acceptance

### Getting Ready to Go to Havana

**Before you depart, there are a few things you need to take care of. Please read carefully!**

#### ONLINE ACCOUNT

All students studying with SSA have an online account. To access your account, go to [www.spanishstudies.org](http://www.spanishstudies.org) and click the "Login" link at the top of the page. You will then be prompted to enter your username and password. If you have forgotten your password, you may request a new one on the login page.

#### PRE-DEPARTURE STEPS

In order to finalize your acceptance in an SSA program, you must submit the following items via your online account as soon as possible. All pre-departure items will be due within two weeks of the application deadline.

- Academic Pledge and Program Conditions & Release Statements
- Passport Information and Copy
- Course Selection
- Housing Questionnaire
- Health Statement Form
- Essay for Universidad de La Habana
- Letter of Recommendation (from a different professor outside the Spanish department)
- Program Deposit (due within 10 days of acceptance)
- Arrival Information
- Digital Photo
- SSA Website/Online Application Survey (optional)

#### PASSPORT

To travel to Cuba you need a valid passport. For U.S. citizens, the most convenient place to apply for a passport is at your local post office. **If you do not yet have a passport, apply for one immediately!** It can take up to 4-6 weeks to receive your passport. If the start of your program is less than 90 days away and you have not yet applied for your visa (see below), you will have to pay for expedited service of your passport. Expedited service still takes about 2-3 weeks. The U.S. State Department's website provides details on passports and current processing times [here](#). You may also inquire via telephone at (877) 487-2778. Students who are not U.S. citizens should contact the appropriate government agency in their home country for passport information.

**Students who already have a passport should verify that it will be valid through the program dates and for at least six months after the SSA program concludes. To ensure that the passport is valid, it must also be signed on the page that is beside the page with your picture and personal information.**

**You should NOT be carrying your passport around with you in Havana. We recommend that you bring a photocopy of your passport which you can keep in your wallet just in case you need it.**

## **VISA**

**Note:** SSA does not recommend and is not responsible for any student who chooses to travel or stay in Cuba outside the program dates. **You MAY NOT travel outside of Cuba during your time in the country.**

Short-term program students will obtain their student visa upon arrival at the airport in Havana before going through immigration. The on-site Resident Director will provide the Cuban visa authorities with your passport information. They will then issue your visa and send it to the José Martí International airport in Havana. We will send you a scanned copy of this visa to show as proof throughout your travels. Upon arrival at the airport in Havana, you will show an immigration officer the scanned copy of your visa and ask them to retrieve the original. You must do this before approaching the immigration booth. NOTE: Sometimes the airlines at the airport in the United States do not recognize the scanned copy of your student visa. In this case, please purchase a tourist visa, keep the receipt, and SSA will reimburse you.

**Semester students will need to prepare their student visa application materials as soon as possible.** Students must complete the attached [Cuba Visa Application Form](#) and mail it along with all visa materials to SSA. The \$70 (subject to change) visa fee plus \$30 (subject to change) administrative fee will be added to your online account. You can login and click on "View/Pay Bill" in order to pay the fee. **We will not send your application to the Cuban Embassy without this fee being paid in full.**

Our on-site Resident Director will provide the Universidad de La Habana (UH) with your name, your arrival/departure dates, your passport number, and your address in Cuba. UH will assign a radio number to each of you and inform the Cuban Embassy. Once the on-site Resident Director in Cuba lets us know that the radio numbers have been issued, we will send your applications as a group to the Cuban Embassy. Once they have been processed, the Cuban Embassy will mail them to SSA. We will then mail them to each student individually. **If you will not be at your home address during the time when your student visa will arrive, you must make alternative arrangements to receive it.**

When you arrive in Cuba, the immigration officer will stamp your visa with the date of your entry into Cuba. **Keep the visa stub with your passport since you will have to present it when leaving the country.**

Connect with Rocío Haro, your on-site Resident Director in Havana, Cuba ([cuba.spanishstudies@gmail.com](mailto:cuba.spanishstudies@gmail.com)). Rocío will be in touch soon to go over more details in preparation for your arrival.

## **BANK ACCOUNTS AND MONEY**

**Cash (USD), credit, debit, or ATM cards issued by U.S. banks cannot be used in Cuba, and banks cannot transfer funds from the U.S. to Cuba.**

If you are the only signer on your bank account we suggest you add a co-signer to it for your time in Cuba. You will most likely not be able to access your online banking account. If you use your online bank account for financial aid disbursement, etc., then you definitely want to have a co-signer on the account who can authorize transfers, etc. while you are in Cuba.

**The best way to take money to Cuba is in cash. You must bring enough cash with you to Cuba to last you the full term.** You should reserve about €150 (euro) to be exchanged in the airport when you arrive in Havana. We recommend including bills such as €10s, €20s, €50s and €100s.

The currency of Cuba is the peso, or CUP (also locally known as *moneda nacional* or MN), which is commonly represented using the sign \$. It is used by both residents and visitors alike. The CUP is available in bills of 1, 3, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000 and 5,000. CUP is used for everyday purchases by the locals, and small businesses such as farmers' markets and street vendors. However, many restaurants, bars, taxi drivers and other services prefer you pay directly in foreign currencies such as dollars, pounds, or euros.





**Note:** For carrying cash to Cuba, we recommend using a hidden money belt that can be worn invisibly under a shirt or pants. Usually hidden money belts don't need to be removed when going through airport security. For more information on security, see page 7.

### **WHERE TO EXCHANGE MONEY INTO CUBAN CURRENCY**

Students can exchange money into Cuban currency at banks, hotels, and government currency exchange houses (CADECA). CADECA offices are located in airports, hotels, resorts, and shopping centers. CADECA offices are the safest and most reliable places to exchange currency.

There may be a limit on the amount of money that you can receive and a significant fee charged for each transaction. In the event of an emergency, money can be wired to you through the U.S. Embassy.

### **WHAT IS THE BEST CURRENCY TO BRING TO CUBA?**

It all boils down to bringing the foreign currency that has the highest possible conversion rate in Cuba. In terms of conversion value, the British Pound Sterling and the Euro are the best currencies to bring to Cuba.

You can also exchange the following foreign currencies in Cuba:

- Canadian Dollar (CAD)
- Swiss Franc (CHF)
- Euro (EUR)
- Pound Sterling (GB)

The exchange rate depends on whether you want to buy or sell CUP as well as the type of foreign currency you are using. The international exchange rate determines the value of international currencies against the Cuban Peso.

You may use the U.S. dollar on the streets to pay for some services, but you won't be able to exchange dollars for CUP at the CADECA because there is a banking restriction in Cuba for U.S. dollars. We will keep you informed if this changes.

### **PREPAID CARDS IN CUBA**

On June 15, 2021, the Cuban government launched prepaid cards exclusively available to foreign visitors. BANDEC (a Cuban bank) issues these cards, and you can use them to pay for goods and services at facilities that accept credit cards, such as hotels, state-operated restaurants, and certain retail stores. These cards are very important for purchasing products in supermarkets and stores. We recommend you read more information here: <https://www.cuba.travel/Portals/0/Documentos%20PDF/MLC%20prepaid%20cards.pdf?ver=P20qFCqY4mKEr2gsdQPelq%3D%3D>

### **BUDGETING FOR YOUR TRIP**

The program recommends budgeting a minimum of \$2,400 USD (including flight costs) for a semester-long program, maybe up to \$3,600 USD depending on your spending habits. Plan accordingly. While some restaurants are highly priced by U.S. standards, meals and snacks from street vendors are very cheap. For a few dollars you can buy small pizzas and *cajitas* – a filling meal of rice, beans, and meat with a little salad garnish boxed to go. Licensed *paladares* (privately-run restaurants) can be expensive: for example, US \$8 - \$12 for a large, good lunch. A lunch can cost you as little as the equivalent of \$5.

As you make Cuban friends and go out to enjoy Havana together, keep in mind that there may be times where you will have to pick up the tab. This is not because they are taking advantage of you, but because they cannot afford most purchases. You might want to budget a little extra for when you invite your Cuban friends out for social activities.

Below you will find a detailed estimate, which explains how to budget for personal expenses and other costs not covered by your SSA program fees. These figures are general guidelines and may be different for each person's budget and lifestyle in Cuba.

	<u>Semester</u>	<u>Short-Term</u>
School supplies (bought beforehand in the U.S.)	\$50	\$20
Bus/Taxi transportation	100	30
Every-day & going out expenses	1,100	300
Meals-Lunches	950	300
Flight	800	800
Miscellaneous	500	100
Total	3,600	1,650

**Note: There are no limitations for bringing items back from Cuba.** Be sure to check the [U.S. Department of the Treasury website](#) for updated information.

### **INCOME TAXES**

U.S. residents who are abroad during the Spring semester will need to make arrangements for filing federal and state income taxes. Individuals who are temporarily living abroad can request an extension on the deadline for filing their federal income tax return. This extension is generally until June 15. Please note that if money is owed to the government and an extension is filed, interest will be charged on the amount if it is not received by April 15. For more information on federal income tax laws and regulations, please consult the IRS official web page [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or call (800) 829-1040. Individuals should contact their state government for regulations information on extending state taxes.

### **POWER OF ATTORNEY**

If your signature will be needed for any official or legal document while in Cuba, you should make the necessary arrangements for a "power of attorney" to be held by parents, guardians, or another appropriate person to act on your behalf. This can be done by writing out in detail the specific duties that this person will have, (i.e. signing a check; corresponding with the school or university about financial or academic matters; or obtaining medical records and information, in case of an emergency). This letter should then be notarized so that it is legal and official. Public notaries are available at many banks, post offices, public libraries, and town halls.

### **ABSENTEE VOTING**

Voting is a privilege and right for all U.S. citizens. If you are a U.S. citizen and will be abroad during an election, SSA urges you to take advantage of this right by voting via absentee ballot. **You should apply to do this at least two weeks before you leave home.** U.S. citizens can get more information, as well as the forms needed to apply for the absentee ballot, by visiting the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). Be sure to also call the local city clerk's office of the city where you are registered to vote.

### **COMMUNITY PAGES**

Don't forget to follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)! For all program-related questions for SSA staff, please email [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org).

### **PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION MEETING**

Students accepted into an SSA Havana program will be invited to participate in an online accepted students pre-departure orientation meeting before their departure. During this meeting, students will be able to ask SSA staff and the on-site Resident Director specific questions about study abroad in Havana. Dates and information on how to join the meeting will be sent via email closer to the meeting date.

### **DEPARTURE NEWSLETTER**

SSA students receive a Departure Newsletter by email a few days prior to the program start date. The newsletter contains important travel and arrival information, such as the orientation address, emergency contact information



(also included in this handbook), the address for SSA in Havana, taxi and baggage tips, and contact information for fellow participants. **Make sure to bring a copy with you during your travels!**

## Billing Details

SSA is affiliated with over 70 colleges and universities. For most affiliated schools, payment is made to SSA directly by the school. However, billing arrangements vary between universities, so we ask that you pay close attention to the information received with your acceptance letter and in the View/Pay Bill section of your online account.

### **PAYMENT OF FEES**

The non-refundable deposit is due within 10 days of your acceptance to the program. In cases where the school is sending payment directly to SSA, you should ask your college or university to discuss this with SSA directly.

**Note:** The due date for the non-refundable deposit may not be deferred.

Payment must be received by SSA no later than the due dates listed in your online account. Any payment submitted after its due date will be subject to late fees. You will not be admitted to SSA housing or classes until all payments have been received. Special arrangements are made only in exceptional cases and may include interest rates and service charges. Your transcript will not be released until all financial obligations you incurred during the school term have been satisfied, including payment for unreturned library books and program cell phone usage.

If you anticipate that you will have financial aid to use toward your program payment, please contact the U.S. office of SSA regarding the necessary paperwork to defer your final program payment due date.

**Note:** All checks should be made payable to Spanish Studies Abroad

### **FINANCIAL AID**

You must speak with the financial aid office at your home university regarding the school's policies for the transfer of financial aid for study abroad. If financial aid will transfer, there are some forms that must be completed in order to coordinate the transfer of funds and the deferment of the final payment due date if aid will be disbursed after that time. The non-refundable deposit due date may not be deferred, even if the amount will be covered by financial aid.

The SSA Financial Aid Deferment Form, included in your online acceptance packet, should be submitted to your home university's financial aid office to be completed and returned to the U.S. office of SSA before your program final payment due date. You will also need to make sure that the financial office is able to coordinate with SSA regarding any forms that they need completed by SSA to transfer financial aid, such as a Consortium Agreement.

## Scholarships

### **SSA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

The SSA Scholarship Program is open to all students enrolled in all of our Havana programs. We offer \$1,500 scholarships for semester programs, \$500 scholarships for summer programs, and \$500 scholarship for the January Term among all of our locations. Students may apply for only one of the two scholarship options: The SSA Merit-Based Scholarship or the SSA Diversity Scholarship.

Award recipients are chosen based on the submission of one original essay in English. For more information about the scholarship program and to download the application, visit [www.spanishstudies.org/scholarships](http://www.spanishstudies.org/scholarships).

While all eligible students are encouraged to apply, the SSA Scholarship Program is very competitive and only a

handful of awards are made per term. Students will be notified of scholarship awards before leaving for their programs abroad. A check is sent to the student's permanent home address before arrival in Havana. Scholarship awards cannot be used toward program payments like tuition. Scholarships are meant to offset extra expenses while abroad, such as flights, gifts, entertainment, etc.

### **SSA GO-AGAIN ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

The SSA Go-Again Alumni Scholar Fund was developed in 2004 and designed to benefit returning students wishing to embark on an additional cross-cultural adventure with SSA. Spanish Studies now offers all alumni students a stipend to apply towards another SSA experience in Spain, Argentina, Puerto Rico, or Cuba. Please note that **all SSA Alumni who choose to attend an additional program with SSA will automatically receive the Go-Again Alumni Scholarship**. Alumni who receive a Go-Again Alumni Scholarship are also eligible to apply for the SSA Scholarship Program. Alumni scholarships are as follows:

- Semester: \$500
- Summer Term: \$100
- January Term: \$100

## Possible Additional Fees

### **TRANSCRIPT FEES**

Students whose home school requires a transcript from a U.S. degree-granting institution may obtain academic credit and a transcript from our School of Record, Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio; an additional fee of \$250 is charged by Heidelberg for this service. If the student has requested this transcript service due to a home institution requirement, a request form will need to be signed and sent back to [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org). In order to facilitate the issuing of the transcript the student may be billed by SSA on behalf of Heidelberg University for the additional fee. SSA will then pay Heidelberg University for issuing the transcript.

## Refunds

**If you decide not to attend a SSA program after you have been accepted, please send us a written notification immediately. You can inform us of your decision via email at [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org)**

Withdrawal from the program between the final payment due date and 30 days before the start of the program has a penalty of 25% of the program fee. Withdrawal from the program within 1-29 days before the start of the program has a penalty of 25% of the room and board fee and 100% of the tuition, study tours, orientation, and general education fees. There is no refund for any portion of the program fees on or after the program start date.

**Please note that these penalties are in addition to the deposit, which is non-refundable.**

There is no withdrawal from room and board arrangements with SSA during the course of a program. SSA will change unsatisfactory lodgings but will not refund any portion of room and board fees after a student's arrival at a home. If students find their housing to be unsatisfactory, they should contact the SSA staff immediately; SSA will determine if a housing change is warranted.

## Packing Suggestions

### **FASHION**

June will be very hot (upper 80s and 90s) with high levels of humidity, and the winter months will be cooler (70s). Prepare for both ranges of temperature. Breezes blow in Havana throughout the year, and the rainy season (May – October) tapers off as winter approaches. Always remember that the sun can be quite intense and come prepared for that probability. Havana is an urban city, not a beach resort, so choose clothing that will work with an urban environment. Clothing is casual for going to classes at the university. Lightweight semi-dressy or dressy clothes are appropriate for an evening out at a special restaurant or a nightclub. Rain gear should be lightweight and



comfortable to use in the hot weather. Cubans tend to work hard to dress up every day and may be offended by non-Cubans who present themselves in dirty or unkempt clothing. Do not pack overly fancy/expensive clothing or jewelry, as these items are not commonly worn. Your host family will do your laundry once a week.

## CLOTHING

- Casual lightweight clothing
- 1-2 dressy or semi-dressy outfits
- Enough underwear for a week
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Hat
- Bathing suit
- Sneakers or running shoes
- Rain Jacket
- Lightweight pajamas

Here's a video called "[How to Dress in Cuba](#)" that perfectly describes what Cubanos generally wear.

**Note:** At the university, female students are not permitted to wear shorts. Dresses and skirts are allowed if they are long in length.

## OTHER ITEMS

- USB device for storing assignments and printing purposes
- Beach towel
- Washcloths, if desired
- Backpack (or bookbag)
- Any cosmetics/products you use
- Medicines for cold and upset stomach
- Vitamins and menstrual products
- **Prescription medications**, if needed\*
- Sunscreen (SPF 25 and higher - It's SUNNY!)
- Umbrella

**\*If you take any prescription medication or wear contacts, be sure to bring enough for your entire stay. Refer to "Prescriptions" under the "Health Insurance and Medical Care" section of this handbook.**

## SECURITY AND PERSONAL CARE

We suggest taking a suitcase that locks so you can keep valuable items secure at all times. This would be the place to keep your passport\*, airline tickets, traveler's checks, extra cash, and anything else of value that you don't want to leave lying around. You should also know that your things might get moved around when your family cleans your room. Remember that this is their job; they are not trying to get into your belongings.

If you bring a laptop, you may want to get a cable lock for it as well. We also suggest that you take only a minimum of valuables, leaving at home most of your credit cards, ID or membership cards and other items that are hard to replace.

**\*You should NOT be carrying your passport around with you in Havana. We recommend that you bring a photocopy of your passport which you can keep in your wallet just in case you need it.**

**Note:** For carrying cash to Cuba, we recommend using a hidden money belt that can be worn invisibly under a shirt or pants (money belt example below).



Over the counter products we take for granted, such as contact lens supplies and tampons, are not generally available in Cuba. Please take such necessary items with you. Favorite brands of personal care items such as deodorant and shampoo are not likely to be available either, although acceptable substitutes can sometimes be found. You should take any items of this type that you cannot do without. You may want to bring along some

travel-sized tissue packets to act as toilet paper for when you go out.

### **PLUG-IN APPLIANCES**

Any electrical appliances used in the U.S. may be used in Cuba. Most but not all electricity in Cuba is 110 volts, and the outlets and plugs are also the same shape as in the U.S. Because both 110v- and 220v-currents are used in Cuba, and because the different outlets within a given room might provide either voltage, always ask about the voltage before you plug in any apparatus. **If you plug a 110v appliance into a 220v outlet it will be permanently damaged.**

### **Necessary items**

Visa issued to you by Cuban government • A suitcase with a good lock • School backpack • Course syllabi • All required course readings • Plain paper and notebooks • Pens, pencils, highlighter • Battery-powered alarm clock • Casual clothes • 1-2 dressy or semi-dressy outfits • Enough underwear for a week • Comfortable walking shoes • Hat, bathing suit, sunscreen • 1 beach towel • 1-2 USB Flash drives • Medicines\*, first aid kit, vitamins

\*Take a sufficient supply of any prescription or other medicine you use for your entire stay in Cuba. You should pack a small, personal **first-aid kit** which includes: medication for upset stomach, diarrhea, headaches; also include rubbing alcohol, Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, antihistamines, anti-itch medication, sunblock, etc. If you use an inhaler, make sure you take enough with you for the time you will be in Cuba. They are extremely expensive and hard to find.

### **Suggested Items**

• Sneakers or running shoes • Washcloth, nail clippers • Shampoo, cosmetics • An umbrella or rain poncho • Earplugs • Bug spray/cream (not aerosol) • Snacks (granola or power bars, nuts, etc.) • A few zip-lock bags • Pocket Kleenex • Hand sanitizer • Handi-pack toilet paper for public restrooms • Lap-top • Water bottle

### **Courtesy Gifts**

Even basic supplies are rationed and always in short supply. You might want to donate pencils to a school or offer soaps to a clinic or family. You will undoubtedly make Cuban friends or be invited to homes. In such instances, any of the following will always be appreciated: Pocket Spanish-English dictionaries, books in English or Spanish (non-political and non-religious proselytizing, please), notebooks, pencils and pens, over-the-counter medicine, vitamins, toys, fancy soaps, shampoos, cosmetics, baseball caps, T-shirts, sunglasses, reading glasses and used clothing and shoes.

### **WHAT NOT TO BRING**

- Books and pamphlets that preach a political or religious creed, other than for your personal use
- Credit cards
- Expensive jewelry and other valuable belongings

## **Getting to Havana**

### **Travel Information**

#### **BOOKING YOUR FLIGHT**

All students should plan on arriving in Havana **before 3 pm on the start date of the program**. Please note that **when booking your flight, you should always refer to your program calendar** which is located in your acceptance e-packet—the link was sent to you in your acceptance email.

In order to allow flexibility to our students in making flight arrangements, we do not offer a group flight option. You will be responsible for purchasing your own flight to Havana, Cuba. We have provided you with a list of U.S. commercial airlines in your acceptance packet. Please contact them to secure your space on the flight as soon as possible.



Insurance will be included in your flight ticket price for the first 30 days you are in Cuba. For semester students who will be staying longer than 30 days, SSA will purchase insurance for you from Asistur in Cuba, before you arrive in Havana. This way you will be covered for the entirety of your program. **The charge for this will be added to your student portal and must be paid before we can begin the process for you.** SSA will need your full name and passport number before purchasing insurance. **Please make sure your Personal Information in your student portal is complete and your passport has been uploaded.**

**Once you have your flight itinerary, you must submit the information via your online account, or email it to [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org).** If you have any delays or last-minute changes in your flight itinerary, please inform our U.S. and Cuba office at [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org) and your parents or guardians. **If you are en route to Havana, you will need to also inform the on-site Resident Director at [cuba.spanishstudies@gmail.com](mailto:cuba.spanishstudies@gmail.com).**

**IMPORTANT: We require that you bring a copy of your SSA acceptance letter with you for your flight to Cuba.**

**Note:** For short-term students, depending on the airport you fly from, you may need to pay a visa fee (approx. \$50-\$100). Semester students must have their visa in order before departure. Please see the Visa section of this handbook for more information.

## While You're There

### Arrival

Most students will enter Cuba through the José Martí International airport and will arrive in either Terminal 2 or 3, depending on which airline or charter company you choose. **SSA staff will be waiting outside of whichever terminal the majority of students will arrive at until 3 pm on the start date of the program.** This will be made known during the Departure Newsletter that will be sent out a couple of weeks before the start date. **If you fly into a terminal that is different from the specified terminal, it is your responsibility to arrange transportation to your homestay.**

You will go through passport control in the terminal and then customs. Sometimes immigration and customs officials will ask you questions such as "Where will you be staying in Havana?" and "How long will you be in Cuba for?" Be sure to have your host family's address (written down if you have not memorized it) and explain that you are studying at the Universidad de La Habana through SSA.

**Note:** When you arrive in Cuba, the immigration officer will stamp your visa with the date of your entry into Cuba. **Keep the visa stub with your passport since you will have to present it when leaving the country.**

You will then go through security and go to the carousel to pick up your luggage. Be patient. Sometimes it can take up to two hours for luggage to come through to the baggage carousels. Before you leave the airport, an official will ask to check your baggage claim receipt. They will then compare it with the sticker on your luggage and then let you leave.

**You must bring enough cash with you to Cuba to last you the full term.** Please see the sections on money below for more information about handling money in Cuba.

### ORIENTATION

Prior to the start of your studies at the Universidad de La Habana, SSA will lead you through an important orientation to help you adapt to your new home. Topics will include an overview and tour of the city, health and safety information, customs information, social interactions, behavior policies for the homestay where you will be staying, and university coursework.

**Attendance at orientation is mandatory.**

## Housing

**The best advice we can give you in order to take the most out of your housing situations would be: Communication.**

You will live with host families during your term in Cuba. They will provide you with daily breakfast and dinner. For lunch, you can explore Havana on your own! The on-site Resident Director will provide you with a list of options for lunch at orientation when you arrive in Havana. Your homestays are located about a 25-minute walk from Universidad de La Habana, where your classes will take place. Lodging is composed of double rooms with a private bath, air conditioning, and refrigerator. It is important, however, to understand that the living conditions in a developing country are not always luxurious or fully functioning. Therefore, be prepared for minor inconveniences such as occasional cold showers or low water pressure, a noisy air-conditioning unit or a malfunctioning television. **It is important to remember that these minor inconveniences are an integral part of “the Cuban experience” and can be rich in their educational value.**

For legal and safety reasons, students are required to live in SSA housing for the duration of the program. Contracting private housing is not permitted for students enrolled in programs taking place under the auspices of Universidad de La Habana and may be illegal as well. Students entering into a housing agreement are therefore committed to living in the homestay for the duration of their SSA program.

You will find that your Cuban family will become like another family for you. They not only welcome you into their homes, they are there to support you for your time in Havana. Always feel free to tell them if you need something.

The arrangement that SSA has with the Cuban families is for them to provide you with a home, meals, support and company during your time in Cuba. Please do not abuse this trust by inviting friends from other study abroad programs to eat meals at your home stay. If a student from another program regularly eats meals at your homestay, SSA will bill you for that.

### **HOUSING RULES**

- No overnight guests
- No drugs or alcohol. Any consumption of drugs may result in arrest and expulsion from the program and the country.
- Be respectful of your host family. Have on slippers or shoes when you walk around the house; do not walk around barefoot.
- Be fully clothed when walking around the house. Do not wear only a towel if you just got out of the shower. Keep in mind that Cubans are very sociable and friendly people and they often make unannounced visits, so be sure to be dressed in a decent fashion.
- You may use the phone to make local and national calls, but for international calls, please go to an ETECSA center and purchase a calling card. If your family or friends would like to call you, be sure to coordinate with them on a time and date.

**Do not make international phone calls from your Home Stay.** Remember, telephone minutes pass very rapidly and calls can become quite expensive.

Remember that it can be very expensive for Cubans to receive phone calls. If a Cuban receives a phone call on their cell phone from someone using a landline, they are charged for the phone call. If you are going to call someone, make sure you use a cell phone. You will also notice that many Cubans communicate via text messaging. Keep in mind that Cubans are allotted 300 phone minutes a month. If usage exceeds that figure, then the families will have to pay a bill. Be sensitive to this as you use the phone in their home.

### **HOUSING NORMS FOR STUDENTS AND HOST FAMILIES**

To ensure a correct and cordial relationship between the host(s), students, and SSA, a series of norms and recommendations have been designed. There are minimum conditions designed for all homes in general; it is normal for personality differences to exist between the host(s) and students and there will also be certain differences between one home and another. If you have a doubt, don't understand a certain norm, or would like to make a comment regarding housing, be sure to consult with the SSA staff in Havana immediately.

**YOUR BEDROOM WILL HAVE:**

- A bed
- Closet
- Night table

**THE BATHROOM WILL HAVE:**

- Toilet
- Sink
- Shower
- Towels

**LAUNDRY:**

- Once a week; no more than 12 items at a time

**MEALS:**

- Breakfast
- Dinner

**DOCTOR:**

If a student doesn't feel well and needs a doctor or medication, the following option applies:

- An SSA staff member will accompany you to Cira García hospital. No cost is involved as the Asistur insurance will cover the cost of your doctor consultation.

**HOUSING CHANGES:**

- If unresolvable differences should arise between the student and the household, the student should speak with the on-site Resident Director and also send an email explaining their situation and the reasons for requesting a housing change. The on-site Resident Director will move the student as soon as possible within 10 days of the decision. Once the host family is informed of the change, we ask that they not discuss this subject with the student to avoid any discomfort.
- If the host family desires that the student be moved, the on-site Resident Director will be notified 10 days in advance.
- In the event that the on-site Resident Director must move the student because some or any housing requirements have not been fulfilled, SSA maintains the right to move the student without previous notice to the household.
- In case of any indication of sexual harassment or inappropriate behavior on the part of the host family members, SSA will move the student to a different home immediately and with no previous warning. SSA will also stop working with a host family where an issue like this arises. Should there be any case of sexual harassment or inappropriate behavior on the part of the student, SSA will deal with such issues on a case-by-case basis, moving the student to a different home immediately and terminating enrollment in the program, as necessary.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

- The student should respect the schedules and customs of his/her host family.
- If students decide not to spend a night in the home, they should communicate this to the host family.
- The host family will not discuss financial matters related to housing, as this is very uncomfortable for everyone.
- If the host family finds it necessary to be absent overnight or on a weekend for any reason they must inform the SSA staff. Both the SSA staff and the student must agree to this.
- There should be a pleasant environment in the house, where the student feels comfortable and welcome.
- The host family should pay special attention not to invite any visitors to the home that could cause an uneasy or unsafe situation for the student.

- Should the student not leave the home on the program's end date, SSA is not responsible for paying the host family for extra day(s).
- The student may not take their friends to the home without previous permission from the host family.
- The student may not have guests staying overnight.
- If the student's house keys get lost or stolen, for fear that the missing keys may be used to rob the home, the host family may ask the student to pay for a new lock.
- The student cannot use articles like towels, sheets, etc. outside the household.
- The student's room may not be rented out during weekends or school breaks even if the student is not present.
- The house may not have a charcoal, coal-dust, gas, or similar type of heater.

## Special Dietary Needs: Vegetarians, Vegans, and Gluten-Free

Meals in Cuba can be repetitive with lots of pork and rice, and very few vegetables. We recommend that all our students be careful about their health, but vegetarians and vegans especially should make sure they are getting enough food and protein. We suggest bringing multivitamins with you, as well as granola or power bars, peanut butter or other supplementary snacks. For gluten-free students, it would be beneficial to bring some gluten-free pasta or other products, as they are very difficult to find in Cuba. Ask the on-site Resident Director about any vegetarian restaurants in Havana. While Cubans are starting to offer more vegetarian options, the availability of restaurants that specialize in vegetarian cuisine is not like what it is in the U.S. The supply of fruits and vegetables at home may vary from week to week, as it depends on what your host mother is able to find in the local market.

**Students requiring a gluten-free diet should inform SSA right away**, so that the on-site Resident Director may search for an appropriate homestay that can serve such meals. Gluten-free foods are not as readily available in Cuba as they are in the United States.

**You must let SSA know about any dietary restrictions or food allergies. You can do that by including this information on your housing and health forms, emailing [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org), or calling (413) 256-0011.** Please send us a list/description of what you can eat so that we can meet with the host family and prepare for your arrival.

**Note:** Some dietary accommodations may require an additional fee.

## Public Transportation

Transportation is one of the island nation's greatest problems. The lack of vehicles and the shortage of fuel contribute to difficulty in getting around. As a result, public bus traffic in the capital or elsewhere is extremely crowded and involves waits of an hour or two at busy times. For the average Cuban, it can take days of waiting at a bus terminal to obtain a seat on an interprovincial bus. Trains have similar problems. In light of these difficult conditions, the SSA program charters buses through a travel service to provide reliable transportation for group excursions and study visits.

For getting around Havana, you may choose to walk or use taxis. If you have a surplus of time and a shortage of money, you can navigate your way on the metropolitan buses for only 1 peso (*moneda nacional*) though there are no printed route maps or schedules. Beware of pickpockets when riding in a *guagua* or any other bus!

When you don't have the time to spare, there are a variety of taxi services that provide prompt and cheap service. There are three types of taxis, though only one kind of taxi that is officially authorized to carry foreigners. The various "tourist" taxi companies use modern cars in good condition and use meters to calculate the fare. Beware that the rate that is charged on the meter is higher for luxury taxis like Mercedes Benz cars, and lower for smaller



cars. Several companies also offer "microbuses" seating up to 14 people for a fee that ranges between 15-20 USD to any location within 15 kilometers.

Private taxis, or *boteros* (also called *máquinas*), usually the old, 1950s American cars, will stop for passengers along predetermined highly-traveled routes, and pick up as many passengers as will fit. Once you manage to stop a *botero*, you ask the driver if he is going in your general direction (choosing a main street near your destination) and if he is, then he will let you in. The fare ranges from 30-50 *monedas nacionales* per person. Be aware that if the final destination is in Miramar the price might be 100 *monedas nacionales*. You can pay with CUP if need be.

The third type of taxis are the government-owned black and yellow *Lada* cars. They charge fares in CUP or USD.

## Emergencies and Emergency Contact Information

### In the U.S.

SSA  
433 West Street, Suite 8  
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002  
tel: (413) 256-0011

**After-hours emergency line: (413) 687-7069**  
info@spanishstudies.org

### In Havana, Cuba

tel: (011+53) 5841-2920

**After-hours emergency line: (011+53) 5841-2920**

Resident Director: Rocío Haro

[cuba.spanishstudies@gmail.com](mailto:cuba.spanishstudies@gmail.com)

**Note:** For the Havana numbers given above, the (011-53) code at the beginning of the number is only necessary to add for making an international call from the U.S. to Cuba. If calling within Cuba, you can skip the code and just dial the eight-digit phone number. **If calling to the U.S. from Cuba, add the code "119+1" before dialing the normal U.S. ten-digit number.**

### Other Emergency Numbers for Cuba

The following numbers are the Cuban equivalent of "911" in the U.S. You may dial those numbers from anywhere in Cuba.

**Fire Department:** 105

**Police Department:** 106

**Drug Hotline:** 103

Should an emergency arise, U.S. family members may leave a message for students on the on-site Resident Director's cell phone at (011+53) 5841-2920 in Havana, or at our U.S. office telephone, (413) 256-0011. The Resident Director's office in Havana is open Monday through Friday from 9 am - 3 pm local time. The U.S. office is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 5 pm EST.

Before going abroad, be sure to [register online](#) with the government's **Smart Traveller Enrollment Program (STEP)**. It is a free service for U.S. citizens to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad, so that you can receive information about safety conditions and emergencies, and help the Embassy get in touch with you in case of an emergency.

In the unlikely event of an emergency, please be sure to check these web pages. Up-to-date information on Emergency Procedures and Security can be found on our website at [www.spanishstudies.org/safety](http://www.spanishstudies.org/safety) or at the [Department of State website](#).

## Health and Wellness

### HEALTH INSURANCE

SSA obtains medical insurance coverage for all semester students during their stay in Cuba through Asistur. The insurance covers all doctor visits and procedures at a medical clinic designated for international visitors. There is no extra charge for the insurance policy as it is already included in the program fees.

Coverage includes

1. Medical expenses for illness and accidents	\$25,000
2. Repatriation and transport	\$25,000
3. Death	\$7,000
4. Sickness/Wounds	\$7,000

24-hour Alarm Center

Tel. (537) 866-8527  
(537) 866-8339  
(537) 867-1315

E-mail: [asisten@asistur.cu](mailto:asisten@asistur.cu); [seguros@asistur.cu](mailto:seguros@asistur.cu)

**Be aware that if you require treatment for any pre-existing condition, you will be required to pay for such medical services in cash and then file a claim for reimbursement by your insurance company when you return home.**

**Note:** High-risk activities such as bungee jumping, motorcycle riding, etc. are not covered by the insurance.

**Note:** If you decide to return to the United States to receive medical or dental services that are provided in Cuba and are covered by Asistur insurance, you will be responsible for travel to Miami and to your home destination.

Although SSA provides medical insurance while in Cuba, if you have medical insurance at home, it is a good idea to take along one or two claim forms. These would be used if you need treatment for a pre-existing medical or psychological condition, medical attention while traveling outside of Cuba, or if you encounter health issues while traveling outside of the SSA program dates. **Please note that you are only covered through SSA for the dates of the program and within Cuba**, so you should also plan to bring claim forms if you are traveling before or after the program, or to any other country. If you have dental insurance at home, you should also bring some dental insurance claim forms with you, in case you need dental treatment while you are abroad. When the staff in Cuba enroll students in the insurance, they keep the students' insurance cards and policy numbers in their office, so that they are not lost during the program.

If you are under medical or psychological treatment at home, you should speak with your doctor about the possible effects of study abroad and cultural change on your condition. If you have any pre-existing medical or psychological conditions, you should bring a copy of your medical records, in case you need treatment in Cuba.

The University of Havana does offer psychological help through the Department of Psychology, however, these appointments are often difficult to procure. You will need to notify the SSA staff far in advance, if you know that you would like psychological help while on-site in Cuba. The Cuban health system does also offer psychological consultations for the price equivalent of 25 USD. These consultations are not covered by the health insurance, as it is not considered a medical emergency in Cuba.

It is important to note that eating disorders are considered medical conditions and must be reported on your health statement. **Withholding medical information could result in your dismissal from the program.**

**EMERGENCY MEDICAL HELP**

Medical attention is available at an excellent clinic for foreigners (Clínica Cira García, tel. 537-24-2811). You may also be treated at a number of other facilities throughout the city and, of course, in an emergency, you will be seen at the closest possible clinic or hospital. Cuba's standards of medical science and practice are recognized as the highest in Latin America.

If you need to go to the clinic, inform the staff in Havana. They will accompany you in the case of an emergency or if you are unfamiliar with the procedures of the clinic. For non-urgent needs, there is an international pharmacy in

el Hotel Habana Libre, Calle 23 esquina L.

There are a few accessible hospitals:

**Cira Garcia Hospital for Foreigners**

Calle 20 No.4101, Playa  
Tel. 7204 2811

**Policlínico Vedado**

Calle 15 y 18, Vedado  
Tel: 7830 3736

Hospitals near the university:

**Calixto García**

Avda. de la Universidad y 27 de Noviembre, Vedado  
Tel: 7838 2138

**Clínica Camilo Cienfuegos**

Calle Linea No. 151, Vedado  
Tel: 7832 5555

## **PRESCRIPTIONS**

**If you take any prescription medication, be sure to bring enough for your entire stay\*. Contact your health professional and insurance company several weeks before leaving; some medication requests require several weeks to be fully processed.** These should be in their original containers: that is, labeled with your name and the name of the prescription drug. In the case that you are unable to acquire enough for the entire stay, or if your medication is lost, you should take a written prescription for replacement of the drugs. The prescription should bear the generic name (chemical composition) of the drug, NOT the brand name, since medicines purchased in other countries usually have different brand names; though this prescription may not be enough at pharmacies, it will help a Cuban doctor make a valid prescription. Keep in mind that not all medications are available in Cuba.

**\*SSA strongly discourages students from having medications mailed to Cuba.**

**If you wear contacts, you should bring enough for the entire stay plus extras, and if you wear glasses you should bring an extra pair.**

## **INJECTIONS**

If you require regular medical injections, you should bring syringes with you from home. The cost of having injections administered by a healthcare professional is not covered by your SSA insurance, so be prepared for that expense. In order to get your injections at a clinic in Havana, your doctor at home must write you a letter with the following information:

- Directions on how to administer the injection
- How often the medication is administered
- Generic name of the medication
- Components of the medication
- Exact dosage of medication needed and any other relevant information for administering the injection
- Any possible side effects
- Any other relevant information for administering the injection
- EpiPen in case of emergency

Send a copy of this letter to the U.S. office of SSA, and take another copy to Havana. **Again, you must have a written prescription and/or letter from your doctor to get through airport security with your injection materials.**

## **HEALTH INFORMATION FOR TRAVELERS TO CUBA**

Please check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#) for up-to-date information on required vaccinations and tips on staying healthy while in Cuba.

## **DRINKING WATER**

The water supply in Cuba has been known to contain giardia, a parasite which if ingested can cause diarrhea, loose or watery stool, stomach cramps, gas, malaise, and upset stomach. Vomiting, chills, headache, and fever may also occur. Symptoms generally begin 1-2 weeks after being infected and may last 2-6 weeks, sometimes longer. We firmly recommend that you drink water that has been treated against giardia.

There are several forms of water that you can drink safely:

- Bottled water which you may purchase in a variety of Cuban stores for about US \$1-2 a liter. Your host families will provide bottled or filtered water for you.
- Water that has been boiled for a minimum of one full minute. (please note that you will not have access to the means to boil your own water).
- Some host families have water filters in their home and you can drink readily from this.

## **FITNESS**

There are no gym facilities on campus, although there is a track and field stadium there. There are no swimming pools so if students are interested in swimming, they will have to go to a hotel that has a pool. There is a gym on E street between 15 and 17. There is also another gym on L street between 17 and 19. The membership costs around \$20 per month. It is safe to run in the city, but we do not recommend running at night in Havana.

## **MACHISMO**

One of the biggest challenges for U.S. female students in Cuba is the issue of machismo. In the Caribbean the way many men view and interact with women, especially foreign women, is very different from what you may be used to in the United States. We recommend that you read about machismo and about Caribbean culture before arriving in the country. Communicating with SSA Havana alumni and staff is the best resource in preparing to deal with machismo in Cuba.

### **Forms of Machismo**

- Catcalling is very common in Cuba. From the perspective of a Cuban man, it is seen as a way to show their "appreciation" for beauty. Men will make comments about your height, weight, hair, etc. Ignore them and keep walking.
- "Are you married" is a normal question for men to ask in the Caribbean, and it is not considered offensive, but it might make you bristle, especially after you have heard it a number of times.
- A typical pattern of behavior is when a man passes a woman walking in the opposite direction on the street. He will turn around and ogle her from behind.

The biggest challenge in combating machismo is that it is so deeply ingrained into the Cuban subconscious that even Cuban women have come to accept it. The following anecdote perfectly illustrates this. For an assignment a past SSA student asked her Universidad de La Habana professor for her opinion on the catcalls and other comments made by men on the streets. The professor's candid response surprised the student. She (the professor) said that as a woman, it would be a blow to her self-esteem if she DID NOT receive any catcalls or comments from men on the streets. This, naturally, contradicts what many of us believe in the U.S., but it is important to understand this mechanism as a part of Cuban culture. Recognizing this structure is a crucial part of developing a coping strategy to deal with it.

### **Actions to Take**

- The best thing to do if you are the subject of a man's unwanted attention is to ignore him and keep on walking to where you are going. If they see you idling around, they will spend more time with you. In the event that he follows you, go to the nearest restaurant or hotel. There you can either inform the hotel staff of your situation or you can call the on-site Resident Director.
- When you go out, especially at night, do not go out alone. Ask another SSA student, a Cuban *intercambio* student, or a host family member to accompany you.

### **Resources**

- Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA) [www.sashaa.org](http://www.sashaa.org)
- The U.S. Embassy
- Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CENESEX) <https://www.facebook.com/cenesex/>

### **Videos**

Machismo in Cuba: "Los machistas" and gender equality (in Spanish; no subtitles)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toool5q\\_Dvk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toool5q_Dvk)



El machismo del cubano (in Spanish; no subtitles)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MXnSpjq\\_f4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MXnSpjq_f4)

Mariela Castro: el machismo y la mujer cubana (in Spanish; no subtitles)

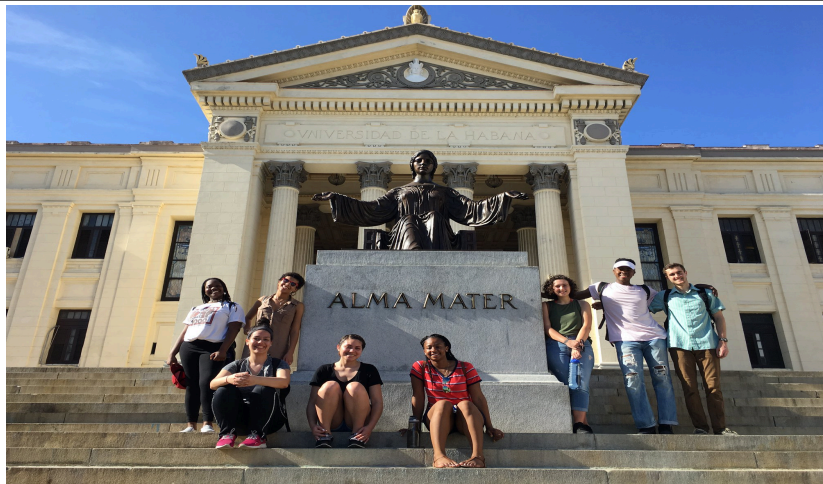
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBzdzk2cA58>

Macho: The Deep Roots of Machismo in Latin America (in English)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQ0Jao5aZ\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQ0Jao5aZ_Q)

Cuban Movie *Retrato de Teresa*

## Academics with SSA and Universidad de La Habana



### UNIVERSIDAD DE LA HABANA

Founded in 1728, the Universidad de La Habana has become one of the most important symbols of Cuban culture, philosophy, and history, establishing a strong connection between student political activity on campus and the course of history that the country has followed. This is especially true regarding Fidel Castro, who was a student here.

Universidad de La Habana has 15 colleges (*facultades*) at its main Havana campus. These are divided into three fields: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities and Economic Sciences.

The student body of the Universidad de La Habana is very active in politics and very well informed about what is going on in the country and in the world. The Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU), or University Federation of Students is a very prolific organization that played an especially prominent role in the 1950s. It was founded in 1922 by Julio Antonio Mella, a student, who led students to take control of several buildings on campus and demand university reforms and free higher education among other things. Since then the FEU has become a prominent part of the university and you shouldn't be surprised if you see FEU banners waving in locations around Havana.

You will have two options for a semester of study:

- **Spanish Studies Program** - allows students to take courses taught by Cuban faculty with a focus on language and culture. You will be able to take courses with other international students who are in Cuba

like you to perfect their Spanish. We recommend that you have completed at least one semester of intermediate college level Spanish or the equivalent.

- **Integrated Studies Program** - this program offers you the opportunity to take classes with Cuban students. You will need to have a very good level of Spanish for this option. The prerequisite of this program is to have at least two semesters of advanced college-level Spanish or the equivalent prior to applying.

**Note:** All Spanish Studies and Integrated Studies program students must take one language course at FENHI.

At Universidad de La Habana (ULH), classes are organized for the SSA program at the Facultad de Español para no Hispanohablantes (FENHI) and taught by professors from several departments.

Students enrolled in the Integrated Studies Program take their courses at either the Facultad de Artes y Letras, the Facultad de Filosofía e Historia, and/or the Facultad de Comunicación Social.

Students may also do Independent Research Projects (IRPs), please contact SSA for details.

Shortly before the short-term or semester program begins, all students have to take a language placement exam (*examen de nivel*). This determines your level of Spanish proficiency and what class you should take. **If you are planning to earn credit for an Advanced Spanish class and you place into Intermediate-level Spanish, inform the on-site Resident Director and your school immediately.**

The SSA program places emphasis on reasoned discussion among students and professors during about half of each class period. Keep in mind that a good portion of your grade is determined by how often you participate in classes.

Semester students must enroll in 16 credits per semester according to ULH guidelines. There is no possibility to earn more credit at ULH. Universidad de La Habana does not allow students to audit or sit in on classes as a non-participant.

### Course Readings and Syllabi

You will be provided with a syllabus when you arrive in Havana. Course syllabi are not as readily available in Cuba as they are in the U.S. so it might be difficult to obtain a copy.

### CREDIT

Most semester courses at FENHI are worth four credits each. However, if you are enrolling in the Integrated Studies Program you must be aware that the Cuban credit system is a bit different. In the United States 1 contact hour equals 50 minutes, but in Cuba 1 contact hour equals 45 minutes. SSA uses a formula to convert Cuban contact hours to their U.S. equivalents. While you do not have to know the details of this procedure you should know how much credit a Cuban course will translate to in your university. The standard equivalent of contact hours in the U.S. is 45 hours equals 3 credits.

Universidad de La Habana Hours	U.S. Contact Hours Equivalent	U.S. Credit
80 hours	72 hours	5
60-64 hours	57 hours	4
56 hours	50 hours	3
48 hours	43 hours	3
45 hours	40.5 hours	3
40 hours	36 hours	2
30-32 hours	29 hours	2

If you have questions, ask the on-site Resident Director. Please keep in mind that you must enroll in the U.S. equivalent of 16 credits worth of classes during your semester in Cuba.

## BOOKS FOR CLASSES

During the first couple weeks of classes you will receive a piece of paper from the Registrar. Take this paper to the bookstore to obtain the appropriate books for your classes. You do not need to pay for your books; you are borrowing them for the semester and you must return them before you leave for the U.S. Since other students after you will be using the books, please do not write on them or deface them in any way.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, STUDY VISITS AND EXCURSIONS

Classes are scheduled in the mornings and afternoons. Some study visits will take place during class time, other complementary course activities will be scheduled outside of regular class meeting times. Sometimes students and teachers can arrange tutorials, where the student meets privately with a professor. **Class attendance and class-related activities are mandatory. Students are allowed five (5) absences during the semester. Any more absences than that and you will fail the class.** You will receive a tentative schedule of classes, study visits and excursions during the orientation. Each semester has a 2-week window called "shopping" during which time students may add or drop classes.

## SPRING SEMESTER SCHEDULE - FACULTAD DE ARTES Y LETRAS

Each spring the Facultad de Artes y Letras arranges to have its students volunteer at the International Book Fair at La Cabaña Fortress. Many students, except seniors, take part in this program and as a result some classes at the Facultad de Artes y Letras do not begin until the end of February. If a class you enroll in is affected in any way by this program, let the on-site Resident Director know immediately and she will work with the Universidad de La Habana to make sure that lost contact hours are made up during the semester.

**Note:** SSA does not grant refunds for any missed portion of the study trips and/or cultural visits.

## SPANISH-ONLY POLICY

When you submit your Pre-Departure materials, you sign a Spanish-only contract, promising to speak only Spanish while you are on the program. We take our Spanish-Only Policy very seriously and you should, too. Let's be perfectly honest: it's a waste of time and money if you go to Cuba and speak English with your friends on the program. Make an effort, not just in class, but in the street, in your home, everywhere you go in Cuba. It's the only way to make your SSA program the experience you want it to be.

**Note:** Spanish is the official language used in all orientations, classes, PowerPoints, discussions, trips and excursions, etc.

## COURSE REGISTRATION

The preliminary Course Selection form you submit with your Pre-Departure materials will be the first step in selecting your classes for the program. As per the requirements of Universidad de La Habana, all students must register for a total of 16 credits. A few factors may change your original course selection:

- If you have not met the prerequisites for a class you have chosen
- If the class you want is already full
- If you have too many or too few credits and need to alter your schedule accordingly
- If a particular course is canceled due to under-enrollment
- If your performance on the placement exam in Havana indicates a need for a change

Any changes that you would like to make to your course registration once your Course Selection form has been received must be sent via email to [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org) after you consult with your home university academic advisor. Once in Havana, there will be a short Add/Drop Period during which you may change your schedule on a space-available basis.

## COURSE WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Students may add or drop integrated university courses without penalty (course does not show up on the transcript) during the Add/Drop Period of the Integrated Studies Program only. The Add/Drop Period lasts for 2 weeks after the start of the university calendar. Universidad de La Habana frowns on any student who attempts to withdraw from a class after the add/drop period. If a student is able to withdraw after the add/drop period, the

course will appear on the host university transcript for the class in question with either a **2 (Suspenso)** or a **0 for (No Credits Received)**. A “W” for “Withdrawal” will appear on their SSA transcript.

### **PROGRAM TRANSFER POLICY**

Please be aware that students who transfer programs (i.e. from Integrated Studies to Spanish Studies) for any reason, must follow the calendar of their new program. Regardless of the original program that a student chose, housing through SSA expires on the date of the new program. Students will be responsible for adjusting travel arrangements and paying any associated fees that may arise due to the program transfer. This policy applies to students transferring programs either before or after their departure date.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

SSA holds students to the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating. Any student who is academically dishonest will face disciplinary sanctions, which may range from a failing grade on the assignment to dismissal from the program. **Incidents of academic dishonesty may be reported to the student's home campus.**

### **GROUP MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES**

Group meetings are held periodically for SSA students and staff. These meetings give you the opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns that arise, as well as to share experiences and information. Meetings are also held before all SSA sponsored excursions for pre-trip orientation.

**In addition to group meetings, SSA sponsors a number of mandatory activities throughout the course of the program. Some of these activities include:**

- Weekly cultural site visits to museums, monuments, etc.
- Day or overnight trips to cities to surrounding areas in Cuba (e.g. day trip to Las Terrazas or Viñales, an overnight trip to Santiago de Cuba).

**Note:** Due to insurance regulations, it is not possible to bring guests, including visiting family members and friends, on official SSA program excursions and visits.

### **SPEAKING PARTNERS PROGRAM**

Students will be paired up with Speaking Partners to practice their Spanish. SSA may put U.S. and Cuban students in touch with each other via email or WhatsApp before the start date of the program to help prepare for the upcoming term.

## **Travel and Visits from Family**

**IMPORTANT: You cannot travel outside of Havana without your passport.**

There will be an overnight trip to another province during your program in Cuba. Your program dates can be found here on our website: <https://spanishstudies.org/acceptance-packet/havana/>. Students may also want to plan their own independent travel on the free weekends. If you would like to travel to other regions of the island, you have a few options for transportation: fly, take a train, or take the Viazul buses (paid in CUP), which is the cheapest and slowest with the longest wait-lists of all these options.

Flying is a good option for going to Santiago de Cuba because it is so far. The trains are another possibility and can be paid for in CUP, but again, you will have to endure long lines to get a ticket.



Keep in mind that attendance at all classes is required. Students that opt to take independent trips outside of Havana are expected to use free days for such activities and not plan trips on days when classes are in session.

**IMPORTANT: Students are required to leave full contact information with the on-site Resident Director when they travel outside of Havana, indicating destination, mode of transportation, and lodging arrangements.**

**Travel agencies on la Rampa**

Cubatur and Havanatur below H.Habana Libre on 23rd

**Airlines on la Rampa for domestic flights**

Address: Calle 23 y P

Cubana de Aviación (Tel. 33-4949)

Aero Caribbean. (Tel. 33-5936)

**Car rental**

Beware of extra charges, for example, being charged for the full tank of gas you start with.

**Buses**

Transtur, Calle 21, e/N y O, next to Hotel Capri. Tel. 33-4038.

Havanautos, Tel. 24-0646

Viazul, the only bus company for reliable, fast service to cities throughout Cuba; Avenida 26 y Zoológico, Nuevo Vedado. Tel. 81-1108, 81-5652.

**Places to Stay in Havana**

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR VISITING FRIENDS AND FAMILY**

SSA policies prohibit visiting families and friends from staying with you in your homestay. However, we have compiled a list of bed and breakfast homes not far from where you live where your friends and family can stay. If you have friends and family who are planning to visit you in Cuba, we suggest you make the reservations at least a month in advance.

Giselle Calle 1ª, No. 252, Apto.82 e/Paseo y A, Vedado	Tel. 53-7-870373 Email: gortizconcepcion@gmail.com
Alexander Barrosa Calle 19 No.376 e/H y H. Apto. 16B, Vedado	Tel. 53-7-8323795 Email: vmbf2008@gmail.com
Mª Eugenia Alcalde Calle 19 No 376 Apto. 8B e/G y H	Tel. 53-5-272 2189 E-mail: mealcalde@nauta.cu
Juan Emilio Daudinot Calle 17 #606 (altos) between B and C, Vedado	Tel. 53-7-837-7593
Villa Koba Rosita Calle A, No 661 e/27 y 29, Vedado	Tel. 53-7-8333 2208 Email: info@villakoba.com
Yamila Colom Calle 15 No.208 Apto.4 e/J y K, Vedado	Tel. 53- 5293 7596 Email: yamilacolomloo@gmail.com
Maricel Díaz (Susy) Calle Línea No.307 Altos e/H e I, Vedado	Tel. 53-7-8327908 Email: susy63@nauta.cu

*Casas Particulares* are also some of the cheapest places to stay while traveling in Cuba. The cost of a room with a private bathroom is between 30-35 USD per night. An entire apartment with three private rooms is between 100-120 USD per night. Included in the cost are a private room with a lock, bathroom, fan, and occasionally included are breakfast and access to the kitchen. (You will know a *Casa Particular* by the triangular symbol on the door).

## Keeping in Touch with Family and Friends

### MAIL AND PACKAGES

The ordinary mail between the U.S. and Cuba takes about one month for delivery, sometimes longer, and is very unreliable. Only letters and other documents can be sent through the mail. No packages are accepted.

There is a post office (*Correos*) not far from the university. Go down the main stairs of the university and proceed down San Lázaro Street. Go to the first street light and to your right; across the street is the *Correos*.

### TELEPHONE

You will be provided a cell phone to use during your time in Cuba; this will be used to communicate with the on-site Resident Director, your host family, and friends. Please pay close attention to the following rules for usage.

- If you go one (1) month without putting credit on your cell phone, the line may be cut and we will no longer be able to use it. **Please put something into your account every month.** You should make it a habit to check your cell phone credit at least every 2-3 days.
- SSA does not subsidize student use of the cell phones. Students are responsible for keeping their credit up to date.

You may purchase credit (it will look like the card below) for your phone at any hotel, ETECSA or Cubacel.



Sample Cubacel card



Back of Cubacel card

Every month Cubacel has an offer (usually announced by a SMS message to people's cell phones) in which during a 3-day period customers are encouraged to purchase credit for their cell phones. During this period Cubacel will double the amount of credit that appears on the person's cell phone. For example if 20 USD are paid toward your account during the days of the offer, 40 USD will be credited. However, this offer is only valid if the payment is made from outside of Cuba. This means that your family, relatives or friends have to make the payment to your account from the U.S.

There are many websites for making payments for your cell phone from the U.S. We use and recommend [Ding](http://Ding.com). It is a simple process; refer someone at home to the following instructions:

1. Go to [www.ding.com](http://www.ding.com), select "Cuba" from the country list and click "Send- top-up"
2. Select "Phone top-up"
3. Enter the Cuban cell phone number (after the country code for Cuba, +53)
4. Select the operator "Cubacel"
5. Select top up amount (how much money you want to add to the cell phone)

6. You will then be prompted to sign up for a Ding account in order to process the payment. The account is free.

We suggest that you budget \$50-\$60 USD for your cell phone use during the first couple of weeks in Cuba.

**Note:** It is a very complicated process to purchase a cell phone line in Cuba, and SSA has purchased a line under the name of a Cuban associate so that students may have cell phones. If you lose your SIM card, neither you nor the on-site Resident Director can purchase the new card; it has to be the owner of the cell phone line whose name appears on the contract. Be very careful with your SSA cell phone! **If you lose the Cuban SIM card, you must pay the 10 USD replacement fee.**

## INTERNET

Host families very rarely have internet access. Students also will have limited access to email and the Internet through the university; however, technical problems and maintenance delays make the system unreliable. See [this helpful video](#) on how to access the internet in Cuba.

We recommend that students go to the major hotels in Havana in order to access their wifi.

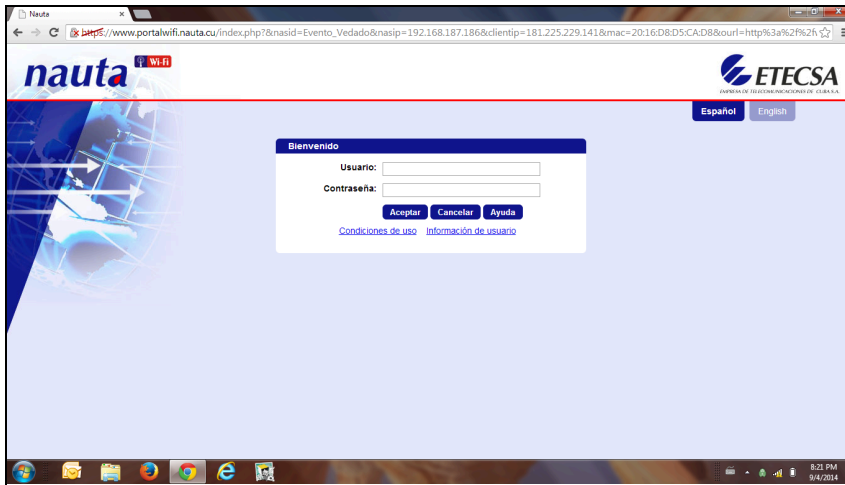
Internet access is available at a cost of between 1 USD and 5 USD per hour. At places like Hotel Nacional and Havana Libre, expect to pay 10 USD for one hour of Internet time. You can usually access the Internet through cards sold by ETECSA.

With the development of mobile data, Cubans can access the internet through mobile data by recharging packages on their phones. For this, it is necessary to have a local phone card. Be sure to bring your cell phone unlocked.

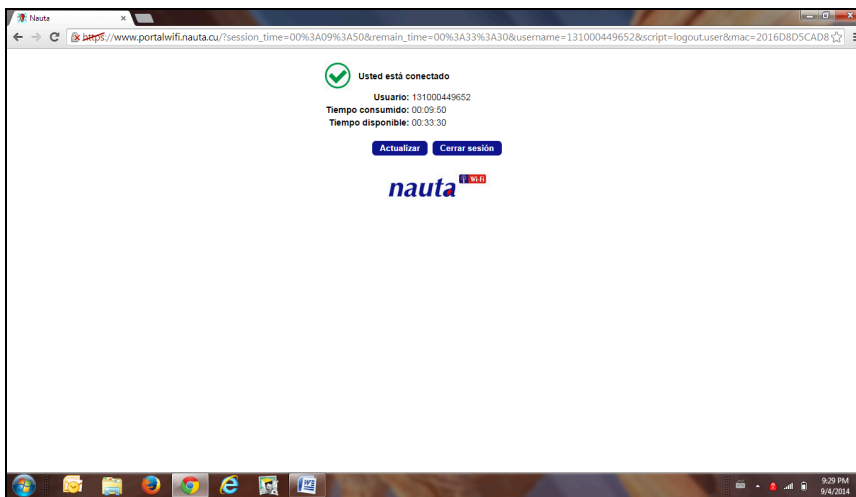
**Note:** If you choose to use email regularly at a hotel, be respectful of hotel guests who may want to access the Internet as well. Hotel guests have priority over non-guest Internet users. Sometimes there will be a shortage of Internet/Wi-Fi cards, in which case the hotel will restrict their sales to hotel guests.

Other things to keep in mind if you are accessing the Internet at a hotel:

- **Be respectful:** Many people choose to work on their laptop in the bar area of a hotel because of the convenience of having a table and a chair. You are free to do this, but be respectful of the bar and order something while you use the Internet there, such as a coffee or soda. Chairs and tables can sometimes be scarce in hotel lobbies. If you go to the hotel with friends do not dominate the space. It is a disservice to the hotel and its guests if three or four students are using their laptops at the tables, especially if they are not purchasing anything from the bar. Keep in mind that sometimes hotel guests might want to sit at a table and have a drink or eat a meal. By taking all of the available tables and chairs you deny them the chance to sit down and you deprive the bar of business.
- **Logging off:** Many people assume that once they terminate their Wifi connection that they are logged out and can return to use the remaining minutes on their Internet card at a later date. This is not true. When you decide to log off of the Internet type this into your URL: <http://1.1.1.1/>. This will take you to the Nauta Wifi Portal, where you can click on the button to end your session.

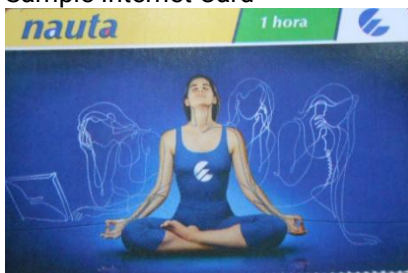


To begin your Internet session you should see this screen.



When you want to end your Internet session you should see this screen. Click on "cerrar sesión" to end the Internet connection.

### Sample Internet Card



Front



Back

### EMAIL

If you have a Gmail account, you might want to download the [Gmail Offline application](#). This is useful in that it allows you to compose messages offline and store them in the Outbox, so that when you reconnect to the Internet they are sent. This will save you a lot of time and money if you aren't composing your emails when connected to the internet!



If your university uses the Google email application, you may find that your access to it is blocked in Cuba. We recommend a couple of solutions to avoid this:

- 1) Set up your university gmail account to forward incoming email to your PERSONAL gmail account or other email address.
- 2) Mask your IP address while in Cuba. Go to <http://www.privateinternetaccess.com> and download the program for \$39.95 (one year of access). This way you can log into Gmail as if you are accessing it from London or elsewhere. Remember, you must disconnect from this program in order to completely log off the Internet.

Universidad de La Habana will assign you an email address for you to use while you are in Cuba. You should make it a habit to check this frequently since FEU, the university student group, sends invitations to social activities, movies, lectures, concerts, etc. The email address you receive will follow this model: username@ffh.uh.cu. Remember that on campus the Wi-Fi connection will be slow and access to Facebook, Gmail, etc., will be blocked for certain hours.

### **VIDEO CALLS AND SMARTPHONE APPS**

Skype, Zoom, and Facetime usually do not work in Cuba. You may be able to make video calls with another app called [IMO](#). You can try messaging home over WiFi with the app [WhatsApp](#). Havana Good Time is an app that will provide you with updated lists of events, activities, concerts and restaurants in Havana. Isladentro (<http://www.isladentro.net/index.php/en/>) is another app worth considering.

### **COMPUTERS**

In the main library of the university, there are a limited number of computers for writing. There are some computers in the Facultad de Filosofía e Historia as well. Almost all computers at the university have an array of program applications, such as MS Word and MS Excel. Computers may be very slow.

We recommend that if you have your own laptop, you should take it with you. Take special care in keeping your laptop safe and locked. At the university you can have your laptop configured to the campus Wi-Fi. You should also bring a flash drive. Some places have three-pronged outlets while others do not. It is best to bring along with you a two-pronged converter. Keep in mind that it is very rare to find places to fix Apple products in Cuba should your Macbook have issues.

It can be expensive to print documents, make photocopies, or scan something. Hotel Nacional offers printing services but the rate is about 50 centavos per page. Ask the on-site Resident Director about other places to print. Paper is in very short supply and expensive.

Attachments you receive by email may be unreadable on the university's computer. Save them onto a flash drive and review them later on your laptop. In Cuba, flash drives are a premium and software is used to convert large files into smaller sized documents such as cmd.exe. They will still be readable, but you cannot forward them by email or convert them into other formats on the Internet. You must open each document on your laptop and save it in the format you want.

**Note: DO NOT bring any routers or hard drives with you. You will be immediately stopped and questioned by immigration officials, you will bring unwanted attention to the program, and you might place your time in Cuba in jeopardy.**

# After the Program Ends

## Alumni



Studying abroad is an experience that transforms you long after you have returned home. We help our alumni to develop their new found skills as they continue their adventures through life. Whether in developing their careers, returning abroad, or continuing their education, SSA is committed to helping students maximize the benefits from their time abroad. Always feel free to keep in touch with us, and if you have an incredible story to share, email [info@spanishstudies.org](mailto:info@spanishstudies.org) with the details!

Our website also has many important resources for alumni, such as information on reverse culture shock, re-entry conferences, and our Alumni Ambassador Program.

### TRANSCRIPTS

The U.S. office of SSA issues academic transcripts at the end of each program. Your official transcript will be emailed to the email address provided on your Home School Approval Form in your application and a student copy will be emailed to you.

**Notes:** Transcripts for integrated courses may be delayed due to the Universidad de La Habana academic schedule. If you have an outstanding balance on your account, your transcript will be held until the balance is paid.

SSA transcripts show course numbers and titles, the number of contact hours and credits, and the grades for all coursework undertaken on the program, and course work completed at Universidad de La Habana. Grades and credits are reported according to the U.S. semester-hour system.

**SSA courses may not be taken on a pass/fail basis.** Petitions to change a course from traditional grading to pass-fail must be addressed to the Registrar of the student's home institution.

For both the Spanish Studies and Integrated Studies Programs, you will receive a transcript from Universidad de La Habana accompanied by an SSA transcript to serve as a translation into the U.S. college credit and grading system. This process takes much longer than it would at a U.S. university. Often it will be a couple of months before ULH transcripts are even mailed to the U.S. office.

As a general rule, students should have all courses and outside studies approved for transfer credit by their home institution before the start of a program. This can normally be arranged through your study abroad advisor or registrar at your home institution.

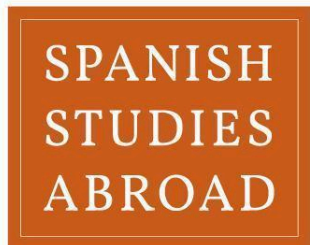
### Additional Transcript Requests

Once the program ends you will receive an official transcript sent to the designated recipient on your Home School Approval Form and you will be emailed a student copy. If you need an official transcript in the future, there is a fee of \$10. If you'd like to order multiple transcripts at once, each additional transcript in the batch will cost an additional \$5. You may either choose to pay by check made payable to Spanish Studies Abroad or complete a credit card authorization form that is available on our website here:

<https://spanishstudies.org/students-parents/transcripts/>. If the receiving institution requires a copy of the Universidad de La Habana transcript from Cuba, the student is responsible for international postage. You should submit the SSA Transcript Request Form to SSA with the following information:

- Your name and the program you attended
- Your birth date
- Your current contact information, including email address and phone number
- The name and address of the person/institution to whom/where you would like the transcript sent

**Note:** If you received a transcript from a U.S. degree-granting institution (Heidelberg University), you will need to contact Heidelberg University to request an additional transcript. Please visit the university's [website](#) for a transcript request form and information about associated fees.



## The Center for Cross-Cultural Study

### Program Conditions and Release Statement

I hereby release and discharge Spanish Studies Abroad/The Center for Cross-Cultural Study Inc. and The Center for Cross-Cultural Study, S.L. (CC-CS) and its agents, employees, and representatives from all suits, claims, or liability of any nature arising out of or related to my participation in an SSA/CC-CS program including, without limitation, claims for personal injury or property damage.

As a program participant, I authorize SSA/CC-CS to share details of my program with my family, my home school, and my host school, as needed. I also authorize SSA/CC-CS to share details of my academic record, such as my home school transcript, with my host school abroad. Furthermore, I authorize SSA/CC-CS to provide my home school with a transcript of the coursework I complete as an SSA/CC-CS participant. I understand that if I am rendered ineligible for a program after my initial acceptance, I am not entitled to any refund from SSA/CC-CS. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to maintain the minimum eligibility requirements from the point of my acceptance until the commencement of my program.

I release all materials from my experience abroad to be used by SSA/CC-CS and its affiliates exclusively for promotional reasons. This includes, but is not limited to, photo, print, video, digital mediums and social media posts or pictures. I understand that I can be removed or dismissed from the SSA/CC-CS programs at any time, either prior to or after departure, for violating the Academic Pledge and other published SSA/CC-CS policies.

In the event that program participants become incompetent for any reason, including (but not limited to) injury, accident, mental illness, disease, or loss of consciousness,

they appoint SSA/CC-CS as their guardian, and authorize SSA/CC-CS to take any action which it deems appropriate under the circumstances, including (but not limited to) arranging for medical or psychiatric treatment, administering prescription drugs, or transporting them to their home country.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

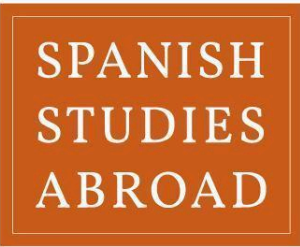
Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**[Note: If applicant is under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian must sign the following declaration and release]**

I, the undersigned [father] [mother] [guardian] of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, a minor, do hereby consent to their participation in the SSA/CC-CS program and do forever release, acquit, discharge, and covenant to hold harmless Spanish Studies Abroad/The Center for Cross-Cultural Study, Inc. and The Center for Cross-Cultural Study, S.L. and its officers, agents and employees from any and all actions, causes of action, and claims on account of, or in any way growing out of, directly or indirectly, all known and unknown personal injuries or property damage which I may now or hereafter have as the parent or guardian of said minor, and also all claims or right of action for damages which said minor has or hereafter may acquire, either before or after they have reached their majority resulting from participation in any SSA/CC-CS programs.

Parent/Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Signature: \_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# The Center for Cross-Cultural Study

## Academic Pledge

### SSA Code of Conduct

Studying abroad requires a significant commitment to personal responsibility. While on an SSA program, you are, in effect, a cultural ambassador for your home country, a representative of your home institution, and a member of your adoptive community.

In addition to the Program Conditions and Release Statement that all students sign as part of the application process to SSA, you also agree to apply the same standards of conduct and academic integrity while abroad as you would at your home institution. These standards include, but are not limited to:

1. Following honest academic standards and maintaining your commitment to academic growth.
2. Strict adherence to host country laws and customs.
3. Respect for your host families and fellow program participants.
4. Respect for SSA property, professors and staff.
5. General personal and academic practices in line with those outlined by your home institution.

### Spanish-Only Language Policy (Applicable to students in the Spanish Studies Program and the Integrated Studies Program only)

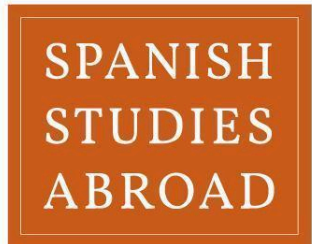
The Spanish-Only Language Policy is fundamental to the educational philosophy of SSA. It is a tool that promotes cultural integration and active learning, where students put into practice what they are learning. This is the best way to develop both fluency in Spanish and a deeper understanding of Spanish culture. The benefits of adhering to the Spanish-Only Language Policy, no matter your initial language level, are great:

- You will improve your ability to understand and express yourself in Spanish.
- As fluency increases, you will gain a greater awareness of the local culture as you develop relationships with your host family, professors, and friends.
- You will experience a greater feeling of accomplishment in your integration, while demonstrating a higher level of respect towards the local culture.

Living abroad provides an opportunity for total immersion in the language and culture – but only if each and every student actively seeks out this experience. The immersion experience begins NOW, as



you get to know your fellow students on the SSA program. You may find that speaking only in Spanish is awkward and even somewhat isolating at first, but years of experience have proven that it is the best



# The Center for Cross-Cultural Study

way to improve your language ability. While each student makes an individual commitment to using only Spanish, this is also a collective effort that contributes to the progress of every student. To help you get the most out of your experience, you and all of your fellow students attending programs with SSA are required to adhere to the Spanish-Only Language Policy.

Students are expected to use Spanish in all written and verbal communications while abroad. Students are NOT expected to speak in Spanish when they are faced with an emergency, when speaking with family members, and on occasions when it is absolutely necessary to use English. However, speaking English in the presence of other SSA students is considered a violation of the policy and must be avoided at all times.

## Academic Pledge

1. In signing this Language Pledge, I agree to use Spanish as my sole language of communication while participating in SSA programs. I understand that failure to comply with this Pledge will result in a five-point deduction from the final grade of the mandatory course required of that program and may also result in expulsion from the program without receiving a refund or academic credit.
2. I have read and understood the Academic Pledge and agree to the conditions.

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_