



# Nature & Knowledge: A Journey from Amazon Rainforest to Galapagos Islands

## Ecuador and the Galapagos Study Abroad

Fall  
2021

### Study Abroad Office

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### Program Description

This abroad will use a dramatic journey between the vastly different ecosystems of the lowland tropical forests of the Amazon Basin across one of the earth's highest mountain ranges, to the biodiverse and unique Galapagos Islands to give students not only the opportunity to learn how environment influences biodiversity, but also to place that new knowledge into cognitive and cultural perspective.

The multidisciplinary academic focus of the trip is natural history and philosophy, with country studies and Spanish language providing the cultural and linguistic context and accompanying intercultural competence skills needed to navigate and understand the human environment the students will encounter.

The natural history focus of the program will help students develop a sense of place, using a scientific approach. How does the environment influence what type of flora and fauna live in that environment? How do biotic and abiotic factors influence the biodiversity of a place? While philosophy may seem like a big jump from the natural history being covered in the biology classes, it actually supports the topic nicely. The philosophy course will focus on epistemology (the study of knowledge); more precisely, we will study how knowledge is gained, interpreted, and used. Our model for this dichotomy between gaining facts and developing knowledge comes from the foundational journey of Charles Darwin, who served as a substitute naturalist on the five-year, round-the-world voyage of the HMS Beagle.

At just 22 years old, Darwin explored and documented vastly different environments from what he knew in his native England. His lens was that of a biologist and geologist, and, while still influenced with the largely scholastic perceptions of his time, his new scientific knowledge and the improved scientific processes of his era (particularly the Scientific Method) led him to use that knowledge to revolutionize what was known of the natural and physical world. It led him to formulate the theory of natural selection, one of the most enduring and revolutionary ideas in modern science. Understanding the social and environmental issues that Darwin was dealing with will provide a fantastic example of how these same factors need to be navigated today in our pursuit of knowledge.

Our host throughout the abroad is [Universidad San Francisco de Quito](http://www.usfq.edu) (USFQ), a large, private, liberal arts University in Ecuador. This University regularly supports study abroad programs of other colleges and universities and hosts more than 1,000 international students each year. It maintains cooperative arrangements with the University of North Carolina and Boston University, who co-share the management of their research stations in the Galapagos on San Cristobal (UNC) and in the Amazon basin at Tuputini Research Station (BU).

*“... it appears that  
nothing can be  
more improving to  
a young naturalist,  
than a journey in  
distant countries.”  
– Charles Darwin*

# Academics

A total of 15 semester hours credit will be earned on this abroad during Fall Semester 2021. 1 semester hour will be earned during Spring Semester 2022. *Courses subject to change.*

## Fall 2021

**Natural History** - *students will take one of the following courses:*

**BNR 245: Natural History**

SH: 4 Attribute: GESL

This course focuses on the study of the natural history of flora and fauna in a specific country or region. Ecosystems studied include: marine, alpine, forest, grasslands, riverine. Offered on Principia abroads only, with a star (\*) grade until following midterm.

- OR -

**BNR 340: Advanced Natural History**

SH: 4 Attribute: None

An advanced course that focuses on natural history of flora and fauna in a specific country or region. Designed for those majoring in Biology or Environmental Studies, the course assumes successful completion of the Bioblock (BNR 111, BNR 112, BNR 191, BNR 201). It focuses on the ecological dynamics of populations, communities, and ecosystems in the region.

## Philosophy

**PHIL 221: Topics in Philosophy: Epistemology & Darwin**

SH: 3 Attribute: None

This course is an introduction to the field of epistemology (study of knowledge). We will be looking specifically at the life of Charles Darwin and his voyage as on the HMS Beagle as a replacement naturalist for a journey around the world. His observations of the environments he encountered provide a good backdrop for looking at how we arrive at knowledge-beliefs and the transition from the Scholastic approach to a Natural Science approach in academia. Students will read from a selection of classic to contemporary articles on epistemology as well as about Darwin's voyage. The course will require a lot of journal writing and reading as well as a few short presentations.

**Spanish Language** - *students will take one of the following courses:*

**SPAN 104: Elementary Spanish**

SH: 3 Attribute: None

**SPAN 136: Language Wkshp Abroad: Elem**

SH: 3 Attribute: GE2L

**SPAN 236: Lang Wkshp Abroad: Intermediate**

SH: 3 Attribute: None

**SPAN 336: Lang Wkshp Abroad: Advanced**

SH: 3 Attribute: None

## Special Studies

**SPST 285: Country Studies: Ecuador**

SH: 5 Attribute: None

Offered only in association with Principia abroad programs, this course provides an interdisciplinary survey of contemporary issues in the destination country or countries. These issues may include geography, cultural history, politics, economics, religion, foreign relations, environment, the arts, etc. May be taken more than once if associated with a different location.

## Spring 2022

**SPST 281: Reentry Seminar: Ecuador**

SH: 1 Attribute: None

The reentry seminar is an opportunity for students to articulate the personal and academic learning gained from their study abroad or field program experience. Students share their growth and experiences through reflection, writing assignments, and the creation of a documentary presentation for the community. May be taken more than once if associated with a different abroad or field program.



## Program Faculty

Dr. Scott A. Eckert joined the Principia College Faculty in 2010 after spending more than 30 years as a research scientist working large marine vertebrates, such as sea turtles, whale sharks and penguins. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Biology and Natural Resources Department. Dr. Eckert obtained his B.S. in Biology from Principia College, and his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in Zoology. He is world renowned for his expertise on leatherback turtles, studying the important role these wide-ranging oceanic reptiles play in the marine environment. His long career as a research scientist has led him all over the world including projects throughout the eastern and western Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas, and two summers in Antarctica. For 10 years Dr. Eckert has taken his students to Trinidad to work on his leatherback sea turtle conservation project, and he has helped lead two other Principia abroads to Dominica and Peru.

Chris Young trekked in Nepal in 1999, studying Tibetan Buddhism, and fell in love with the country and its people. During his graduate work, he studied the Rig Veda and the Upanishads and their relation to Pre-Socratic philosophers. He has been teaching philosophy for more than 15 years at Principia College and has led 3 study abroad trips to Nepal and India, and has supported two study abroad trips to Greece, Italy, and Turkey. In 2019 Chris lectured on a Principia Lifelong Learning trip to the Galapagos and is now obsessed with Darwin's role in the Philosophy of Science.

Dr. Cecily Lee is joining this program as a visiting faculty. Her academic credentials are: B.A., Principia College; M.A.T., Webster University; M.A. in Spanish, Washington University in St. Louis; and Doctor in Modern Languages, Middlebury College. Her dissertation topic was the acquisition of intercultural competence through study abroad. Having lived, worked and raised a bilingual and bicultural family in Mexico, Dr. Lee brings an intimate knowledge of Hispanic culture to her co-leadership of this program. During her 15 years of teaching Spanish language and Hispanic literature and cultures at Principia College, she led 11 prior Principia Study Abroad and Language Immersion Programs -- to Peru (5), Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Guatemala (3).

The program resident counselor attached to the abroad will be announced at a later date.

## Itinerary

Four weeks will be spent on campus preparing for the abroad. There we will focus on foundational knowledge and skill development in biology, (e.g. basic ecological and biological concepts, fauna and flora identification and observation methods, scientific methods and scientific research and writing skills) foundational concepts in philosophy, communicative competence in Spanish language, and intercultural competence skills and knowledge in country studies), as well as learning how to be a low impact traveler. We intend to practice field skills like snorkeling and use of field equipment (binoculars, field guides, cameras, etc) during the four weeks.

The group will travel together to Ecuador for the 10-week, in-country part of the program.

The group will spend the first week in Quito, taking Spanish language classes, learning about Ecuadorian history and culture, and getting to know the vibrant city.

The next two weeks will focus on the Amazon rainforest at the Tiputini Biodiversity Station, with trips to nearby eco-lodges and the Cloud Forest. Students will contribute to ongoing ecological assessment and data collection, and participate in philosophical lectures and exploratory trips.

Returning to Quito for two more weeks, students will continue their Spanish language and cultural studies. Several excursions from Quito will take the group to indigenous communities, Salinas de Bolivar, and hikes. The group will also do a multi-day service project with an amphibian rescue program, supported by the St. Louis Zoo.

The final leg of the journey will take the group to the Galapagos Islands, where we will be stationed in San Cristobal at homestays, as well as multi-day island hopping excursions. There the students will continue their ecological assessment and research, Spanish language assessment, and philosophy coursework putting knowledge into context.

The program will end in Quito in early December. Students will be able to travel on their own schedule back to the United States when the program concludes.

## Applications

Applications are available online at:  
<http://www.principiacollege.edu/abroads/upcoming-abroads>.

Completed applications must be submitted to the Principia Study Abroad Office no later than 5:00 pm on Wednesday of Week 4, **September 23, 2020**.

No late or incomplete applications will be accepted.

## Selection

Selection will take place during fall semester 2020. Each applicant will be interviewed by professors Chris Young and Scott Eckert, and the program Resident Counselor. Equal consideration will be given to all applications submitted by the application due date. See the “Eligibility & Prerequisites” section of this sheet for selection criteria.

Notification of the outcome of the Ecuador Study Abroad selection process will be made by mail on Friday afternoon of Week 8.

Those eligible but not accepted in the initial selection process may be placed on a waiting list.

Participation in this program will likely be denied any accepted student if their grades put them on academic probation. Your academic transcript may be reviewed during the selection process. Students must also be in good standing with regard to the Principia Student Community Commitment and the Principia Standards (see page 4 of the program application).

## Cost

The cost of this abroad program will be the same as tuition, room, and board for fall semester 2021, plus airfare and a \$500 study abroad fee.

The following items will be INCLUDED in the cost: tuition; all accommodations, meals, and transportation; academic instruction and lectures; admissions to scheduled sites, museums, and cultural activities planned as part of the program; some insurance; and administrative fees.

Costs NOT INCLUDED: Domestic US and international airfares; fee; personal expenses; optional activities not planned as part of the program; and any other expense not specifically noted as included in the cost of the program.

Please see the “Financial Aid and Responsibility” section to the right to see what is included in your PrinBill, how financial aid is applied, and when payment is due.



## Eligibility & Prerequisites

The program directors seek students who have a sincere interest in issues related to natural history, philosophy, language, and culture, as well as those who are self-motivated learners who can adapt successfully to different learning environments.

Preference will also be given to students with a 2.0 GPA or higher. Student must meet the Study Abroad Student Selection Criteria (see [website](#)) to apply for and remain on this program. This program is open to all enrolled students in good academic and social standing. This program is open to all majors.

## Financial Aid & Responsibility

Students who will be eligible to receive financial aid for the 2021-2022 academic year will have their loans, scholarships, and grants automatically applied toward tuition, room, and board. Your PrinBill will also include the Study Abroad administrative fee (\$500).

Payments for past and current tuition, room, and board must be up-to-date, or a satisfactory payment schedule must be arranged with the Student Billing Representative, in order for a student to be allowed to participate in this program.

If accepted, students will be required to sign a financial commitment agreement stating that if they withdraw from this program, either voluntarily or involuntarily, after Wednesday, **November 25, 2020**, they agree to pay to Principia a penalty fee of the amount equal to the non-recoverable expenses incurred by their withdrawal plus Principia Abroad administrative fees. Even if all prepaid expenses are recovered, a minimum \$500 fee may be levied.

The program cost, less any applicable financial aid, will be billed to each participant's Principia account, and payment will be due by **August 26, 2021**.