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Study Abroad Office

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Ecuador & Galapagos

Changing Perspectives, Growing in Knowledge: A journey from the Amazon to Galapagos

Program Description

This study abroad will take you on a dramatic journey through the vastly different ecosystems and cultural landscapes of the lowland tropical forests of the Amazon Basin, one of the earth's highest mountain ranges, and the biodiverse and unique Galapagos Islands. The journey will give you the opportunity to observe how nature and culture interface dynamically with each other in the Ecuadorian context and to place that new knowledge into cognitive perspective. You will spend time at research stations in a pristine Amazon tropical forest and in a tropical cloud forest. You'll see how people live in Andean villages above 12,000 feet. You'll stay with host families in Quito, the capital city, while studying Spanish at an Ecuadorian university. You'll explore and snorkel throughout the Galapagos Islands and learn from people you meet about the challenges of living 600 miles away from the mainland in a national park.

The multidisciplinary academic focus of the trip is natural history, philosophy, country studies and Spanish language.

The **natural history** focus of the program will help you 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 academic divergence from natural history, 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. The unique model for this dichotomy between gaining facts and developing knowledge that we will use on this trip 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. 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. 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.

In **country studies**, we'll look at place through a complex view that includes history, economics, politics, art and music. You'll learn to develop your cultural lens, your ability to understand a culture that may be distinct from your own. Distinct cultural lenses yield distinct perspectives. What do Ecuadorian cultural spaces look, sound, feel like? How do some of their ways of being in and viewing the world differ from or resemble yours? What core values inform their perspectives and behavior – and yours? To find out, you will be continually observing your surroundings, participating in what is going on, connecting with people from various places and walks of life, and reflecting on what you see, hear and experience.

Language too is an inherently integral part of place. Learning Spanish through immersion in fact means learning it in its "home territory" and cultural context. You'll have awesome classes with native language teachers for a foundation. But the heart of your language learning will be its experiential nature – the act of decisively "plunging in" to the language and the culture, just as you'll plunge into the ocean to experience its hidden wonders. That will mean soaking in the Spanish you are constantly hearing around you and using it yourself to navigate through your day. You'll notice how much people will appreciate your efforts to communicate in their language when you are standing in their cultural space/place. As you speak the language and experience the culture(s), you'll be developing the skills of intercultural competence so essential for a global citizen.

Our host throughout the abroad will be Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), a large, private, liberal arts university in Ecuador. They regularly support study abroad programs of other colleges and universities and host more than 1,000 international students each year. USFQ maintains a cooperative arrangement with the University of North Carolina, who co-shares the management of the research station in the Galapagos on San Cristobal.

Academics

A total of 15 semester hours credit will be earned on this abroad during Fall Semester 2024. One semester hour will be earned during Spring Semester 2025. Courses are subject to change.

FALL 2024

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.

- 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 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 136: Language Wkshp Abroad: Elem***
- ***SPAN 236: Lang Wkshp Abroad: Intermediate***
- ***SPAN 336: Lang Wkshp Abroad: Advanced***

SH: 3

Attribute: GE2L

SH: 3

Attribute: None

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 2025

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 Staff

Faculty Program Director Dr. Scott A. Eckert joined the Principia College Faculty in 2010 after spending more than 30 years as a research scientist working on 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 three other Principia abroads to Dominica, Peru and Ecuador.

Drop-in Faculty 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 18 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, and in 2021 he co-led the first Principia study abroad to Ecuador. In 2019 & 2022 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). She was also visiting faculty on the 2021 Ecuador Abroad.

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

Preliminary 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, getting acclimated and familiar with this vibrant city and local environments. The next week will focus on the Andes and Andean mountain people and their communities. Then we'll return to Quito to stay with local families, and dive into our language and Ecuadorian culture for three weeks. We'll spend a week at the Tiputini Biodiversity Station deep in the heart of the Amazon where you'll see and study the incredible diversity of life, including troops of monkeys and wonderful tropical plants and birds. We'll also be spending a few days in a tropical cloud forest research station on the west side of the Andes mountains, to witness yet another explosion of tropical biodiversity and to visit an organic cacao plantation (Ecuador is the origin of cocoa and chocolate!). Finally, we will travel to the Galapagos islands with their famous tortoise, marine iguana, penguins and sea turtles. You will have time to really get to know this world heritage site as we live and study at a research station on San Cristobal, then travel by boat to a number of the other islands for exploration. All the while you will have opportunities to learn, interact with the Ecuadorian people, and explore this wonderful country.

The program will end in Quito in early December. You will then be able to travel on your own schedule or return back to the United States.

Financial Aid & Responsibility

Students who will be eligible to receive financial aid for the 2024-2025 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). **See Study Abroad Grant for additional funding opportunity.*

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 22, 2023**, 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, 2024**.

Study Abroad Grant*

Students who receive Principia need-based aid are eligible for an additional Study Abroad Grant to help with expenses not covered by financial aid and scholarships. These costs may include flights, room and board, administrative fee, and opportunity costs. Preference is given to students who demonstrate financial need, are first-time study abroad participants, and have a minimum 3.0 GPA.



Cost

The cost of this study abroad program will be the same as tuition, room, and board for fall semester 2024, plus airfare (up to \$1,500), and a \$500 Study Abroad administrative fee.

The following expenses will be **INCLUDED** in the program: tuition; all accommodations and meals (room and board) and transportation; academic instruction and lectures; admission to scheduled sites, museums, and cultural activities planned as part of the program; student travel insurance; and administrative fees.

Costs **NOT INCLUDED**: Domestic US and international airfares up to \$1,500; \$500 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 left to see what is included in your PrinBill, how financial aid is applied, and when payment is due.

Vaccination & Health Information

Uncertainties with international travel include the possibility of airlines, the U.S. government, foreign governments, and/or in-country partner program providers requiring COVID-19 or other vaccinations. Information or evidence about participants' status with regard to vaccinations may be required by these entities. Program participants may be subject to these requirements, and need to be aware of them. Failure to comply with these requirements may mean inability to travel or participate in the study abroad program.

For Ecuador, all participants are required to have a yellow fever vaccination (see the [CDC website](#) for more information).

In order to manage the uncertainties of international travel safely and effectively, the Study Abroad Office will collect required vaccination and other relevant health information from all participating program faculty, staff, and students.

For more information regarding health and safety for Principia Study Abroad programs, visit our website: [Health & Safety Resources](#)

Applications

(see instructions on page 6 for more information)

Applications can be found directly from this link:

bit.ly/study-abroad-app-fall2023

Completed applications must be submitted to the Principia Study Abroad Office no later than **5:00 pm** on **Wednesday of Week 4, September 20, 2023**.

Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Program Selection

Selection will take place during fall semester, 2023. Each applicant will be interviewed by the program faculty and RC. Equal consideration will be given to all applications submitted by the application due date. See the [**Study Abroad Student Selection & Eligibility Criteria**](#) for additional student eligibility criteria.

The Principia Abroad Office will notify each applicant at the end of Week 8, fall semester 2023, regarding the decision on their application. Those eligible but not accepted in the initial selection process may be placed on a waiting list.

Participation in this program could be denied any accepted student whose grades put them on academic warning or academic probation. Students may also be removed from the program if not in good standing with regard to the Principia Conduct Standards or the [**Study Abroad Student Code of Conduct**](#).

Eligibility and 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.

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



Study Abroad Application Instructions

- Applications can be found on the Study Abroad website: [Application Process](#), or directly from this link: bit.ly/study-abroad-app-fall2023
- To authenticate the Google Form application submission, you **must use your Principia email** address.
- **DUE DATE:** Your study abroad application, as well as the online signature forms from your resident counselor and academic advisor, **MUST BE SUBMITTED BY 5:00 pm on Wednesday, Sept. 20 (Week 4).**
No late applications will be accepted!
- The application has **9 sections**, and you must complete each section before moving to the next.
 1. **Personal Information:** The first section includes basic **personal information** including P01 number, date of birth, citizenship, email, phone number, address, emergency contact(s), declared/expected major and minor, and expected graduation date.
 2. **References:** The second section includes **listing two references**, their emails and phone numbers. One is your personal/character reference and the other is for group learning.
 3. **Academic Advisor Meeting:** The third section confirms that you **met with your academic advisor** to discuss this study abroad program and that it does not conflict with any graduation requirements. You will send your academic advisor this signature page to confirm the meeting: bit.ly/studyabroad-advisor-signature
 4. **Resident Counselor Meeting:** The next section confirms that you **met with your resident counselor** to discuss your ability to demonstrate emotional maturity, personal responsibility, and commitment to adapt to different living and learning conditions. You will send your RC the signature form to confirm this meeting: bit.ly/studyabroad-rc-signature
 5. **Additional Questions:** The next section includes **additional questions** including previous international travel and previous abroads for which you have applied and been accepted or not accepted.
 6. **Essay Questions:**
 - a) What is one important skill you will bring to the study abroad? What is one important skill you want to learn/develop during the program?
 - b) How do others see you? Describe your personality from another's perspective.
 - c) What are your personal goals for the program?
 - d) Describe your spiritual practice, in specific regard to how you envision it being relevant to participating in this study abroad program.
 - e) What courses have you taken that you feel have particularly prepared you for this program?
 - f) What should we know about you as we choose students for this program?

The last three sections include signing off on your understanding of the following topics:

7. **Financial Responsibility** – including commitment and withdrawal deadlines. **If applying for Study Abroad Grant, additional questions will be asked in this section to explain specific funding need.*
 8. **Academic & Social Responsibility** – including that you have read the [Study Abroad Student Code of Conduct](#) and the [Study Abroad Student Selection & Eligibility Criteria](#).
 9. **Statement of Expectations** – including abiding by the standards set forth in the previous documents, Principia's standards, additional standards stipulated by the program faculty or international laws and custom, and expectation that you will fully participate in all aspects of the program.
- Again, the application and two online signature forms must be received by **5:00 pm on Wednesday, Sept. 20 (Week 4)**. Please be in touch with Study Abroad Program Manager Allison Terry with any questions – allison.terry@principia.edu or 618-374-5215 – or stop by School of Government, Suite 160 (SOG 160).