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**Study Abroad Office**

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# Finland Study Abroad

## *Sustainable Futures: Exploring Finnish Education, Sustainability, Culture, and Place*

### **Program Description**

Education and sustainability are mutually reinforcing; leading to supporting healthy livelihoods for people in stable societies. A community which puts its resources into both educational development and sustainability promotes a balance between environmental harmony, cultural diversity, spiritual well-being, and economic stability, creating a unique sense of place. The Finland Study Abroad focuses on the connections between education, sustainability, culture, and place.

The program will start on campus for approximately five weeks and will travel abroad in Finland for approximately seven weeks. The program will conclude back on campus in Elsah for the remaining weeks of the semester. Students will leave this abroad program with an understanding of how Finland operates educationally, sustainably, and how a sense of place and cultural identity connects the two. Students will learn firsthand why Finland is ranked number one in each of these areas on a global scale and how to transfer new insights and ideas gained from their experience abroad back to their home communities.

The program will offer classes from the Educational Studies Department and Sustainability Department. Classes from the Special Studies course offerings in the catalog will be taught as well. Two of the classes will be taught by professors both on campus before traveling abroad and also by “dropping in” on location for a shorter amount of time.

This program is open to all students.



# Academics

A total of 15 semester hours credit will be earned on this abroad during Spring Semester 2026.  
Courses are subject to change.

## SPRING 2026

### **SUS 280 Sustainability Education: Finnish Perspectives**

Instructor: Stephanie Lovseth

SH: 3

Attribute: None

Experience sustainability education in action while living and learning in Finland, a global leader in both education and environmental consciousness. This immersive course takes you deep into environmental and sustainability education (ESE) in Finnish schools, climate change education pedagogy, Indigenous knowledge systems, and community education and engagement for sustainable development, while also critically exploring the challenges and gaps in achieving sustainability. You'll examine how Finland's educational philosophies promote sustainability and reflect on how these principles, and their limitations, can shape a more just and sustainable future, both locally and globally.

### **EDST 275 Pedagogy of Place: Friluftsliv and Udeskol: Nordic Concepts for Education Outdoors**

Instructor: Dr. Nikki Gamrath

SH: 3

Attribute: GESS

This course will explore place-based educational and cultural Nordic concepts like "friluftsliv" (a concept that loosely translates in English to 'open air learning and living' and "udeskol" (a Nordic approach to education outside the classroom). By examining pedagogical approaches to these teaching and learning concepts, this course will critically examine Nordic teaching methods and management techniques used outdoors, studying the implications of outdoor student learning and student well-being and its impacts on traditional classroom practices, and investigating the cultural roots of nature schooling and its standardization in Nordic educational systems.

### **EDST 240 Contemporary Topics: Finnish Education**

Instructor: Dr. Nikki Gamrath

SH: 3

Attribute: None

This course will cover Finnish pedagogy and teaching methods. It will include a critical analysis of current social policies with education and learning models. By drawing upon current Finnish research, this class will address questions such as: What is experiential, collaborative and visible learning, according to the Finnish approach to teaching and learning? What strategies and techniques do Finnish educators use indoors and outdoors as part of their teaching craft? How are Finnish teachers prepared? Why is Finland considered the best in the world in education? Are Finnish education systems and methods transferable?

### **SPST 285 Country Studies: Finland**

Instructors: Dr. Nikki Gamrath and Dr. Amy Herr

SH: 5

Attribute: None

This course will examine the historical, political, societal, and cultural contexts of Nordic nations, with a special emphasis on Finland. Topics will include Nordic traditions, the Nordic way of living, Nordic countries' exceptionalism, gender, peace, and social welfare, Nordic 'reconciliation' with Russia, Nordic literature, and Sami history and culture.

### **SPST 281 Re-Entry Seminar: Finland**

Instructor: Dr. Nikki Gamrath

SH: 1

Attribute: None

This course provides exploration and identification of personal and academic learning, in specific regard to intercultural learning, professional development, and the associated program's academic focus. This course includes intentional reflection and the collaborative development of a related community presentation. Offered only in association with study abroad or field programs. The title will be extended to describe the program location.

# Program Staff

## **Faculty Director – Dr. Nikki Gamrath**

In addition to facilitating a full Principia abroad to Finland in the past, Nikki has also facilitated a two-week long Principia Lifelong Learning sailing trip, planned and facilitated dozens of mountain climbing and backpacking expeditions for Outward Bound and the Teton Science Schools, and planned an entire full semester abroad to New Zealand for Principia. Nikki is experienced in expeditionary group facilitation and understands the work involved in setting learners up for success in this type of learning environment. Her teaching pedagogy is grounded in experiential learning, inquiry, and future-focused learning. She holds an EdD in Curriculum Design and Instruction.

## **Drop-in Faculty – Dr. Amy Herr**

As a sociologist and a peace researcher, Amy operates in fields that embrace diversity and champion global and civic education. Amy holds a graduate degree in Intercultural Conflict Management from Alice Salomon University in Berlin, Germany. She also has practical peacebuilding experience with her non-governmental organization work and her certification in Mediation and Negotiation. Amy has lived in Berlin for almost 10 years, returning recently to the states. She also lived in the UK and Finland, so has extensive abroad experience. She holds dual citizenship in Finland and the USA. As a Principia College graduate and a double major in Sociology & Anthropology and Education, Amy has experience engaging with and confronting some of society's most complex topics, focusing in on problem-solving and individual/societal contributions to peace. She took part in a Principia Abroad to India (2009), and looks forward to co-leading her first abroad program.

## **Drop-in Faculty – Stephanie Lovseth**

Stephanie served as the program faculty director of the St. Lucia Study Abroad in 2022. She studied abroad as a graduate student with Loyola University, Chicago, in Vietnam and Italy. Stephanie is also a graduate of the Principia College Biology & Natural Resources program and participated in the Himalayan Kingdom's study abroad program as an undergrad student. As a faculty member at Principia College she is the Director of Study Abroad and an assistant professor in the Educational Studies department. Stephanie has been the resident counselor on Principia study abroad programs to New Zealand (2009) and India and Nepal (2010) and was the former Director of the 100 Elk Outdoor Center, in Colorado. Stephanie has demonstrated aptitude in successful learning community building, experiential teaching and learning, student and group welfare management, metaphysical and spiritual support, character education commitment, attention to diversity and inclusion, problem-solving skills, and sound judgment and risk and safety attentiveness.

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

# Preliminary Itinerary

This abroad will have three components: on-campus in ELSAH, in-country in Finland, a return to campus.

## ELSAH

The program will start on campus with approximately 5 weeks of intensive classroom learning and community building to prepare students for observation, adventure, and experiential learning in Finland. All the courses will be introduced during this phase.

## FINLAND

Following a spring break for students, abroad participants will arrive in Helsinki where they will focus on Finnish culture and connect with the University of Helsinki to engage with university professors and Finnish students on educational and cultural topics.

After about two weeks, the group will head far north to the Arctic Circle to explore Lapland, Sami culture, Arctic living, sustainability practices, and partner with the University of Lapland for an educational and cultural learning experience.

The group will then head south to the Ruutavaara region to explore sustainability, outdoor education pedagogy, and culture at a Finnish nature school. Heading even further south to warmer climates, students will stay in the medieval town of Porvoo to offer service on a sustainable Finnish farm.

The in-country portion of the abroad will end in Helsinki and all participants will return to ELSAH to wrap up the program, course work, and share their experiences with the greater community at the end of the semester.



## ***Financial Aid & Responsibility***

Students who will be eligible to receive financial aid for the 2025-2026 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, April 23, 2025**, 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 **January 15, 2026**. See [PrinBill Guide Payment Policy](#).

### ***Study Abroad Grant\****

Students who receive Principia need-based aid and postgrads are eligible for an additional Study Abroad Grant to help with expenses not covered by financial aid/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, board, and fees for spring semester 2026, 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.

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/studyabroad-app-S25](http://bit.ly/studyabroad-app-S25)

Completed applications must be submitted to the Principia Study Abroad Office no later than **5:00 pm** on **Wednesday of Week 4, February 19, 2025**.

*Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.*

## Program Selection

Selection will take place during spring semester, 2025. 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 7, spring semester 2025, 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

This program is open to all enrolled students in good academic and social standing, regardless of major.

Although not required, some previous course experience, or a deep interest in Education and Sustainability is encouraged. This abroad is for students who possess a dedication to the experiential learning process, an openness to global ideas, flexibility, and conscientiousness toward building a sense of community.

We expect students to show a commitment to solving problems and to developing strength of character. Preference will also be given to students who show that they are self-motivated to conduct independent research while at the same time demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively. Students will also need to have a desire to experience learning outdoors in colder climates and be prepared for possible snowy and icy conditions.

Other fundamental criteria for selection include the student's responses to the essay questions on the application, dispositions demonstrated during the interview and daily life on campus, and GPA will also be a consideration.

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/studyabroad-app-S25](http://bit.ly/studyabroad-app-S25)
- 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, Feb. 19 (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](http://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](http://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) Why have you chosen to apply to Finland as your study abroad destination?
    - b) How does studying in Finland align with your academic interests?
    - c) What challenges do you expect to face while studying abroad in Finland, and how do you plan to overcome them?
    - d) Finland has a strong emphasis on equality, social welfare, and inclusivity. How do these values resonate with you, and how will you integrate them into your experience abroad?
    - e) Describe who you are as a learner and communicator.
    - f) Describe who you are and how you show up in a group learning environment. Be specific and give examples

*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, Feb. 19 (Week 4)**. Please be in touch with Study Abroad Program Manager Mary Jane Hoff with any questions – [maryjane.hoff@principia.edu](mailto:maryjane.hoff@principia.edu) or 618-374-5214 – or stop by School of Government, Suite 160 (SOG 160).