

Study Abroad Reflection Prompts

(adapted from assignment by Prof. Heather Hall, Anthropology Study Abroad Program leader, Santa Fe College)

Introduction

Studying or travelling abroad is a rich experience and, as such, it is difficult to capture in its entirety. The prompts below are meant to help you reflect on some aspects of your life abroad.

Here is how they can help you:

- 1- Read all the prompts
- 2- Select your topics for discussion from the list below. Do not try to address all the groups, but select topics from at least three different groups.
- 3- Draft a paragraph answering each one of the selected topics
- 4- Develop your paragraphs into a coherent 1,000 word-long essay
- 5- Check spelling and grammar
- 6- Upload your essay into your eportfolio
- 7- Add pictures of your experience abroad that help visualize the points you address in your essay

Topics

Group 1: Perspective

- **Ability to evaluate competing perspectives on global issues**
 - Where you confronted with different perspectives on global realities? How did you understand these differences? Does different mean wrong? Please explain and support your answer.
- **Awareness of one's own values and culture**
 - Did you have any experience in which your values were tested? What did you learn about your values through that experience? What did you learn about your host country's values?

Group 2: Cultural Self-Awareness

- **Awareness of global issues**
 - How did your experience allow you to see the world differently, or help you make sense of the world you are part of in a new way?
- **New perspective on the U.S. and its role in the world**
 - What did you learn about the connection between your country and South Africa? How does this affect your understanding of global interdependence?
 - How do South Africans perceive the U.S.? Is it beneficial to be able to see yourself from someone else's perspective? If so, how is it beneficial?

Group 3: Critical Thinking

- **Critical thinking skills**
 - How does one thing affect another? Did anything happen while in the field that that shocked you out of our habitual way of imagining the way things are? Did an experience force you to think otherwise than the way you have been thinking?
- **Research & Data Collection**
 - What was your experience with specific data collection techniques and applications? Did you find the process easy, hard?
 - What difficulties did you confront and how did you deal with those difficulties? How might you prepare or do things differently in the future?
 - What kind of cultural information can you obtain from these data collection techniques that would be difficult to get any other way?

Group 4: Personal Growth & Skills

Think of career-related knowledge, skills, or contacts developed through your study abroad experience – and what does this demonstrate?

- **Self-reliance**
 - What did you do during your experience that makes you now feel more confident about yourself and your ability to engage with new people, places or things?
 - In what way(s) did you develop a sense of accomplishment, an ability to be self-reliant, and an increase in self-esteem while abroad?
 - Did you do something that you didn't think you couldn't do, but now you know you can?
- **Problem-solving**
 - How did you demonstrate resourcefulness, creativity or problem solving skills, or people skills?
 - Were you confronted with a problem that you had to deal with on the spot? And how did you choose to deal with the problem and what was the outcome?
- **Tolerance for ambiguity**
 - Describe a situation in which your expectations were not met. How did you react? Did this cause anxiety? How did you deal with the situation?
- **Flexibility**

- Did any part of your experience require you to cooperate with others (locals or other students)? Were you able to cooperate in a respectful, sincere manner?
- How did you demonstrate tolerance, flexibility, or a positive attitude in adapting to differences abroad?

Group 5: Connect Learning

- **Connections**

How did what you learned in the field relate to what you already knew from class, movies, books, friendships, heritage, etc.? Can you demonstrate how your experience in the field allowed you to recognize that all knowledge is related?

- **Learning Awareness**

- In what way did your experience leave you wanting to learn more? What questions were you left with?
- In the future, how will you learn more about what you are interested in? Did your study abroad experience influence your relationship to information and how you acquire knowledge?
- What did you learn about yourself and how do you learn?

Group 6: Career Goals & Personal and Social Responsibility

- **Interest in community service/involvement**

- How were you able to contribute to communities you visited?
- In what ways would you like to be involved in community service in the future?

- **In what way has this experience help you define your career path?** What do you plan to accomplish and how has this experience contributed to your development as a future professional in your chosen field?