

Panama Spring Break Program – Climate Change and Environmental Management

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

EXPLORE THE PANAMA CANAL WATERSHED FROM A WHOLE NEW PERSPECTIVE!



Auburn University and the Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC) introduce a unique 3 credits, Spring Study Abroad Program on Climate Change and Environmental Management in the Republic of Panama.

This course is intended to give students a general understanding of the potential impacts of climate change on Panama's water resources. Through a mix of lectures, hands-on laboratory exercises and field trips, students will explore direct and indirect effects of a changing climate on water resources management. Throughout the course, students will learn to use technologies and to apply cutting-edge research methodologies for the analysis and monitoring of natural and human systems affected by climate change.

The 2016 program will focus on the study of the Panama Canal Watershed. Beyond its well-known importance as a waterway between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, this watershed supplies raw water to be treated for human consumption in the cities of Panama, Colon, Chorrera and Arraijan; about 70% of the country's total population. It also serves water for hydroelectric energy generation at the national level. Furthermore, multiple human activities are developed along the Panama Canal Watershed, including industrial, agricultural, fishery, tourism, forestry, livestock raising among others; and it is

home to different communities including indigenous groups. All these factors together make this watershed one of the most vulnerable areas of the country, susceptible to any changes in the climate, and hence a proper management is essential for its conservation.

The Climate Change and Environmental Management Program is a one-week spring course in which students will:



- acquire basic knowledge and skills on the science of climate change;
- analyze trends in climatic variability and human vulnerability in Panama;
- explore direct and indirect effects of a changing climate on water resources management.
- learn and use technologies such as GIS to analyze environmental changes
- lectures, hands-on lab exercises and field trips

At the end of the program student will:

- have a broader understanding of environmental sustainability in Panama, present and future;
- recognize and critically analyze concepts influencing water, ecology, forest, urban management in Panama;
- apply knowledge gained from lectures, field trips on sustainability and cities, to identify problems, find solutions;
- become confident and ready to take up challenges;
- learn new ways of doing research and in-depth study of topics related to climate change and environmental management.

During the 2016 Spring Program students will have the opportunity to visit (*):



- Old Panama City
- Casco Antiguo
- The Panama Canal Miraflores Visitor Center
- Gamboa Rainforest
- The Panama Canal Environmental Economic Incentive Program
 - National parks (Soberanía, Camino de Cruces, Chagres)

*These sites are subject to change.

Download a copy of the [AU.COSAM.Panama.pdf](#)

ELIGIBILITY

- Students with at least sophomore standing
- Minimum GPA of 2.25
- Basic computer skills
- Successful candidates will demonstrate academic success, maturity and desire to experience another culture
- Basic Spanish proficiency is a plus but not required

IMPORTANT DATES

SPRING 2016

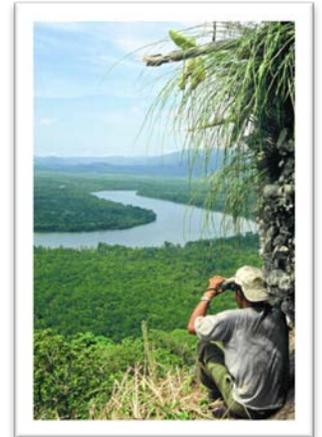
- **Deadline for Application: End of spring 2016 class registration**
- **Duration of the Program: March 12-20, 2016**

COURSES

Courses: GEOG 5720 / 6720; HONR 3087 Honors Study & Travel: Panama (3 credits)

Language of instruction: English

Download a copy of the [Panama Study Abroad Syllabus. Spring 2016.pdf](#)



PROGRAM COSTS

Students on this program will pay the Program Fee in lieu of tuition (regardless of in-state or out-of-state residency).

For detailed description of program costs, download a copy of the [COSAM Panama Budget.pdf](#)

ACCOMMODATIONS

The students will be housed either in the dorms at the City of Knowledge or a hotel near CATHALAC depending on capacity and costs:

- Shared bedrooms, bathrooms
- Laundry facilities (to be paid by the student)
- Blankets, pillows, bed linen and towels provided
- Local Transportation (in the case of using a hotel outside the City of Knowledge)
- Wi-Fi Internet (most probably but not guaranteed- depending on hotel/dorms)
- Breakfasts and lunches
- Transportation from Airport on arrival date
- Transportation to Airport on departure date
- Transportation during field trips
- Please consider that the study abroad program includes moderate physical activities such as hiking, walking, swimming and/or recreational sports

TESTIMONIALS FROM PREVIOUS CATHALAC STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

“Working with CATHALAC was a great experience because it is an international organization that is diverse within itself in all areas from nationalities to disciplines. It allows a space for everyone to contribute and provide information while learning on environmental issues. I enjoyed my time working there because I got to see how my major applied outside of the world I am used to seeing every day and it opened my eyes to new opportunities.” – Martha Santos, Ranch Management, Texas Christian University, Spring 2014.



“Leaving the United States to work in the developing country of Panama brought me to a new level of awareness to the fact that places in this world still do not enjoy the privilege of clean drinking water and a functioning infrastructure to bring it to their homes. The opportunity to contribute to the water quality and GPS field-work tested my abilities to adapt to and function within an environment that was outside my

physical comfort zone and knowledge-base, while working in conjunction with local stakeholders and CATHALAC researchers. I learned more than I expected to on this trip and would highly recommend this experience to anyone with a flexible spirit and intense curiosity about the world” – Kelly Hodgskins, Environmental Ecology, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Summer 2014.

“This has been the culminating experience of my life. It has changed the way that I view my world, my country and myself. I leave Panama with a new family (CATHALAC), and a new sense of duty to be an ambassador for global sustainable environmental policies and practices.” – Jonathan Chanault, Earth Systems Science, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Summer 2012.



“The CATHALAC study abroad program offers an invaluable experience for anyone who has interests in climate change and foreign cultures. You will be educated on relevant issues by top researchers in their respective fields that offer valuable guidance and wisdom. While learning and researching on issues that could change the world, you are taken on exciting adventures into the beautiful Panama.” – Chris Jahng, Earth and Environmental Science, University of British Columbia – Okanagan, Summer 2011.

LOCATION

About Panama



Panama, officially the Republic of Panama, is the southernmost country of both Central America and, in turn, North America. Situated on the isthmus connecting North and South America, it is bordered by Costa Rica to the northwest, Colombia to the southeast, the Caribbean Sea to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the south. The capital is Panama City. With a land area of 29,340 sq mi, slightly smaller than South Carolina, Panama has a population of 3,405,813 inhabitants (2010 est.)

Spanish is the official language, although many Panamanians speak English, especially in the business and service sectors. It is interesting to note that native speakers of English in Panama have developed varieties of the language that are unique in the Caribbean. Indigenous groups keep their languages alive in their daily living. In stores, you will probably hear Cantonese, Haká and Mandarin Chinese, Hindi from India, Hebrew by the Jewish community. As you can see, Panama is not only a “melting pot” but also a “language pot”. If you want to practice your Spanish, visit www.learnspanishtoday.com or any other online Spanish lessons.

Panama has always been a crossroads between cultures, earning the nickname “melting pot”. With a population of almost 4 million people, 67% of it is made up of mestizos (Amerindian mixed with white) and mulattos (white mixed with black); 14% black; 10% white; and 6% Amerindian (indigenous or natives) and a 3% is made up of various ethnic backgrounds. (ATP, Panama)

So many of Panama’s extraordinary locations are steeped in history – stories abound of cruel chieftains raiding peaceful villages, of ferocious pirates battling natives, and of conquerors bringing new cultures with them as early as the 1500’s. One can also find existing indigenous communities in Panama, living almost as they did centuries ago. Indigenous groups that maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage make up 10% of the total population. It is estimated that several indigenous groups including the Kuna, the Ngöbe-Buglé, the Emberá, the Wounaan and the Naso were living on the isthmus prior to the Spanish arrival.



Workers from many distant countries arrived for the construction of the Canal in the late 19th century, and then they stayed on and started families in the new republic. The Cantonese Chinese, Hindustani, Jewish and Arabian communities are numerically significant. There have also been large numbers of immigrants from Latin American

countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Peru, among others. This migration continues today, as do race mixing, which creates a "rainbow population", where everyone is a bit of everything.

Time Zone: The time in Panama all year long is the same as the EST (GMT -5).

Currency: The official currency in Panama is the Balboa (B/). It has the same value as the American dollar.

Electricity: Panama uses 110 volts

Weather and Temperature: Panama has a humid tropical climate. There are only two seasons: the dry season, known as "summer" (mid December to Mid April); and the rainy season, known as "winter" (April to December), but note that even during dry season we still have some rain. Temperatures reach 95°F.

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS



If you do not have a PASSPORT: Please check <http://travel.state.gov> for the nearest local passport office and forms. Auburn Abroad recommends that you apply for a passport as soon as possible. If you already have a passport: Please check the expiration date. Passports should be valid for at least 6 months following your scheduled time abroad.

U.S. and Canadian citizens traveling by air to and from Panama must:

- Present a valid passport when entering or re-entering the United States. Panamanian law requires that travelers present a passport valid for at least six (6) months.
- Purchase a tourist card at the airport in Panama before clearing customs or contact the issuing airline to purchase \$5.00 tourist card prior to boarding plane. Tourist cards are for sale at the airport, however, we recommend making this purchase prior to arrival to minimize time at customs. The tourist card should allow a stay for up to 90 days. The tourist card is granted to citizens from Argentina, Canada, Mexico, the United States, Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Japan, Taiwan and Australia, among others.
- Present tickets or documents for return or onward travel
- Have sufficient cash (advisable US\$300 or more) and a credit card for emergencies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Learn about CATHALAC: <http://www.cathalac.org/en/education>

All selected applicants should review travel information about Panama available from the United States Department of State and the Centers for Disease Control:

Department of State Information on
Panama: <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/pm/>

CDC Health Information on
Panama: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/panama>

Other recommended and useful information can be found
at: www.embassyofpanama.org/ as well
as www.visitpanama.com/ and <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>