Study Abroad for Psychology students

“The world is a smaller place, and a more interdependent place, than we imagine. We are immersed in our own culture like a fish in water, and we often can’t even see it until we get a perspective from outside our culture.”

Mary Bower-Russa, Associate Professor of Psychology, GVSU

Study abroad can help you...

…Gain an understanding of how differences in behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs can be influenced by variations between cultures.

…Permanently change your perception of your own culture, your own place of origin, and yourself. It is nearly impossible to retain one’s earlier perceptions of these elements, and how they fit with the world at large, after a study abroad experience.

…Increase sensitivity to, interest in, and respect for cultural diversity.

…Gain international perspectives on the field of psychology, which often differ dramatically from US perspectives.

…Improve professional potential and enhance employment opportunities in a globalized world.

…Continue your developmental trajectory into adulthood in a way that no other college experience can offer. Students often emerge from study abroad experiences with enhanced self-reliance, social and professional confidence, and openness to many kinds of new experiences.

But what about.....

Do I need to speak a foreign language?

NO! Most study abroad programs offer instruction in English, even in non-English speaking countries. This includes Psychology courses that would be accepted by your home department.

Why should I go abroad during my college years?

To take advantage of the unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities afforded by an undergraduate study abroad program. University-supported study abroad programs are often the best chance people have to spend a significant period of time living abroad.

Can I afford to study abroad?

YES! Early planning for study abroad helps you make cost-effective program decisions, and it also helps you prepare your finances through savings, scholarships, and financial aid. Your financial aid applies to study abroad and, in some cases, your loan eligibility will increase to cover additional expenses. Furthermore, the Padnos International Center offers grants and scholarships specifically for qualified study abroad participants. Visit the Padnos Center to learn more about your options.

Will I take longer to graduate?

With good advance planning, you can take courses that satisfy requirements in your psychology major or the general education program. Be sure to begin planning at least six months in advance.
What are my next steps?

Set goals and plan for results

- Begin at least six months in or more advance of your study abroad. It is never too early to start planning.
- Set some goals. There is not one program best suited for Psychology students. There are many good study abroad programs, and the best one for you depends on what you want.
- Prioritize your goals. Consider your long-term academic and professional goals, as well as your on-campus degree requirements.
- Consider long-term programs and programs in non-English-speaking countries. The longer you stay, and the further outside of your comfort zone you stretch yourself, the more benefits you will gain from the experience. (And keep in mind that many universities teach courses in English, even if the native language is not.)
- Prepare academically. You may need to take prerequisite courses for your chosen program.
- Give yourself time to research and talk to advisors and students who have studied abroad.

With proper planning study abroad can help you prepare for your professional life in today’s global context.

Attend a First Step Meeting
Learn about study abroad resources and advising by attending a First Step Meeting at the Padnos International Center. See www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad or call 616-331-3898 for the latest schedule.

Investigate Programs
Use the Study Abroad catalog, the Padnos International Center resource center (130 Lake Ontario Hall), website (www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad), and peer advisors to find a program that fits your goals.

Talk to your advisor
Use a credit transfer form to get approval from the psychology department for major-specific courses. Keep in mind, students are also able to fulfill general education requirements abroad, including a custom theme. Custom theme information sessions are held weekly in the Padnos International Center. See www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad or call 616-331-3898 for the latest schedule.

Once you have selected a program
Psychology students planning on studying abroad will need to communicate closely with their academic advisor throughout their planning process. When you decide on the program that will work best for you, you should begin an online study abroad application at www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad. Be sure to pay close attention to application deadlines.

Be sure to meet with your psychology advisor at least three months prior to departing for your program. The psychology department must approve any psychology courses you wish to take to ensure that they will be counted toward your degree requirements.
Academic Considerations for Psychology Students

What classes can I take while studying abroad?

As a Psychology student, you can study abroad at almost any time during your undergraduate career. You may fulfill your general education prerequisites, you may take Psychology courses, or you may apply for research credits while abroad. Most programs have one-semester courses but you may also go for a full year abroad or only for a summer internship/research program.

Major courses
Many study abroad programs offer a wide selection of courses, including Psychology courses that can be approved by the psychology department to contribute to your psychology major. And remember: Almost all of the courses in the programs listed below are taught in English. However, it is recommended that you plan to fulfill the Capstone requirement at GVSU.

General Education Requirements
Students may take selected general education requirements through study abroad. Many students choose to fulfill foundation requirements, including courses within the World Perspectives category.

Custom Theme Abroad
Another popular option is to fulfill your theme requirement while studying abroad. For information on how to propose a unique study abroad theme, visit the Padnos International Center website at http://www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad/. Theme abroad information sessions are offered weekly in the Padnos International Center.