**Development Studies**

**in**

**Honduras**

****

**Student Handbook**

**Fall 2017**

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**Introduction**

This handbook is designed to prepare you for your semester in Honduras and answer your questions about studying abroad. We hope that it will help you get ready to make your study in Honduras an unforgettable learning experience.

During your time in Honduras you will be kept busy…

…learning in the classroom about development and poverty.

…practicing your Spanish in class and with your Honduran family and friends.

…experiencing Honduran culture by visiting ancient Mayan ruins, banana plantations, remote

villages, and more.

…playing soccer with friends or socializing over a cup of coffee.

Your life will be full of new experiences and sensations.

But living and studying in Honduras won’t always be easy. You will struggle with Spanish and with understanding familiar customs and cultures, and at times you will feel uncomfortable living outside your own country. But we guarantee that through all of these experiences--both the exciting and the uncomfortable--you will experience life in a way you never have before, make friendships that cross cultural and national borders, and leave Honduras a more perceptive person that when you arrived.

Take time to prepare yourself for this program—read up on Honduras, learn a little more Spanish and most of all reflect on your own willingness to be open and adaptable to the differences and adventures you will encounter in this study abroad experience.

**Before You Leave for Honduras**

A semester in Honduras is hard to imagine. Will it be all you hope for or a frustrating disappointment? Are you prepared academically, socially, and emotionally for the challenge of living in another culture? Will it be safe? It’s natural to be both eager for the adventure and at the same time apprehensive about your ability to handle living in a new and different culture. So it makes sense to spend some time reflecting on how you can make your semester the best and most rewarding experience.

Most students who participate in a study abroad program say afterwards that it was the most important experience in their lives. Never before have they met such different people and learned so much about themselves. They can’t wait to return abroad.

But participants never describe the semester as pure excitement and fun. They also use words like stretching, confusing and uncomfortable. The greatest achievements of the semester are often described as learning to cope, to function as a resident and not as a tourist, and to endure the uncomfortable for the sake of enjoying the enriching experiences of living abroad.

We have seen over the years that the students who get the most out of their time in Honduras are not necessarily the best students academically. They are the ones who come with the most realistic understanding of themselves and their own culture. All students find aspects of Honduran culture that they don’t like. But the most successful students are able to understand their likes and dislikes are mostly based on what they are used to, so they handle the differences without getting too frustrated or needing to change things.

Remember that while there is much that separates the North American and Honduran cultures, there is also much that brings them together. Your own willingness to take the plunge to do a semester abroad is an indication of your openness to living in an unfamiliar culture. Patience, humor and a generous spirit can make the coming semester a positive and unforgettable experience.

**Getting Ready to Go**

**Registration**

Students who participate in Calvin-run off-campus semester programs are automatically registered for

their program. Once you are accepted into a Calvin program, the Registrar’s Office will register you for the classes that you listed on your preliminary application. In other words, you don’t need to do ANYTHING in order to be properly registered for the semester.

You should, however, meet with your advisor to decide your courses for the following spring semester,

since you will register via internet from Honduras during the fall semester. Registration information will

be sent to your Calvin e-mail address while in Honduras for you to register for fall classes but it’s a good idea to know what classes you want to take in the Spring before you leave for Honduras.

(Non-Calvin students should, of course, check with their home schools concerning registration for the

program and for the following semester).

**Financial Aid**

Calvin Students receiving financial aid on-campus will receive the same aid package for their off-campus program in Honduras. The Development in Honduras Semester costs roughly the same as a semester

on-campus. For additional information on questions relating to financial aid, please contact Dave

Brummel in the Financial Aid Office.

**Academic Program**

The academic program in Honduras runs from mid-August to December. The three development courses are offered back to back every day except some Fridays. About half of your weekends will be spent on Friday through Sunday fieldtrips or retreats with the class. Each is worth three credits and is taught by the program director, along with many guest lecturers. The final two weeks of your semester are spent in an internship with an organization of your choice.

**Course 1: Exploring a Third World Society** (3 semester hours—Calvin core credit: Global & Historical

Studies)

This course introduces developing world economics, politics, history and culture within the context of

Honduras. Frequent guest lecturers provide students with an opportunity to interact with leading

Honduran politicians, economists, historians and sociologists.

**Course 2: The Problem of Poverty** (3 semester hours—Calvin core credit: Combined courses 211 and

212 will result in one Sociology credit (elective) and one Economics credit (elective))

This course presents and analyzes principal development theories and discusses the factors

which affect both poverty and the attempt to develop impoverished areas. The class will also include

frank discussion about how Christian values can and should shape development theory.

**Course 3: Development Theory in Practice** (3 semester hours—Calvin core credit: See Course 2 for

core credits)

This course provides an in-depth analysis of development practice, both past and present, Christian

and secular, in the developing world today. Guest speakers from leading Christian and non-Christian

organizations that work with the poor will present overviews of their work, their strengths and

weaknesses.

**Course 4: Practicum** (3 Semester hours—Calvin core credit)

During the two-week practicum, students observe and work with a development organization they are interested in learning more about such as micro-enterprise and business development, education, agriculture, health, and peace and justice work. They also put into practice skills they have learned including participative investigation, evaluation and proposal writing. Through the process, they better understand the day to day work of development practitioners and gain important experience. Their research and evaluation also provide helpful information to the Honduran development organization.

**Spanish**

The most basic tool for understanding another culture is language. Students find they depend on their

Spanish classes to answer many of the questions that come up in their life with their Honduran family,

on field trips and on the streets. Spanish classes are taught each afternoon—Monday through

Thursday—by Honduran teachers using Calvin College’s curriculum. Students study in small groups

according to their level of proficiency and advanced students may study literature, advanced grammar

or culture.

NOTE:

Some students are disappointed to find their Spanish doesn’t improve as much as they had hoped. Keep your expectations realistic. Learning a language is a process. Three-and-a-half months is not enough time to become completely fluent but you will learn. If you really want to learn Spanish, spend most of your time with your Honduran family and friends not with your fellow classmates.

**Planning Your Budget**

**The cost of the program includes: Expenses you are expected to cover:**

-Airfare to and from Honduras\* -Personal medical expenses

-Room and board (includes laundry) -Medical insurance (required)

-Tuition -Passport

-Field trip expenses -Recreation

-Local transportation (buses and taxis) -Dining out

-Required immunizations -Personal weekend trip

-Immigration expenses

-Cell phone and plan

\*The airfare covered by the program fee is the cost of a round-trip Grand Rapids/Tegucigalpa/Grand Rapids ticket. If your ticket is more, you will be expected to pay the additional amount. If your tickets cost less, your account will be credited with the amount of the difference.

It’s hard to say how much money you should bring for these expenses since everyone spends differently. But we can tell you that living in Honduras is less expensive than in North America—a good dinner can be had for about $7, a cab ride across town is $3, and a bus ride to the coast costs about $10. Try to bring enough money to allow you to enjoy the country and to bring home a few souvenirs. Typically students say about $150 to $200 a month is sufficient but you can spend much less if you choose to. You will want to take some U.S. dollars with you to use in the airport and for traveling outside of Honduras.

Once in Honduras the easiest way to change money will be by writing a check from your U.S. account to the Calvin program and getting Honduras currency in return. (Canadian students—unfortunately checks issued in Canadian currency are impossible to cash in Honduras. You’ll need a U.S. dollar checking account to write check on). You may also bring your credit or debit card for use in tourist areas during your travels (VISA cards are the easiest to use). Travelers’ checks are difficult to exchange and are not necessary. So just bring your checkbook, some U.S. currency, and your credit/debit card if you have one. If you decide to take a credit card, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company before you leave that you will be using your card outside the United States or Canada.

**Passports**

U.S. citizens: Application for a passport should be made as soon as possible. You will need to bring the

following materials to a major post office (Grand Rapids’ main post office at 225 Michigan NW or the

Wyoming post office in Rogers Plaza).

1) Completed application form, available from Calvin’s Off-Campus Programs Office or on-line at

http//: www.travel.state.gov

2) Proof of citizenship (certified birth certificate with raised seal, naturalization papers, or a previous

passport)

3) Picture ID

4) The applicable fee—most commonly $135 (cash, check, or money order)

5) Two duplicate passport photos. (The Audio Visual Department in lower Hiemenga Hall gives a very

good price and knows the exact dimensions for passport photos).

Please note that you should **NOT** sign the application prior to submitting it at the post office—the

postal employee must witness your signature—and complete the form in black or blue ink.

Canadian citizens: Request a passport application from the Canadian Consulate in Detroit. Passports

are issued in Ottawa. The contact person in the Consulate is Beth Ann Van Harn, Consular Officer, Suite

1100, 600 Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI 48243-1798. The phone number is (313) 567-2340.

When you receive your passport, sign it on the page opposite your photo, thereby making it valid. Then make

three copies of the first page of your passport (with photo) and distribute them in the following way:

1) Leave one copy at home with your parents.

2) Pack one copy in your luggage, separate from your passport.

3) Give one to the Off-Campus Programs Office.

**What to Pack—Think less, not more!**

Bible Anti-bacterial non-water soap

Passport Sunscreen

Copy of your passport Insect repellant

**Checkbook (U.S.)** Swimsuit

Snapshots of family and friends Sweatshirt/fleece

Camera Baseball cap

Gift for host family Comfortable shoes/boots

Textbooks Dress shoes

Spanish/English dictionary Good walking shoes/boots

Travel guides (optional) Pants/shirts/socks/underwear

Towel Backpack for school

Extra set of contacts/glasses A duffel big enough for Fall Break travels

Anti-malaria and other medications (you won’t want to lug your suitcase)

Flip-flops to wear in the shower USB

Thin, light weight bed sheet Laptop

**NOTE:**

U.S. products (almost anything you can think of) are easily available in Honduras and probably

cost about the same. So make sure you tell your friends that they can much better send you a little cash to buy your own care package. Postage from the U.S. or Canada to Honduras is very high and big boxes have a tendency to be seriously delayed.

**DO BRING DON’T BRING**

Towel Clothes iron—ironing will be done for you

Sheet Too many clothes—your family will live

Hair dryers, flat irons (voltage is same as US) more simply than you are used to

**How to Dress**

Honduras is style-conscious in a different way than North America. Because wealth is not

something taken for granted, Hondurans, especially in the city, take care to dress neatly.

The students at the Pedagógica University will be well dressed in styles similar to those worn in North

America, but you will probably notice that they are less sloppy and wear everything a little tighter.

Honduran students wear jeans but only ones that are clean and without rips or holes. Their clothes will

always be carefully neat and well cared for. You will **not wear shorts to class no**

**matter how hot it gets!!!**

While tattoos and piercings are generally accepted in U.S. culture, Hondurans often see then as signs of delinquency or gang involvement. You should plan on removing any facial piercings

for the duration of the semester and make an attempt to cover any visible tattoos (for example, with

an armband). Pierced ears are widely accepted, though men may receive strange looks.

**In Class**

Shoes—NO flip-flops or beat up shoes

Clothes—Nice jeans or skirts, khakis, polo shirts, dress shirts, blouses, etc.

Reasons:

1. We will regularly be having speakers in class who are the officials of the Honduran government, World Bank, UNDP, U.S. Embassy, etc. You will dress nicely on those days.

2. While you are in Honduras we ask that you dress like a Honduran not a college student from North America.

Previous students suggest that you bring a couple pairs of jeans, a couple pairs of other pants, a few

comfortable dresses (just the women, that is), clothes for lounging around the house (t-shirts and

shorts). Also bring only clothes you don’t mind getting stretched out—everything will be washed by

hand. Bring sweatshirts, a raincoat and sweaters for Santa Lucia. Bring one dressy outfit in case you get invited to a wedding or party.

**Weather**

This program takes place during Honduras’ rainy season (August to December). The average low

temperature for that time period is 50 degrees and an average high of 89 degrees. Santa Lucia, where you will be living, is in the mountains above Tegucigalpa and will get cold, we promise!! Take

long sleeve shirts and sweaters and some cold weather shoes. There will be NO HEAT in your houses.

FINAL NOTE ON CLOTHES:

**Bring enough clothes to last you a couple of weeks. The families you live with will likely be poorer**

**then you and therefore may have fewer clothes than you. Keep that in mind. And you will wear more pants than shorts. Guys, you really have to bring a pair of dress pants.**

**When You Arrive in Honduras**

**The Airport**

The airport in Tegucigalpa is tiny and you should have little problem getting through customs. Have

your passport and customs sheets (given to you on the airplane) ready to give to the airport officials and make sure you mark **tourist** (not student) on your form so you will be given a 90 day visa. We will be outside waiting for you.

**Living in Santa Lucia**

Santa Lucia is a beautiful small town about 20 minutes outside Tegucigalpa. Its a very safe environment and students spend their free-time outside playing soccer or basketball with locals, going for walks on rural trails or enjoying ice-cream at the small lagoon in the middle of town. Excursions into Tegucigalpa on the local bus are easy and allow a break from small-town living. Families in Santa Lucia are friendly and large. Small children are everywhere! Most students find their stay in Santa Lucia to be the highlight of their semester.

**Studying at the Pedagogical University**

You will be studying at La Universidad Pedagógica—a teachers’ college near the center of the city. It

next door to a large shopping plaza and grocery store. Students at the Pedagógica are friendly and many would enjoy developing friendships with students from North America. But because our classes and office are separate from the university, you will find that you need to look for opportunities to get to know them. Past students suggest that if you’re really interested in meeting Hondurans, you should sign up to have a Honduran conversation partner from the university or Santa Lucia.

**Safety**

One of your concerns, especially as you learn your way around the city, is bound to be safety.

Communicating in another language, coupled with your unfamiliarity with your surroundings, will

probably make you feel more vulnerable than you would be at home.

We are concerned with your safety and take all reasonable precautions to make sure you stay out of harm’s way. If you do experience any negative experience related to your safety we will ask that you fill out an incident report so that we can maintain records and try to prevent future incidents. We ask students to reduce risk by not wearing nice watches and jewelry while on buses or downtown and recommend that they carry only the cash they need for the day rather than their entire wallet.

**Email**

You will have access to e-mail at internet cafes in Santa Lucia and at the Pedagógica’s library. But, remember that you didn’t come to Honduras to spend your time e-mailing or skyping people back home.

**Regular Mail**

Letters and manila envelopes take about ten days between the U.S. and Honduras. Large packages are

often delayed and are expensive to mail. We recommend that you tell family and friends to limit their

care packages to what fits in a large manila envelope and just send them more frequently.

You can receive all letters and packages at the following address:

[Your Name]

Apdo 30676

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Central America

**Living with a Honduran Family**

Each student will live with a Honduran family. Some of the families are single mothers with children.

We choose host families who can provide clean and comfortable accommodations with a separate

room for the student and are excited about the opportunity to interact with and help students in their

adjustment to life in a new culture. We do our best to match you with families according to your

preferences but obviously we can’t do that every time so we ask you to be flexible.

The experience of living with a Honduran family will vary from one student to another. For some, the

host family becomes family and their house becomes home. For others the relationship stays distant

but friendly. Whichever case you find yourself in, you are expected to show respect for your family and

their culture. North Americans usually make a guest feel welcome by telling them to make themselves

at home and to help themselves to whatever they would like. Hondurans would find that extremely

rude. They treat guests in their home (even visiting family) with the utmost courtesy—which includes

serving their food, clearing way their dishes and frequently asking if they need anything else. Tell your

family that you would like to help and prefer not to be treated as a guest. Offer to help clean up or to

cook a meal. This is a cultural difference that you will probably not be able to change. Vegetarians

should state their preferences and not feel pressured if the family forgets to comply. If your family is

unfamiliar with vegetarian diets introduce them to it by offering to help with preparation of a meal.

The program provides money for buying lunch on school days and your family with provide breakfast

and dinner. On days that you do not have classes they will provide you with lunch as well. Filtered or

boiled water is available in your home.

Families also wash your clothing (by hand). Some families have maids, which often creates some initial discomfort for students. However, we ask that you be sensitive to the fact that housekeeping is a paying job and you should not criticize your family’s choice to employee one.

**Potential Areas of Conflict**

Remember that every household has a set of rules and expectations. Your Honduran family will feel

responsible for you and worried about your safety as a newcomer. Though you will be eager to accept

some of their assistance (for instance showing you the route from their house to the bus stop), their

concern may sometimes feel over-the-top to you. Do your best to comply with their suggestions as you

learn as you learn to adjust and fit in to your new life. They want to include you in their family, and

they like it when you return the gesture even in small ways (for example, accompanying them to

the grocery store when invited).

Don’t worry if a conflict develops with your family. We’ve found that most times problems can be

worked out with some effort and careful communication. Be prepared to ask lots of questions and

have a sense of humor about misunderstandings and mistakes. These are some areas that can lead to conflict:

**Telephone use:** The home phone is the property of your hosts and should be used sparingly. You will be given a cell phone once you reach Honduras and receive instructions on how to put minutes on it.

**Meals:** Hondurans usually serve you your food to you and chances are you’ll find you don’t always like

everything you find on your plate. Make an effort to try new things and express appreciation for the food you

are given. If you are regularly served too much food or foods you do not like, politely ask if you can serve your

own food. Don’t wait too long to say you don’t like something. After a month of oatmeal for breakfast it will be

embarrassing to admit you don’t like it.

**Access to the kitchen outside of meals:** Hondurans do not snack much between meals. Find out if you are

welcome to take food from the kitchen between meals and if not keep your own supply on hand.

**Curfew:** Honduran young people generally are given less independence than North Americans. They are

expected to live at home under their parents’ rules until they marry. Friends who stop by to visit are received in

the living room rather than the bedroom especially if they are of opposite sex. Talk with your family about your

expectations of you regarding curfew and having your friends over. You should follow their rules. While families

certainly want you to go out and enjoy your time in their country, most families get up early and therefore go to

bed early. You should avoid making them wait up for you. Each family is different, but most want you home by

10pm unless there is a special event, and expect that you will be home for dinner unless you tell them

otherwise.

NOTE: YOU MAY NEVER HAVE AN ADULT OF THE OPPOSITE SEX IN YOUR BEDROOM. This includes your Honduran papá or adult brothers.

**Television:** Your family may spend a lot of time watching TV. You probably won’t love that but you’ll find that if you join them occasionally your Spanish will improve and interesting impromptu conversations will come up. If your family has cable TV you may have a favorite show or sports team you like to watch which your family is not interested in. Do not watch much English television—it won’t do your Spanish any good, and there are too many other interesting things to do. But if occasionally there is a show you would like to watch, check with your family about watching it ahead of time to make sure they do not have other plans.

**Shower Use:** Hondurans take short cold showers to conserve energy and water. Keep your showers short and clean up after yourself in the bathroom. It is a good idea to store your shampoo and soap in your bedroom. Your family won’t want you to be barefoot in the house (unless in your room), and you probably won’t want to either. Bring flip-flops for the shower. Other bathroom etiquette—remember that the toilet paper goes in the waste basket and not in the toilet. This may take some getting used to, but you’ll find that non-compliance just leads to more problems :).

**Courtesy:** When you walk into a house, always make your presence known with a greeting (“¡Buenos Días!,” etc), unless it is very late at night. Never walk around the house with bare feet (remember to bring socks or slippers). Never put your feet on the furniture and never lay on the couch unless you see other family members doing so.

***As much as possible try to work out rules with your family before a conflict situation develops and feel free to ask the program director for advice.***

**Spiritual Growth**

A lot of the learning and growing that will happen as you experience life in Honduras will focus on your

spiritual life and understanding yourself as a Christian. Participating in Honduran church services will

give you a new perspective on the kingdom of God and worship. And being so close to the poverty all

around you will force you to take a hard look at injustice and ask yourself tough questions about your

responsibility as a Christian. Our group will get together weekly in worship, pray and reflect on what

the Bible says about poverty, our witness in Honduras and our role as Christians in the developing

world. If you are feeling especially adventurous, seek out a youth group that you can attend.

**Traveling in Honduras**

The academic schedule for the semester has been set up to allow plenty of time for students to travel

and explore. For field trips, we will travel in buses together and stay in the same hotels. On weekends

when field trips are not planned, students are free to make their own travel plans and will fill out a travel form.

For any trip you should carry the program director’s telephone number, sufficient cash, a supply of

toilet paper, water, and a few snacks for the road. Passports should be carried only when traveling

outside of the country, though it is a good idea to bring a copy with you even on trips in Honduras.

**Visitors**

Kurt and Jo Ann love it when friends and family come visit and your Honduran family will as well. There are a lot of cute hotels in Santa Lucia if your family comes. A single friend can stay with you (if not the opposite sex) if your family agrees but they should pay something for their food. Visitors are welcome to come to class and on trips with us. Talk to Kurt and Jo Ann to work out the details.

**Authority and Discipline**

**Counseling and Support**

Kurt and Jo Ann help students in their efforts to understand and adapt to Honduran culture. They are also very available when students encounter unexpected difficulties, such as sickness, accidents, or unpleasant news from home. On the other hand, when, in the judgment of the director, the student’s family, academic advisor or college administrators should be notified about a student experiencing difficulty, he will do so. Normally this will occur anytime a student is involved or in an accident or is hospitalized, or when the student seems to be in danger of losing academic credit or of being dismissed from the program.

The program director has the responsibility of maintaining order and an atmosphere within which the

students can feel secure and make progress toward the program’s objectives. On those rare occasions

when a student’s behavior disrupts good order, endangers the reputation and good standing of the

program, or seriously affects group safety and morale, the director will intervene.

Intervention usually occurs in two stages. First, a student is counseled about the disruptive behavior

and warned. If the behavior persists the student will be placed on probationary status or dismissed

from the program. The student is given the opportunity to present his/her own cases to the director,

but the director has the authority to make the final decision in consultation with the Student Life Office

and the Director of Off-Campus Programs.

**Involuntary Dismissal from the Program**

Any student dismissed from the program by the director may submit written accounts of the

circumstances of his/her dismissal for inclusion in his/her personal file. The program director is

required to inform the Director of Off-Campus Programs and the Office of the Registrar of the dismissal

and its reason.

***No refunds are given to students dismissed from the program. Any unpaid balance on the student’s***

***account will be due and payable at the time of dismissal.***

**Medical Information**

**Medical Insurance**

It is your responsibility to be sure that you have insurance that covers illness or accident while you are abroad.

You may do this in one of three ways:

1. Verify that you are covered by the insurance policy of your parents even while outside the United States or

Canada;

2. Purchase the Calvin-sponsored insurance (KnightCare); or

3. Purchase a special policy designed for students studying abroad. This costs approximately $25 per month.

Regardless of the type of coverage you have, you will need to be able to cover those expenses for the

short-term, because insurance reimbursement will be done later and on the basis of receipts submitted. Of

course, if the bill is large and you do not have the funds to cover it, Calvin will help you pay it and expect to

be reimbursed later.

**Medical Emergencies**

You must have medical insurance that covers you outside North America. If you are covered by KnightCare, your

policy covers you outside the United States. If your own policy doesn’t cover you outside North America, check

with the Off-Campus Programs Office about policies that provide this and can be purchased on a short-term

basis.

Calvin has purchased an emergency evacuation coverage policy for its students for medical or security

emergencies. However, this does NOT cover any other kind of medical expenses.

Be sure you know the regulations of your insurance company regarding prior approval for care. Keep your

insurance card or a copy of it with you.

If you require medical attention while away from home, you will be asked for payment at the time of service.

This can usually be done via credit card. You can apply to your insurance company for reimbursement IF YOU

HAVE RECEIPTS—be sure to get them!

If you have a medical condition that should be known when receiving medical attention, wear a med-alert

necklace or bracelet.

**The ISIC**

You may wish to purchase the International Student Identity Card. It is an internationally recognized student

card that often helps get discounts as you travel independently.

**Contact Information**

In Grand Rapids:

Don DeGraaf, Director of Off-Campus Programs

Email: ddgraaf@calvin.edu

Phone: (616) 526-6225/ (616) 558-7245

In Honduras:

Kurt Alan Ver Beek, Director of Honduras Development Semester and Jo Ann Van Engen

Email: joannkurt@gmail.com

Cell phone: 011-504-9968-9931 (Kurt)

011-504-9757-5038 (Jo Ann)

Calvin Program Office at the Universidad Pedagógica (Morning hours, Monday-Thursday)

Phone from U.S.: 011-504-2239-6497

postal employee