Intensive Language Study: Spanish for the Natural Sciences IV

SPAN-3000 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Panama: Tropical Ecology, Marine Ecosystems, and Biodiversity Conservation

Course Description
The Spanish-language training course has been specifically designed to integrate the curriculum of the other three semester courses into daily language instruction for the Panama: Tropical Ecology, Marine Ecosystems, and Biodiversity Conservation students. This holistic approach to language learning greatly improves students' success in all program components and their overall experience in Panamá.

The curriculum is designed to prepare the student for daily academic and cultural engagement with host communities. Additional emphasis is placed on increasing language skills in areas related to the thematic foci of the program, including environmental conservation, ecology, history, marine ecosystems, and natural resources use. Classes focus on oral comprehension and communication, situational practices of new grammatical concepts, and cultural appropriateness. Emphasis is placed on the vocabulary used within the tropical ecology, marine ecosystems and biodiversity conservation field to enhance interviewing skills, written assignments, and informal interactions.

Course Objectives
- To facilitate the mastery of important communicative competence skills, with an emphasis on comprehension of daily social interactions with Panamanians.
- To foster the ability to comprehend lectures and formulate questions in more specific situations requiring more technical language knowledge.
- To foster proficiency in spoken Spanish through strong listening comprehension skills and oral practice.
- To further develop grammatical and written capabilities.

*This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.
**Expected Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students should have attained the following:

- Ability for daily academic and cultural engagement with host communities.
- Increased language skills in areas related to the thematic foci of the program, including tropical ecology, marine ecosystems, and biodiversity conservation.
- Enhanced oral comprehension and communication, situational practices of new grammatical concepts, and cultural appropriateness.
- Greater knowledge of the vocabulary used within the field of ecology to enhance interviewing skills, written assignments, and informal interactions.

**Methodology**

Language professors are professionals specialized in teaching Spanish as a second language. Classes meet for four hours daily with an average student-teacher ratio of 5:1. This course provides in-class learning, roundtable discussions, oral presentations, field excursions, and group exercises. Students are required to attend and participate in classroom activities and discussions, conduct interviews at various agencies, and complete readings and written assignments developed and distributed by the language instructors. Formal coursework is supplemented with daily practice within homestay families, lectures and field excursions presented in Spanish, and significant opportunities for informal practice while living and traveling in Panama.

For language placement in appropriate class levels, students are given a written and oral placement exam during orientation week. During the final week of the program the students are re-tested and a final language level is assessed.

Instructors assign course readings that may include, but are not limited to, newspaper articles, technical papers, environmental journals, short stories, and web-based information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Activities and Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses of SER, ESTAR and HABER in the indicative and present subjunctive.</td>
<td>Descriptions of family, people, things, events and contexts. To explain concepts in written and oral exercises.</td>
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<td>Adverbs of time and place in present. Possessive and demonstrative adjectives.</td>
<td>Popular sayings, jargon, colloquialisms. The role of popular music in expressions, pop culture.</td>
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<td>A complete chart of prepositions: simple, compound, verbal and adverbial expressions.</td>
<td>The Panamanian families’ perceptions of immigration and feelings of regionalism.</td>
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<td>The use of the imperative -also with reflexive verbs. Placement of indirect and direct object pronouns.</td>
<td>Research and presentation of information about a topic relating to the natural history of Panamá.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The subjunctive to express influence, emotion, doubt and the unknown. Introduction for the imperfect and past perfect of the subjunctive. Concordance with conditional tense.</td>
<td>Panama’s relation with external debt agencies, the role of land tenure and economic restructuring on poorer communities.</td>
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Assignments and Assessment
Assignments will vary according to the capabilities of each language level and special group needs, but will include oral and written work such as compositions, response papers, practice exercises, field activities, roundtable discussions, and a final presentation.

Evaluation
The Academic Director is responsible for assigning the final letter grades, in consultation with the language instructors.

Oral presentations 25%
Homework assignments 25%
Class participation* 30%
Compositions 20%

*Participation includes student contribution to in-class discussion. Also included is the student’s use of Spanish during educational excursions. Class attendance and assignment completion is assumed.

Grading Scales and Criteria
Grades are given both fairly and rigorously and in accordance with the system below. They will reflect a combination of absolute quality of performance, progress made, the ability to take into account and assimilate the Academic Director’s and the teachers’ advice in assessing the work done. An “A” letter grade reflects exceptional work, perfect combination of academic competences and personal research and analysis. It shows great ability to integrate field-based investigation and personal reflection into a structured and well argued paper. A “B” letter grade reflects serious and methodical work as well as a substantial effort at analyzing and understanding cross-cultural issues. A “C” letter grade shows the work meets the requirements but needs more in-depth reflection and personal involvement. A “D” letter grade is insufficient and clearly reflects lack of work or serious deficiencies.

The grading scale for all classes is as follows:
94 – 100%      A
90 – 93%        A-
87 – 89%        B+
84 – 86%        B
80 – 83%        B-
77 – 79%        C+
74 – 76%        C
70 – 73%        C-
67 – 69%        D+
64 – 66%        D
Below 64%    F

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Please see the SIT Study Abroad student handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, academic warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

Please Note: Course content, lecturers, and readings may be modified as needed. Should any change of class topics or lecturers be necessary, students will be promptly notified.

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