Jordan: Modernization and Social Change
Spring 2015

General Information
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a small country (population: 6.3 million) with few natural resources, but it has played a pivotal role in the struggle for power in the Middle East. Jordan’s significance results partly from its strategic location at the crossroads of what most Christians, Jews, and Muslims call the Holy Land. The desert kingdom emerged out of the post-World War I division of the Middle East by Britain and France. The population at that time was made up largely of Bedouin tribesmen, known as East Bank Jordanians, who were followers of King Hussein’s grandfather, Abdullah - himself originally from Arabia. Today, a significant portion of the population of Jordan is of Palestinian origin - that is, from areas west of the River Jordan, including the West Bank, today’s Israel, and Gaza. With the exception of persons from Gaza, the vast majority of those persons of Palestinian origin have Jordanian citizenship.

The country’s long-time ruler was King Hussein (1953-99). A pragmatic leader, he successfully navigated competing pressures from the major powers (U.S., U.S.S.R., and UK), various Arab states, Israel, and a large internal Palestinian population despite several wars and coup attempts. In 1989 he reinstituted parliamentary elections and gradual political liberalization; in 1994 he signed a peace treaty with Israel. His son, King Abdullah II, assumed the throne following his father’s death in February 1999. Since then, he has consolidated his power and undertaken an aggressive economic reform program, maintaining stability in the face of Islamist militancy while accommodating calls for reform. Jordan acceded to the World Trade Organization in 2000 and began to participate in the European Free Trade Association in 2001. After a two-year delay, parliamentary and municipal elections took place in the summer of 2003.

Unlike many of the states in the region, Jordan has no oil of its own. Its resources are limited to phosphates and agricultural produce. The economy depends largely on services, tourism, and foreign aid, for which the U.S. is the main provider. Jordan prides itself on its health service, one of the best in the region.

Arabs comprise 98% of the population of Jordan, with the remaining 2% being Circassian and Armenian. As such, Arabic is the official and predominant language in the country with English widely understood between upper and middle classes. Jordanian society is characterized by religious tolerance where Sunni Muslims represent 94% of the population with the other 6% Christian.
Climate and Geography
Jordan is a relatively small country situated at the junction of the Levantine and Arabian areas of the Middle East. The country is bordered on the north by Syria, to the east by Iraq, and by Saudi Arabia on the east and south. To the west are Israel and the occupied West Bank, while Jordan’s only outlet to the sea, the Gulf of Aqaba, is to the south. Jordan occupies an area of approximately 96,188 square kilometers including the Dead Sea, making it similar in size to Maine or Portugal. However, Jordan’s diverse terrain and landscape belie its actual size, demonstrating a variety usually found only in large countries.

Western Jordan has essentially a Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers. However, about 75% of the country can be described as having a desert climate with less than 200 mm of rain annually. Jordan can be divided into three main geographic and climatic areas: the Jordan Valley, the Mountain Heights Plateau, and the eastern desert, or Badia region.

Jordan is a very sunny country with average daily sunshine hours ranging from as much as twelve to thirteen in summer. Although summer temperatures are high in the desert, the heat is usually moderated by low humidity and a stiff breeze during the day, and the nights are cool and pleasant.

Average Amman maximum and minimum temperatures in Fahrenheit:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>January</th>
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<th>March</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fahrenhe</td>
<td>54 - 39</td>
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<td>°C</td>
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<td>16 - 111</td>
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Diet
Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in Jordan. You should be willing to try the local cuisine and share in your host family’s mealtimes. Special or restricted diets may not be fully understood by your host family although they may have previously hosted a student with similar dietary restrictions. By trying to replicate your diet at home you will miss out on an important part of your host culture.

As in most cultures, food and rituals surrounding shared meals is quite central in Jordan. Families generally eat a good breakfast (this often includes fresh-baked bread, hummus, cheese, olives, and zeit wa za’tar (olive oil and thyme)), a heavy late lunch around 3 pm (variably this includes cooked lamb, chicken, rice, and a variety of vegetables), and a lighter dinner late at night (similar to breakfast, sometimes containing leftovers from lunch). Like all Arabs, Jordanians think of food sharing as a bonding experience, and so the guests are always pressed over and over to eat more, a situation that makes many students uncomfortable (tip: eat at a slower pace than you usually do, and when full say alhamdu-ili-lah, and thank your host every time he/she presses you to eat more).

Vegetarian or vegan diets are rarely followed in Jordan, but people are becoming increasingly aware of the choice, especially in the cities. Luckily, the fact that Levantine food is rich in vegetable-only dishes (such as fuul, hummus, tabbouleh, and falafel) makes it easier for Jordanian families and restaurants to accommodate vegetarian or vegan diets. Kosher meats are not available in Jordan, though other foods that fit into Jewish dietary requirements are easily found. If you have inflexible dietary requirements, please let your admissions counselor know as soon as possible so that we might try to find a homestay that can accommodate your needs. If this is not possible, you can discuss other program options that might better meet your needs with your admissions counselor.

Note: If you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform our office prior to the start of your program. We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context. In some locations, we cannot guarantee zero exposure to certain foods or a given allergen.

Homestays
As many SIT Study Abroad alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. You will
learn firsthand the joys and responsibilities of being a guest, a family member, and a friend. You will also have the opportunity to share your culture and to learn from another’s culture. We hope you will come prepared for the experience and committed to moving beyond cultural immersion as you begin to question, distinguish, and analyze the host culture vis-à-vis your own culture and come to a deeper understanding of both.

Family structures vary in every culture, and SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families. For example, your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time. They may be quite familiar with your hometown or with international students, or your homestay family may not know much about where you come from. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a “home” (i.e., the physical nature of the house) may be different from what you expect. You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and possibly new priorities and expectations.

Each program’s homestay coordinator will be responsible for placing students in homestays. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the greatest extent possible. Please note: SIT will not have information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.

In Jordan, you will be staying in two homestays. Except for excursions and orientation, you will be in a homestay for the duration of your time in Jordan. There is also a short one-week rural homestay in the Badia area, where students will stay with Bedouin families who settled recently. Homestay accommodations in Amman vary among the families but many are middle to upper class with a high level of comfort while the rural homestay in the Badia would be considered a simpler standard of living.

Other Accommodations
During excursions, the group generally stays in 3 star hotels, where you will share rooms with other SIT students. The program does spend one night at a “desert camp” where accommodations are more rustic. During the ISP period, students will remain in their Amman homestays unless they choose to do their ISP outside of Amman; in that case, they will be placed in a homestay in the area where they are conducting their research.

Local Customs
Greetings:
In Jordan, shaking hands is the common greetings between men, and women. However, men should wait for an Arab woman to offer her hand and women should similarly wait for an Arab man to offer his hand. Many women prefer to avoid touching a man they do not know well. Many men avoid touching a woman at all if she is not related to them, and in that case they may gesture by holding their hand toward their chests. People stand up when greeting each other. People usually say (Alhamdulillah) to respond to “how are you?” (Alhamdulillah) means (Thank God) even if they are not well. It’s a religious concept, which reveals the idea of thanking God.

Living with Family:
In many households people take off their shoes when entering, so wear slip on shoes or sandals in case.

Eating food:
If you are invited for a meal, everybody may eat from a common plate; take the food immediately opposite to you only. Somebody will continue offering you food, eat what you can. It is very important to accept Arabic coffee when it is offered to the guest by Jordanians, as it is a cultural symbol of hospitality, and should be accepted as an act of goodwill.

General Safety & Security Tips:
Always remember to plan your evening outing in group or with at least one of your friends.

Girls are advised not to be alone during evenings, and nights. Always notify your Academic Director of any travel plan outside of Amman either with family, with friends, or on your own. Avoid swimming in ponds and deep seas. Jumping in water from high cliffs is strictly prohibited.
Transportation
Most people in Jordan travel by private car, so the fact that you, as SIT students, will be unable to drive will make life slightly more difficult in this car culture (but it will certainly be safer for you, as Jordan is well-known for its aggressive drivers). Taxis are available throughout the city for reasonable rates, and SIT will include a transportation stipend in your weekly stipend to cover your travel to and from SIT headquarters (most SIT students love taking taxis because of the exuberant nature of Amman’s taxi drivers and their garrulousness that is good for Arabic practice). During our excursions, the program will take buses within Jordan and will fly once during the semester for the trip to Turkey (conditions permitting).

Money
In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the program. When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. Daily commuting costs will be determined by the program. During the ISP period, students will receive a stipend for basic room and board only based on the cost of living at the program base. Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP are the students’ responsibility. Please plan accordingly.

The currency in Jordan is the Jordanian Dinar (1JD=1.41USD). Each dinar has 100 piasters (Arabic: girsh, plural: groosh). The dinar comes in notes of 5, 10, 20, and 50 JD. The easiest way to get money in Jordan is with a bank debit card. ATM machines are widely available. This method also has the advantage of giving you the wholesale exchange rate, which is slightly better than the retail rate that you’ll get at currency exchange shops. Credit cards are used often in Amman, so a Visa, MasterCard, or American Express credit card can be used to make purchases around town, but mostly at the malls and major retailers.

Traveler’s checks can be used, but with a good deal more hassle since not everyone will accept them and most currency exchange shops will also deduct a commission. However, you may want to bring a small amount for emergencies.

You should bring at least US$100 in cash for immediate use.

Though theft is generally not a problem here, you should still be careful with your money. Be sure to bring a lock for your luggage or a small lockbox for your cash and valuables, in order not to be inconvenienced should small fingers find their way into your wallet.

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. This is very important; if you don’t inform these companies that you will be away, when they see charges from another country, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process.

Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. If they will expire while you are overseas, please contact your bank and/or credit card companies for early renewal. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust just in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and these costs are averages.

A suggested total amount of money to budget ranges from US$1000 to $1500. To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program, including travel costs for your planned ISP or a specific personal expense.

Check current exchange rates: http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/

Please budget approximately:

| Personal spending (from past student suggestions): | $700 |
| Books, printing, supplies: | $200-300 |
| Up-front medical costs: | $200 |
Communication
While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication. We have a few suggestions regarding communication during the term, based upon our experience.

It’s important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call, thereby avoiding frustration and making connections more meaningful. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion. While you are encouraged to share with those close to you and use them for support whenever necessary, it is also important to remember that you are on the program for just one term, and that you get out of the program what you put into it.

Phones and Email
All students are required to have a working cell phone while on SIT Study Abroad programs. This policy is part of our commitment to student safety and will facilitate communication in case of an emergency. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they are reachable by phone at all times. This means keeping the phone charged and stocked with airtime/minutes as well as notifying staff of, and replacing, lost or stolen phones. Please note that students who do not comply with the cell phone policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Recently, mobile phones have become an essential feature of social and cultural life in Jordan, and rates are relatively inexpensive. Upon your arrival in-country, SIT will provide you with a cell phone, which will cost about 38.50 USD (this includes the cell phone, SIM card, and 5 JD worth of call-time). You can use your phone as much or little as you like, adding minutes to your account by purchasing “scratch cards” from any mobile phone store in the country — and there seem to be thousands! It doesn’t cost you anything to receive calls, even from overseas, which makes a mobile phone the most convenient way for loved ones to stay in touch with you during your stay. Remember, Jordan’s time zone is +2 GMT while the Eastern U.S. is -5 GMT.

Please bear in mind that a basic cell phone with simple call and text messaging is the best option for all programs. Expensive or flashy phones (including iPhones) are not recommended as these may attract unwanted attention in some economically depressed areas.

SIT Jordan has ADSL service with wireless for its offices, and students can use the wireless between and after classes, but not during class sessions. If your laptop is capable of connecting to wireless networks, then you will be able to access the Internet there.

Mailings
Throughout the semester, posted letters should be sent to the following address:

Student Name  
c/o Dr. Ashraf Alqudah  
60 Damascus St., Abdoun  
P.O. Box 840062  
Amman 11181, Jordan

Sending and receiving packages is another matter, however. Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually expensive and problematic. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient (due to customs delays) that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, unless it is an emergency, sending packages should be done on a needs basis. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged. (This certainly includes laptops! For this reason, make sure you bring your laptop with you on the plane if you think you’ll want it in country). If you will be celebrating a birthday during the program, please inform parents, grandparents, significant others, and anyone else who might think of sending you packages, of the above.

For this program, DHL and FEDEX services are available in country. Reliance on the U.S. Postal Service is not advised; while they may send packages for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottled Water:</th>
<th>$0.5 /liter</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cell phone</td>
<td>$38.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential ISP travel expenses:</td>
<td>$100 - 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>$60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated Total of personal and other expenses:</td>
<td>$100-1500</td>
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a cheaper price, timeliness and reliability have been more inconsistent than with the preferred express mailing agencies. When given the option, it’s always a good idea to send packages certified and with a number that allows the sender to track the package.

If it is necessary for someone to send you a package, it should be sent to the following address:

**Student Name**
c/o Dr. Ashraf Alqudah
60 Damascus St., Abdoun
P.O. Box 840062
Amman 11181, Jordan

The delivery services listed above sometimes require a phone number to mail a package internationally. If the student has a cell phone in country, please use that number. In instances in which student participants do not have individual cell phones, please contact the SIT Study Abroad Office of Student Affairs at 802-258-3212 or call toll-free at 1-888-272-7881.

**Visitors and Free Time**

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the programs and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See Attendance Policy.

Please note that any visitors during the course of the program must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students’ guests.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break.

Students typically have four weeks to conduct research, gather and analyze data, write, and prepare for the ISP presentation. There is a lot to cover, and students find the ISP period a very busy time. For this reason, please plan to use your time wisely.

**Alumni Contact**

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor or ask an alumni contact: http://www.sit.edu/studyabroad/eop_contact_alum.cfm.