Argentina: Transnationalism and Comparative Development in South America
Fall 2016

General Information
The first colonial landing in what we now call Argentina occurred around the beginning of the 16th century, during a voyage led by Juan Díaz de Solís, a Spanish sailor who was the first European to reach the shores of an estuary later named the Río de la Plata (River of Silver, or “River Plate” in British English).

In 1580, a small port named Buenos Aires was established by the colonial Spanish government in the southern territory of the Americas. Many years later, in 1776, this territory became the formal viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata.

Independence from Spain came on May 25, 1810, with the creation of an independent local government: the First Assembly. Six years later, on July 9, 1816, a formal declaration marked the end of Spanish rule. Argentina struggled to establish a nation-state and in 1853 finally adopted its constitution, many parts of which were based on the United States Constitution.

With immigration and investment from Europe, modern Argentina expanded greatly during a prolonged burst of economic growth. Between 1880 and 1930, Argentina was one of the world’s 10 richest countries in terms of per capita income. After a series of both radical and conservative governments, the people of Argentina elected Juan Perón as their president in 1946.
Perón initiated policies that focused on empowering the working class and building a strong welfare state. Massive income redistribution was sustained by many different sources, such as tax revenues, nationalization of industries, and the expansion of public services. Perón also strongly promoted union movements that enhanced his leadership.

After Perón was pushed into exile by the military in 1955, there were a series of military governments throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Perón returned to the presidency in 1973, holding the position for just one year before his death. He was replaced by his wife at the time, Isabel Perón. On March 24, 1976, Isabel was overthrown in a military coup that led to what was to be the bloodiest period in Argentina’s history. In what has been referred to as the “Dirty War,” as many as 30,000 people, alleged to be political dissidents, were abducted and killed without trace by the military. Those 30,000 people are now referred to as “the disappeared.”

Argentina returned to democratic rule in 1983 and since then has been led by stable and democratic governments, although these governments have been weak in enhancing real political reform and social welfare. Argentina’s economy exhibited a cyclical boom-and-bust pattern, with the worst economic crisis occurring at the end of 2001, when the country collapsed economically and politically. Since 2003, the country has managed to recover rapidly. In an era when optimism coexists with social and economic tension, some unresolved social issues, such as poverty and inequality, stand out.

Argentina has a long history of immigration, originally with people coming from Spain, Italy, and other European countries, later from Syria and Lebanon, and more recently from Eastern Europe and neighboring Latin American countries. The population is predominantly Catholic, but Argentina has the largest Jewish population in Latin America. The indigenous population is also important to consider. Now numbering less than 1 million (in a country of over 40 million), they live in the northern, northwestern, and southern regions of the country. The majority of Argentina’s population lives in the urban centers of the nation.

Argentina is brimming with cultural activities. This is evident in its many festivals, expositions, cinemas, theaters, and concerts that take place throughout the major cities. For example, Buenos Aires has over 100 cinemas and 90 theaters. Fútbol (soccer) is the main sport in the country and is central to Argentine national identity. Other popular sports include tennis, volleyball, basketball, field hockey, and rugby.

Finally, Argentina is a federal republic consisting of 23 provinces and the autonomous capital city of Buenos Aires in southern South America, as well as other areas claimed by Argentina, including an Antarctic sector and the Malvinas Islands and several other islands of the South Atlantic.

**Climate and Geography**

Buenos Aires is located in central-eastern Argentina, which has a moderate climate. Summers (December to March) are quite warm, while the winter months (April to September) may be cooler. It rains in every season.

Excursions to Brazil, Asunción (Paraguay), and Montevideo (Uruguay) will expose you to a variety of climatic conditions. Summer temperatures (December–March) in Buenos Aires and Montevideo oscillate between 75–95°F and there are irregular dry periods. While it can be hot in Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the summer months (which is winter in North America!), there is usually a cool breeze coming off of the Río de la Plata.
Winter months (June–September) are cooler, with temperatures between 45˚ and 60˚; however, temperatures can fall below freezing. Asunción does not present much variation in its temperatures. It is usually warm or hot most of the year. The weather in Brazil is warmer than Buenos Aires but presents variations during the year. It can be cool during the wintertime. Please remember that the excursion schedule and locations may vary depending on availability of local lecturers and travel safety.

Diet
Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in Argentina. 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, even if they may have previously hosted a student with similar dietary restrictions. By trying to replicate your home diet you will miss out on an important part of your host culture.

The diet of Argentina is largely influenced by the Mediterranean region, both in food and schedule. Meal times in Argentina are generally similar to those in the United States, except dinners tend to be eaten much later in the evening (9–10 PM). The staple diet in Argentina is various types of meat, breads, pasta, sandwiches, etc. It is also a common custom to drink *mate*, an infusion of herbs in hot water drank through a metal straw called a *bombilla*. The day begins with a light breakfast, which typically includes a cup of tea or coffee, croissants/bread, and marmalade. In Buenos Aires a lunch generally consists of an entrée (a type of meat, a starch option, and salad) and dessert.

Argentines rarely use beans in their meals. In rural communities, many families eat a type of stew called *puchero*, made up of different vegetables and meats. At 5 PM, many families have what is called a *merienda*, a light meal similar to the breakfast meal. Argentine food is generally eaten with very little use of condiments.

There is a great variety of food available in Buenos Aires stores: fruit, vegetables, and meats. There are also lots of restaurants. It is always a good idea to be very honest with your host family as to what you like and dislike, as this will have an impact on the remaining weeks of your semester. Generally, there is one individual in the home who does the majority of the cooking.

Vegetarians can manage their diets in Buenos Aires, but it may require a bit more effort on their part and is subject to availability of vegetables in the market. The Argentine diet, as mentioned before, is largely centered on meat, so it will be necessary to be very clear to your hosts about your dietary preferences. Lastly, kosher food can be found in the city but it is not easy to find homestay families that can accommodate a kosher diet.

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 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 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. Your homestay family may be quite familiar with your hometown and with international students, or they may know very little 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 based first on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. Please note: SIT will not have information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.

In this program, you will have one homestay in Buenos Aires, which will commence directly after orientation and will last throughout the length of the program (interspersed with a few excursions). This homestay tends to be in middle-class families and gives students insight into urban Argentine life.

Other Accommodations
Other accommodations will include small hotels and hostels. They are generally safe, with security boxes available, but you will want to bring a lock to protect your belongings. During the ISP portion of the program students will also be staying in homestays, unless their research takes them outside Buenos Aires. In that case, the student will have to make his/her own lodging arrangement with the program staff’s assistance and approval.

Transportation
Public transportation in Buenos Aires is very good. Participants are easily able to move throughout the city by public bus or subway. This mode of transportation is cheap and safe during the daytime. The use of taxis is also affordable and safe. Transportation on a daily basis will include public bus, subways, or walking. Specifics on public transportation in Buenos Aires are discussed in detail during your orientation upon arrival in-country. During excursions, the group will primarily use private vehicles.

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 program-related expenses, including costs for excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. 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/Practicum 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.

Although the US dollar exchange rate has tended to be stable, we do not encourage you to bring Argentine pesos with you from the US. It is quite difficult to obtain US dollars in Argentina, and it is easy to find money exchange offices throughout the airport and cities. Some students also prefer to bring more US dollars in cash, because there are now two exchange rates in Argentina. Bringing US dollars will allow you to guarantee a better exchange rate. The majority of stores in Buenos Aires also accept credit cards, the most common being Visa, MasterCard, and American Express. Most students access funds from their US bank accounts using their VISA or MasterCard debit cards. Any debit card that is linked to the PLUS or CIRRUS networks should also work at ATMs in country.

The official currency of Argentina is the Argentine peso, which is divided into 100 centavos. Students can check country currency and current exchange rates at: http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/

Withdrawing money from an ATM is very easy in most program locations. Keep in mind that, from our experience, lost credit/debit cards can take several weeks to replace. It is recommended that you also travel with some cash or traveler's checks just in case of emergency or a lost credit/debit card.
Please note that traveler’s checks are not accepted in all money exchange offices, and they may charge a 2–5% fee for the exchange. American Express is the most widely accepted form of traveler’s check.

If using a debit/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 fees for withdrawing cash, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. We recommend that you inquire with your bank to learn if they have any branches in Argentina, or to verify if they maintain any corporate agreements with specific banks in country that would allow you to use ATMs at those particular banks without incurring an international transaction fee.

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 are due to expire while you are overseas, please contact your bank and/or credit card companies for early renewal before you go abroad. 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$1,950–$2,250. 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.

Please budget approximately:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal spending:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visa registration:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books, printing, supplies:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Up-front medical costs:</td>
<td>$200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bottled water:</td>
<td>$50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Typical Internet café usage:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cell phone costs:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential ISP travel expenses:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reciprocity fee</td>
<td>$160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation costs, including taxis at night</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total estimated personal and other expenses:</td>
<td>$2,250.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please bring your visa registration fee in US Dollars.

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 the call more meaningful. You should also consider the impact that constant communication with friends and family at home will have on your cultural immersion. While you are encouraged to share with those close to you and to seek their 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

As soon as students arrive in Buenos Aires, they are provided an opportunity to call home or send an email. SIT will have the information about safe arrival, so family members may also call the US office to confirm...
participants’ arrival. Students will have access to internet while at the program center, IDES.

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.

Argentina’s principal cell phone systems are CDMA and TDMA. It's also possible to use tri-band GSM world cell phones, but these tend to be much more expensive. You might want to ask your cell phone company in the US about the costs of using your phone in Argentina. If you would like to purchase a cell phone in Argentina, they range in cost from US$70 upwards. You can purchase calling plans, similar to a calling card, for the cell phones in order to regulate your cell phone expenses.

Options for obtaining a cell phone prior to departure can be found here, under the Contact and Communications tab. Please note that students who do not comply with this policy may be subject to disciplinary action. 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.

You will not be able to use most US-purchased calling cards in Argentina, and in any case calling cards in Argentina are less expensive than those from the US. Buenos Aires also has a multitude of calling agencies where you can make cheaper phone calls to the US. Email and Internet access is readily available throughout the major cities and in the SIT office, and is often quite inexpensive.

To call someone on a land line in Argentina from outside of Argentina, callers will need to dial their country's international access code, then Argentina's country code (54), then the city’s area code, and finally the number itself. The area code for Buenos Aires is 11.

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

Student Name  
c/o Nuria Pena / IDES  
Araoz 2838  
C1425DGT  
Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA

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, arranging to receive packages from home should be avoided except in cases of emergency. 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, about the difficulties described above.

For this program, DHL and FEDEX services are available in-country. Reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised; while they may send packages for a cheaper price, timeliness and reliability have been more inconsistent than with the preferred express mailing agencies. Given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number.

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

Student Name  
c/o Nuria Pena / IDES  
Araoz 2838  
C1425DGT  
Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA

Remember, shipping can be VERY expensive!
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 Mentor**

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor or ask an alumni mentor: [http://studyabroad.sit.edu/pn/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student/](http://studyabroad.sit.edu/pn/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student/) .