Introduction

Jamaica has a rich and vibrant history and culture. Jamaica started as a European settlement in the early 1500’s and endured 300 years of slavery and colonialism. In the 1800’s, it became the largest sugar producing country in the world. Slavery was abolished there in 1838. Although 95% of its inhabitants have bloodlines in Africa, national origins of its residents include Great Britain, the Middle East, India, China, Japan, Germany, Portugal, South America, and other Caribbean Islands.

Since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1962, Jamaica has been in a transition which has served to shape its unique culture. Jamaica has moved through varied political and social circumstances and has survived with an unusual national character. The people are easy-going. ‘No problem’ is more than a tourist slogan in Jamaica. Interestingly, at the same time, the people are very industrious. When you combine these qualities with a British properness and a genuine friendliness, your experiences in this country’s lush tropical surroundings will not soon be forgotten!

The first thing to remember is that this trip is not a tour and, for the most part, you will not be a tourist. You will be experiencing Jamaica on a much more personal and deeper level. During your seven day experience in Jamaica, you will get to experience the real Jamaica.

The Jamaican Study Abroad Program can best be summed up as a TRIP. That is, a Traveling Research Immersion Program. And immersion is the key word here. As a result of living with a Jamaican family, participating along side Jamaicans in daily service learning projects, and just generally hanging out in the Lucea community, you will get to experience Jamaica as only the Jamaicans do.

Besides learning about the Jamaican culture, this experience will help you to better understand your own culture. Quite naturally, you will get to see how your own cultural background compares to the Jamaican culture. In this comparison, you will observe similarities and differences which will trigger a process of self-reflection.

As a result of this self-reflection and your response to being in a culture very different from your own, you will experience personal growth. Through your interactions with your classmates, professor, and, most importantly, the
Jamaicans you will meet, you will learn more about yourself and your ability to adapt to new situations. More specifically, your experiences in Jamaica will greatly add to your repertoire of interpersonal and personal skills and help you to gain a greater understanding of your strengths. These new skills and self-awareness will help you when interacting with persons different from you whether you are in your own or foreign environments. Such an outcome will benefit your functioning in the work world too.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. For students to become more understanding and appreciative of and sensitive to a culture very different than their own

2. For students to examine their own values, possible prejudices, beliefs and feelings as a result of being immersed in a very different cultural context

3. For students to gain a greater ease, acceptance and comfort in interacting with persons who are different from themselves (ask Jamaicans questions about their culture/lifestyle—get to know them)

4. For students to experience the benefits associated with service learning primarily focusing on screening and intervention for Dyslexia

5. For students to gain greater self-efficacy and confidence in their abilities to adapt and function in settings very different from those that they are familiar with in the United States

6. For educators to be more responsive to the cultural differences of students in their classrooms.

Course Text

Because of the experiential nature of the course and its focus on service learning, there is no textbook for this course.

Schedule

We will meet twice on campus before leaving for Jamaica. The pre-trip seminars will be held on Nov 11 and Dec 10 (see top of page one of syllabus for meeting details). The focus of these seminars will be on trip expectations, logistics, and Dyslexia screening and intervention procedures. **Attendance at these seminars is required.**

The itinerary for the Jamaica portion of the experience follows. Students who are not on time for events and meetings will risk being left behind and points will be deducted from attendance/participation grades. Also, please keep in mind that the schedule of events for our trip are still emerging and last minute changes in our itinerary are likely. Rest assured that the course instructor will notify you, as soon as possible, about changes in the schedule.
Itinerary

Arrive at Hobby Airport/Southwest Airlines Check-In area on Tuesday, January 10th by 8:15 AM. The flight leaves at 10:50 AM. We will arrive in Montego Bay at 2:50 PM PM. **If you run into any problems on your way or in the airport, call Dr. La Carra at 626-786-0398.**

From airport we will go by van to Lucea. Meet family. Dinner at host family’s home. Evening Seminar 6:30 PM.

Wednesday, January 11- 9:00 AM walking tour of Lucea and time observing in schools until 12:00 PM. At 1:00, we will visit the infirmary until 3:00. From 3:00 until 5:00 you will be on your own—swim or just relax. At 5:00 dinner at host family home. Rotary Club meeting in evening.

Thursday, January 12- 9-1- time in schools for service learning—Dyslexia screening and intervention and other school support activities. Likely, this day will be your mountain hike leaving around 1:00. At 5:00, dinner at host family home. At 6:30, Evening Seminar.

Friday, January 13- 9-12 & 1-3- time in schools for service learning—Dyslexia screening and intervention and other school support activities. Late afternoon—maybe go to Bull’s Head Bay for swimming. At 5:00, dinner at host family home. At 6:30, Evening Seminar.

Saturday, January 14—9:00 leave for Mayfield Falls. Stay at Mayfield Falls until about 1:00 PM. Stop in Negril for shopping on the way back to Lucea.

Sunday, January 15th—After Church, we will hit the beach in Negril, watch the cliff divers and, if you so choose make a cliff dive yourself off a cliff at Rick’s Café. This will be followed by dinner in Negril.

Monday, January 16th— 9-12 & 1-3- time in schools for service learning—Dyslexia screening and intervention and other school support activities. Late afternoon—maybe go to Bull’s Head Bay for swimming. At 5:00, dinner at host family home. At 6:30, Final Evening Seminar

Tuesday, January 17th—Leave for airport at 11:00 AM. Flight departs Montego Bay at 3:45 PM and arrives in Houston at 6:20 PM.

Course Requirements & Grading

Attendance and active participation in two pre-Jamaica seminars on campus:10%
Attendance and active participation in planned activities in Jamaica: 50%
Daily De-briefing Journal or five to eight page double-spaced Reflective Paper: 40%
Self-Assessment—required for graduate students (10% of grade) and extra credit for undergraduates

Attendance and Active Participation (60% of grade)
Students are required to participate in the pre-trip seminars and any follow-up meetings and scheduled group activities in Jamaica, including evening seminars/meetings.

Attendance is defined as just showing up on time. Active participation, on the other hand, implies a level of enthusiasm, interest in the activity, and sharing of one’s thoughts, questions, and feelings beyond just being present. Using a sporting event as an analogy, I want you on the field, not in the stands! And I would like you on the field doing your best—not just going through the motions. From your instructor’s perspective, going above and beyond what one is asked to do is always a sure sign of active participation.

De-Briefing Journal (40% of grade)

During or at the start/end of each day in Jamaica you should ‘journal’ your experiences and thoughts. You should pick a time of day to do this that works best for you. You should record your experiences, observations, reactions, frustrations, successes, feelings, problems, ideas, insights, and questions. You should also reflect on how your experiences contributed to or reinforced your thinking about the Jamaican culture, about your own culture, and/or yourself. As much as possible, compare and contrast what you learned to class discussions on campus before departing for Jamaica. Students may hand write their journals while in Jamaica, but they must be typed for submission upon the group’s return to the United States. The deadline for submission of completed journals is Tuesday, January 20th. Each journal entry should be at least 150 words in length. In addition to meeting the required length (25%), journals will be also graded based on the extent of their depth and quality of thought (25%), their degree of reference to the pre-trip seminar discussions and pre-trip personal beliefs (25%), and should include the log described below (25%).

In your De-Briefing Journal, please do a summary log all your service learning time in classes, the infirmary, etc. Your summary log should include the date, times, location, and nature of each of your service learning experiences. In your log, for each service learning experience, you should also briefly report on what you did and reflect/react relative to each experience.

By the end of your Jamaica Study Abroad experience, you should have a minimum of ten hours of service learning experiences. For ‘A’ grade level work, students are expected to participate in a minimum of 12 hours of service learning experiences.

Journals should be sent to the course instructor electronically on or before Friday, Jan 27, 2017.

OR

Reflective Paper (40% of grade)

This is an alternative assignment to the De-Briefing Journal. Students will choose to do either a reflective 3-5 page paper OR a daily de-briefing journal—not both. In the reflective paper students will be expected to relate their experiences in Jamaica to various theories, concepts, understandings, and knowledge gained during the course pre-seminar AND to their own personal perspectives and beliefs that they brought with them to their study abroad experience in Jamaica. Students should clearly and specifically indicate in their papers what insights they gained from the course about themselves or
cultural differences between the United States and Jamaica. Students should also address what thoughts and beliefs they held prior to the course were reinforced or not reinforced by their time in Jamaica. Besides addressing the required length and issues in the paper (50% of grade), grades will be also be based on the depth and thoughtfulness of writing.

The due date for the reflective paper is also Tuesday, January 20th and should also be sent electronically to the course instructor.

Self-Assessment- required for graduate students and extra credit for undergraduates

This assignment involves self-assessing yourself in relation to the course objectives. The results of your self assessment may be reported in a variety of formats—visual, oral, and in writing. The due date for this assignment for graduate students in Tuesday, Jan 20th.

Those wishing to present their course outcomes orally will need to attend the instructor’s Multicultural Populations course being held in the afternoons of the first two weeks of classes in the spring 2015 semester. If more than one student wishes to do this, the presentation will be in a panel format. The exact date and time for this activity will be determined based on students’ preferences/schedules and the course schedule.

Your grade or degree of extra credit for this assignment will be determined by the extent to which you clearly addressed specific course objectives (25%), the insightfulness and depth of your self-assessment (50%), and the clarity of your ‘product’ (25%).

Grading Scale

Undergraduate
Based on a 100 point scale, grades will be assigned on the following basis: A 95-100, A- 90-94, B+ 87-89, B 84-86, B- 80-83, C+ 77-79, C 74-76, C- 70-73, D+ 67-69, D 64-66, D- 60-63, F 59 or lower.

Graduate
Based on a 110 point scale, grades will be assigned on the following basis: A 105-110, A- 99-104, B+ 96-98, B 92-95, B- 88-91, C+ 85-87, C 81-84, C- 77-80, D+ 74-76, D 70-73, D- 66-69, F 65 or lower.

Note
Students who have special needs addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and who need any test or course material accommodations should request assistance through UST Counseling Services/Disability Services at 713-525-3162/6953. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in this regard.

Plan for On-Campus Seminars
Agenda for Seminars

1) Welcome/Introductions & getting to know your classmates and professor
2) Review syllabus and expectations
3) Introduction to Jamaica and Lucea—its people, places, politics, economy, and culture
4) Cultural theory and its application to this study abroad program
5) Discussion of items to bring to Jamaica for yourself and others
6) Plan for transportation of items/gifts for Jamaicans
7) Service learning involving Dyslexia screening and intervention—what you need to know and be able to do and practice doing it.
8) Discussion with students involved in previous Jamaica Study Abroad experiences