

**Culture & Health:
Study Abroad in Dominica**

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Course Description and Objectives

This course investigates health issues from a cultural perspective and how they are situated in Caribbean culture in Dominica. Students will be engaging in health-related activities and connecting these activities to readings completed before and during the study abroad program. A multidisciplinary approach using theories and research from fields such as Global Health, Medicine, Psychology, Medical Anthropology, and Medical Sociology are used to consider how culture impacts health behaviors.



Dominica

Located in Eastern Caribbean, Dominica is a small independent island nation north of Venezuela. The Caribbean's only remaining population of pre-Columbian indigenous people, Kalinago, live in Dominica, along with people of African and European descent. About 3,000 Kalinago live in their own territory of the island governed by their own elected Chief. The primary language is English along with French patois and the original Carib language. There are about 72,000 people living on the island, with about 16,000 people living in the capital of Roseau.

Some major questions we address will be:

What is health? What is global health?

What are major health issues in Dominica?

How is culture defined? How does culture impact our concepts of health?

How is health conceptualized in Dominica?

How does psychology and other social sciences inform global health issues, especially in Dominica?

Learning Objectives

- Acquire an understanding and appreciation of how cultural factors influence health issues around the world.
- Identify major concepts, theories, and methods that inform our understanding of health.
- Use critical thinking to identify and evaluate the source, context, and credibility of information and behavioral claims.

- Recognize values, beliefs, customs, and practices shaped by Dominican culture and how those impact health.
- Reflect on and recognize personal values, beliefs, customs, and practices that are shaped by our own culture and how those impact our own health.
- Acquire knowledge and skills so that students may interact effectively and sensitively with people from different backgrounds and cultural perspectives.
- Demonstrate an attitude of open-mindedness and tolerance for ambiguity.

Course Readings

All readings are articles and will be available on Canvas to download for free.

(**Readings below are suggested and may adjust for the actual course.)

Defining “Culture” and “Health”

We will start by forming a common understanding of the terms “**culture**” and “**health**” and how these concepts are understood by various disciplines. We will also begin discussing what **global health** is and learn about the **One Health approach**.

Readings:

- Cohen, A. B. (2009). Many forms of culture
- Hanna, B & Kleinman, A. (2013). Unpacking global health
- Rabinowitz et al. (2013). Toward a proof of concept of a One Health Approach to disease prediction and control

Theories that guide questions about health around the world

These readings explore how health is measured and assessed around the world and by different disciplines. We will also learn about **theories** that inform the way we study health, and we will examine those theories from a cultural perspective.

Readings:

- Farmer, P. et al. (2013). Introduction: A biosocial approach to global health
- Bandura, A. (2004). Health promotion by social cognitive means

Enculturation and development of health behaviors and knowledge

Readings focus on how children learn health behaviors and knowledge. The process of **enculturation** will be explored and the role it plays in people acquiring health-related behaviors.

Readings:

- Harkness, S. & Super, C. M. (1994). The developmental niche: A theoretical framework for analyzing the household production of health

Health Issues

Readings:

- Kaiser & Weaver. (2019). Culture-bound syndromes, idioms of distress, and cultural concepts of distress
- Cloos et al. (2023). Discussing linkages between climate change, human mobility, and health in the Caribbean: The case of Dominica

Healing

We will consider various perspectives of healing such as the biomedical model and Indigenous perspectives. The role of the mind is considered.

Readings:

Ray. (2004). How the mind hurts and heals the body

Moseley et al. (2002). A controlled trial of arthroscopic surgery for osteoarthritis of the knee

Quinlan & Quinlan (2005). Balancing the system: Humoral medicine and food in the Commonwealth of Dominica

Decolonizing health

These readings introduce the topic of decolonization and how it pertains to physical and mental health.

Readings:

Kwete. (2022). Decolonizing global health: What should be the target of this movement and where does it lead us?

Guinto, (2019). #DecolonizeGlobalHealth: Rewriting the narrative of global health.

<https://www.internationalhealthpolicies.org/blogs/decolonizeglobalhealth-rewriting-the-narrative-of-global-health/>

Course Assessment

Journaling and Reflection

Students will be expected to journal for the course (and personally if they choose!). Three components will be part of the journal.

1. Students will be given prompts each day. Prompts might include how the day's activities reflected an assigned reading; identifying a cultural practice in Dominica and comparing it with practices in the US; consider a major concept from the course and evaluate how cultural beliefs/values/norms might impact it; simply reflect on events from the day.
2. Students should reflect daily on their participation in activities and class work, evaluation based on the criteria below. These daily reflections will be useful when you evaluate your overall participation at the end.
3. In light of positive well-being, students should end their entry with 1 "happy thought" – identifying at least 1 thing that brought them joy or gratitude.

Grades for the journals will largely be based on the student's effort in completing them. These entries are considered informal reflections, and the content will never be shared with other students. Regularly brief journals may receive lower points. Demonstrating critical thinking in the writing receives higher points.

Students are also encouraged to keep a personal journal of their own! Personal journals will never be turned in or shared and help us process our thoughts and provide valuable reflection on memories made while abroad.

Interview Project

Students will be interviewing someone living in Dominica about a pre-approved topic related to health. Topics might include physical or mental health, health care, learning about health, health treatments, or personal definitions of health. Students will summarize the interview and related it to one or more of the readings or other journal articles they find. These will be presented to the group on our last class meeting and include a short paper to be submitted after arrival home.

Participation

Participation in activities is essential to the learning experience that this study abroad course offers. Your grade is largely based on being involved in the activities offered in Dominica and attending group meetings. While there will be free time to explore, the organized events are considered mandatory.

We will hold class sessions while in Dominica. Participation includes coming to class prepared to discuss assigned readings, offering your ideas, and listening respectfully to the ideas of others. It also means engaging in thoughtful and critical reflection during your field activities so that you can critically assess what is happening around you. Your daily journals will help you prepare for these sessions.

Being a Good Traveler

Participation means more than showing up for the academic events and dutifully asking a couple of questions. It also means being a good traveler. You may be hot, tired, frustrated, homesick, and/or grumpy. Recognize this in the moment and be mindful of being a good traveler. A good traveler adapts to the situation at hand and contributes positively to the experience of the group rather than detracting from it. Good travelers show up on time, prepared with everything they need and mentally ready to engage. They look for the good in situations even when things aren't up to their expectations. Good travelers keep their fatigue and discomforts to themselves. They do not allow themselves to become bored. They are critical neither of the country they are visiting nor of their fellow travelers. They keep an open mind and try to understand from the perspective of the local inhabitants. Good travelers watch out for each other.

Assessing Participation

Because participation will constitute a substantial portion of your course grade, these indicators were developed to guide my review of your participation:

- Takes initiative – finds things to do outside of formal class activities
- Accepts assignments willingly

- Shows enthusiasm
- Demonstrates appropriate problem-solving
- Completes assigned readings
- Engages in appropriate behavior and boundaries
- Demonstrates non-judgmental attitude in dealing with others (instructors, fellow students, invited speakers, hotel staff, residents of Dominica)
- Shows awareness of one's role in and impact on the group
- Engages in behaviors that demonstrate respect for the culture and that do not violate laws and customs

A ***self-review process*** will be part of assessment of participation.

Tentative Schedule

Day	Time	Activity	Location
1	Afternoon	Arrive! <i>Class review of itinerary</i>	
2	Morning	Kalinago model village	Kalinago Territory
	Afternoon	Emerald Pool	
3	Morning	Primary School	Castle Bruce
	Afternoon	Culture & Health Care Talk <i>Class discussion on interview questions</i>	Castle Bruce
4	Morning	Infirmary	Roseau
	Afternoon	Snorkeling	Champagne Beach
5	Morning	Secondary School	Castle Bruce
	Afternoon	Traditional Medicine	
6	Morning	Safe Place for Children	
	Afternoon	<i>Class meeting/Free time</i>	Castle Bruce
7	Morning	Infirmary	Roseau
	Afternoon	Mero Beach	Mero
8	Morning	Yes, We Care	
	Afternoon	<i>Class meeting: Prepare for interviews</i>	
9	Morning	Princess Margaret Hospital	Roseau
	Afternoon	Old Market: Scavenger hunt! <i>Class discussion</i>	Roseau
10	Morning	Yes, We Care	
	Afternoon	<i>Interview Project</i>	
11	Morning	PHARCS	Morne Daniel
	Afternoon	<i>Interview Project</i>	
12	Morning	<i>Interview project finalization</i> <i>End of trip debrief</i>	Portsmouth
	Afternoon	Dinner on the beach!	Portsmouth
13	Morning	Horseback riding and beach	Portsmouth
	Afternoon	<i>Interview Presentations!</i>	
14		Leave for home!	