Varanasi, India

Spring 2016

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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Fax: call and ask respondent to switch on fax. Available only at night (U.S. time)

CET Academic Programs
Malika Watson, Asia Programs Coordinator (CET post-acceptance forms, visas)
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UW-Madison Information
International Academic Programs (IAP)
University of Wisconsin-Madison
106 Red Gym, 716 Langdon Street
Madison, WI 53706
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Kate Hamoonga
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Emergency Contact Information
In case of an emergency, students in India should contact your on-site staff first using your CET Emergency Contact information provided on-site. Family members and students in the US should contact the CET emergency phone 1-800-225-4262

Embassy Registration
All program participants who are U.S. citizens must register through the US Department of State STEP Enrollment program before departure. This is required component of program participation. You can register on-line at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. If you are not a U.S. citizen, register at your home country’s embassy or consulate. The closest U.S. Embassy in India is in New Delhi.
American Citizen Services Unit
U.S. Embassy
Shanti Path
Chanakya Puri
New Delhi 110 021
Email: acsnd@state.gov
http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/
Telephone: 011-91-11-2419-8000, ext. 4249 or 8562 or 4040 or 4032

If calling outside of normal business hours and there is an emergency involving a U.S. citizen, ask the embassy operator to connect you to the “duty officer.”

PROGRAM DATES

Spring 2016

- January 15, 2016 – Arrive in New Delhi
- January 16 – Orientation begins
- April 29 – Last day of class
- May 1 – Depart Varanasi

You are expected to stay on site until the program concludes. Early departure is not permitted and may affect your successful completion of the semester.

Travel during the semester should be limited to breaks, holidays and weekends. You must inform the on-site staff by completing the CET-UW in India Varanasi Program Travel Form and inform your housing as instructed by CET-UW staff.

For a more detailed program calendar, please reference your CET Online Account.

ORIENTATIONS

Pre-departure Orientation
An online pre-departure orientation will be held approximately one month prior to departure that goes into a lot of detail about what to expect, how to prepare and the nuts and bolts of studying abroad in India. The date for this orientation is in your CET online account. This is a required component of program participation.

New Delhi Orientation
Orientation in New Delhi will provide students with valuable information about living and studying in India, dress, etiquette, gender relations, health and safety, and language training. It will help you to begin the process of formulating your research interests and equip you with the tools you need to make the most out of your experience.
**Varanasi Orientation**

Following orientation in Delhi, you will travel to Varanasi. In Varanasi, you will be oriented to your new neighborhood, the program center, and your host family or roommates. You be trained on specifics of moving around the city, interacting with locals, and making Varanasi your home for the next few months.

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

**Program Curriculum**

**Directed Field Study** (3 credits)

The Directed Field Study component serves as the centerpiece of the curriculum, allowing students to customize their focus according to their academic interests and complete a formal research project that can contribute to their future academic and professional goals.

Research is conducted under close academic supervision, with guidance from local subject area experts and training in research methods and ethics. Students complete a formal research proposal, bibliography, and 20-page final paper, presenting their work to program faculty at a final seminar. Throughout the semester, students also meet with their supervising faculty and subject area experts individually and in small groups.

**Language** (3 credits)

Hindi language is offered at all levels, with no prior language instruction required.

**Core Course 1 - Urban Geography: Gender, Caste, Community** (3 credits)

This multi-disciplinary course unfolds Varanasi’s many layers through the lens of gender, caste, and community. How does the built landscape intersect with the geography of identity? How are gender, caste, and class articulated within the urban space? How do we tease out the many cities within the city—temporally, spatially, and culturally? In bringing together the tools of urban studies, women’s and gender studies, ethnography and sociology, and blending classroom instruction with faculty-led field visits, this course offers students an opportunity to carefully observe, question, and explore their new surroundings, and to develop nuanced, thoughtful techniques to understand and skillfully navigate it.

**Core Course 2 — ‘People Doing Things’: Puja, Pilgrimage, and Pluralism** (3 credits)

The scholar of religion Charles Long once quipped that religion is just ‘people doing things.’ In its rich and vibrant religious landscape, India—and Varanasi as its holiest of cities—offers perhaps one of most colorful and diverse array of religious practices in the world. Through puja, the multi-sensory act of worshipping; pilgrimage, the movement of bodies to and through Varanasi; and pluralism, the mostly peaceful but sometimes fraught co-existence of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, and Christians (to name a few) in this crowded, bustling, ancient city, students observe people doing the things that matter most to them, that create meaning for them, and that define them.
By using the city as the classroom, and the texts of South Asian scholars who have used Varanasi as a basis for the understanding and theorizing of religion, students gain insight into the cultural, political, and religious dynamics that drive both modern and traditional India.

**Tutorial (3 credits)**

Through three distinct tracks, the tutorial component may serve to complement the focus of the Directed Field Study, engage a different set of interests, or allow the pursuit of more intensive language acquisition. The tracks are as follows:

- Studio and Performing Arts
- Internship / Practicum / Service Learning
- Intensive Language (Hindi or Urdu)

In all cases, however, the tutorial seeks to bring a hands-on, applied dimension to students’ academic interests. All tracks require substantial, sustained contact with and immersion into the host community. Though there are associated readings and writing assignments that are required for the completion of the course and the granting of academic credit, the tutorial focuses on the benefits of structured experiential learning.

1) **Selecting Your Directed Field Research Topic** The process of selecting and refining your Directed Field Study Topic begins before you depart. Talk with your academic advisor and other faculty at your home institution. Share what interests you about India, and Varanasi in particular, and how this fits with your other academic interests or requirements for your degree(s). Describe those interests in your Course Selection Form, and if you have questions you’d like to raise, please feel free to contact a member of the CET staff.

2) You’ll begin to further develop and refine your topic in meetings with your Program Director at orientation in Delhi.

3) Finally, with classes beginning in Varanasi, you will work closely with your Directed Field Study faculty member to develop a final research proposal. There is a vast library of prior student projects at the program center in Varanasi—in addition to meeting with your faculty and Program Director, and reviewing relevant literature on your topic of interest, you are strongly encouraged to see how other students have pursued and completed successful research projects in Varanasi.

**Excursions related to your Academic coursework**

It is our strong belief that academics are not only for the classroom. In addition to the Directed Field Study and Tutorial, which are explicitly field-based and experiential, core and language courses also include significant amounts of structured, field-based contact hours. These may be field-based assignments, activities, or excursions, but they all seek to get you out of classroom and learning through engaging your host context.

Beyond activities and excursions related to your coursework, there will also be numerous activities and excursions related to broader program goals. Your Program Director and faculty will make it clear which are required and which are optional, and are very open to designing activities and excursions around your particular interests—don’t be afraid to suggest things, or to ask if there’s something you’d like to explore!
Program-sponsored study trips outside of Varanasi will be confirmed in the semester calendar. Participation is required of all students, though some activities within the study trip itinerary may be optional.

**Equivalents and Course Equivalent Request Process (CER)**

Each course you take abroad is assigned a UW-Madison “equivalent” course that is then recorded on your UW-Madison transcript. In order to establish UW-Madison course equivalents for your study abroad courses, you will submit Course Equivalent Requests through your My Study Abroad account. Detailed information on the UW course equivalent process that you will use through your My Study Abroad account is available in the IAP Study Abroad Handbook.

Prior to departure, speak with your major advisor(s) to get all the information you need concerning graduation and degree/major requirements. This information will guide the focus of your tutorials and independent study project so that you can make the best possible effort to fulfill these requirements. **As noted above, it is important to get a head start on this process before your departure.**

**Transcripts, Credits and Grades**

You must complete all your academic work for the program before it concludes. Extensions for course requirements will not be granted. Any incomplete academic work that has not been submitted by the conclusion of the program date will receive the corresponding number of credits of “F” on your UW-Madison transcript. Class attendance is required and unexcused absences will affect your final grade.

Once all of your course equivalents have been processed and your grades received from the Varanasi program staff, you will be sent a grade report for review through your MyStudyAbroad account. Once you sign off on your grade report, IAP will post your credits and grades to your student record at UW-Madison.

For UW-Madison students, an Undergraduate Certificate in South Asian Studies is offered though the Center for South Asia. Completion of the certificate provides a concentration in the area through interdisciplinary training and language study that provides enhanced career opportunities or increased preparation for graduate study. Applicants must fulfill the UW-Madison requirements for an established major in their school or college and achieve a minimum GPA of 2.75 in all courses they wish to count toward the certificate. Courses may not be taken on a pass/fail basis. ALL credits earned while on a UW-Madison study abroad program in South Asia will count towards the certificate. For more information visit [http://southasia.wisc.edu/undergraduate-studies/](http://southasia.wisc.edu/undergraduate-studies/)

**Non-UW students:** Make sure you understand how the credit transfer process operates at your home campus. After you return from study abroad, some institutions will require you to submit syllabi and written work completed abroad. It is your responsibility to retain all copies of these documents. After the courses and grades have been posted to your student record, you will need to follow the instructions on the UW-Madison Office of Registrar’s website in order to request a transcript from the UW-Madison. [http://ordertranscript.wisc.edu/](http://ordertranscript.wisc.edu/) IAP cannot request UW-Madison transcripts for students; it is the students’ responsibility to request that the transcript be sent to their home university. All non-UW students who have questions about how credit will transfer back to your home university should contact Malika at CET at [mwatson@academic-travel.com](mailto:mwatson@academic-travel.com)
AESOP (students participating on this program from sponsoring Big Ten schools): You will not receive a UW-Madison transcript. Upon request, a grade report will be forwarded to your home institution’s study abroad office and they will post your credits and grades to your home institution’s transcript.

HOUSING

Housing will be assigned to you by the program based upon availability and your stated preferences in your housing form. Please know that though program staff make every attempt to accommodate student preferences, they are not guaranteed. As with all things in India, we expect you to approach your housing with an open mind, flexibility, and a spirit of adventure. All housing options have been carefully vetted by program staff, and have been found adequate for providing safe, hospitable environment that is conducive to learning. In whatever housing you are assigned, you will be expected to follow the rules and courtesies associated with them. Failure to do so may result in your dismissal from the program.

Rules and recommendations regarding electricity use in your homestay/apartment
The Indian electrical system requires that homeowners pay charges to the government dependent on the amount of electricity used. Appliances designed for the US electrical system (hair dryers, lamps, cameras, laptops, etc.) increase electricity consumption significantly for the family. If consumption of electricity exceeds a certain limit, your landlord may ask you to pay additional charges for usage. You should try to always be considerate and remember to turn off your electricity whenever you’re not using it. Many electrical gadgets are not suitable for Indian electrical sockets and if the proper adapter is not used, it blows a fuse in the lamp post and the family has to pay a fine to the electrical department. During power cuts, most of the families use batteries which cannot be used to charge your electronics. If needed, you may also consult with the local electricians or professionals for advice. The staff will help you with these consultations, learn about the suitable sockets for recharging your gadgets, and help you get suitable adapters. But, as with everything else, come prepared to change your lifestyle and perhaps even to adjust to what may seem like inconveniences—that is why you went abroad, and you’ll be amazed at what you learn as you are adapting to life in India!

PROGRAM CENTER AND STAFF

Program Center
The primary purpose of the CET-UW Program Center is to provide a safe, comfortable environment that is conducive to learning. In addition to being a learning environment, it is also an office and a place for business. All the classes and tutorial meetings are held at the Program Center, and program staff conduct the business of the program there. It has offices, classrooms, library and computer rooms, a student lounge and resource room, a dining room, kitchen, and bathrooms. Mail is delivered to the Program Center, and vegetarian breakfast and lunch are served there on weekdays when the program is in session. Safe drinking water is available for all students at the Program Center. Responsibility for matters pertaining to the Program Center rests with the Program Director.
Program Center Rules

1. The Program Center is common space for all students. Please be respectful of everyone. We would like to maintain a formal atmosphere, since this is also the place where business associates are invited.

2. Please dress appropriately in the Program Center and anywhere you go in Varanasi. Please do not wear clothing such as torn jeans, colorful lungis, unbuttoned shirts, low hip pants tank tops, or any clothing that exposes undergarments anywhere in Varanasi. You are encouraged to adopt local attire, but you may also have appropriate Western attire made onsite if you find that the clothing you brought is not appropriate to your new surroundings. Dressing appropriately is one of the most effective ways that you can open doors for yourself in the local community, build friendships, and represent yourself, your home institution, and the program positively.

3. Please keep the dining area clean. If you are eating a snack or drinking, please clean up after yourself.

4. Please take responsibility for whatever articles you bring into the program house.

5. Cooperate with the cooks in keeping the program house and dining area clean and tidy.

6. Inform the office staff if you will miss one or two program meals. This will help the cooks to avoid waste.

7. Alcohol is not allowed in the Program Center. Use of narcotics and marijuana or other illegal substances is also strictly prohibited. Use of prohibited substances could result in dismissal from the program and/or trouble with local authorities.

8. Please do not smoke inside the building or on the roof.
9. You are financially responsible for any damaged program furniture or equipment in the program center or entrusted to your care. Please handle program property with respect.

10. Unexcused absences are not allowed and are grounds for dismissal. You must inform the Program Director of any travel outside of Varanasi.

11. Owning or operating a scooter or motorbike is not allowed and is grounds for dismissal. Riding as a passenger on a scooter or motorbike is not recommended as your program-provided insurance may not cover any injuries you might sustain.

Banaras Hindu University (BHU)
BHU ranks among the top in the country in the field of academic and research output. The university has two campuses, three institutes, sixteen facilities, 140 departments, four advanced centers and four interdisciplinary schools. BHU has nearly 20,000 students including 2500 research scholars and 650 foreign students from thirty-four nations. Indian nationalists established the University in 1916 as an alternative to such British-founded universities as those in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Students do not take courses directly at the University, and the program often looks to BHU for guest professors, tutorial instructors, and subject area experts.

PREPARING FOR VARANASI
Located on the banks of the Ganges River, Varanasi (also called Banaras) is a sacred destination for pilgrims of various Indian religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Each of the religions have their legends, myths and legacies all connected to the river bed culture and civilization. Many believe that bathing in the Ganges frees us of our sins, and having our ashes immersed into its waters can release us from the cycle of reincarnation.

Varanasi is also home to Sufi Shrines, mausoleums, and mosques that are dated from the medieval period. The city gained in political importance starting in the Early Modern period, when European traders and the East India Company began employing the land and resources for industry and agricultural cultivation of cash crops.

Trade and industry have flourished in Varanasi from the medieval period. Varanasi has the distinction of being one of the first locations of a British wholesale depot for tea trade. The famous Banarasi chai – flowing throughout the day in homes, streets, and businesses – has its beginnings here. In the world of textiles, Banaras has become synonymous with the silk industry. The bulk of silk production is owned by small- and large-scale entrepreneurs. Varanasi is also home to a large Muslim population which comprises approximately 25 percent of its population, largely weavers in the city’s famous silk sari industry.

Buddhists come to Varanasi and visit nearby Sarnath where Buddha preached his first sermon. Sarnath is located about 7 miles from the CET-UW Program Center. There are five temples – Burmese, Japanese, and Indian – dedicated to Buddha, along with a Jain temple and a museum containing the lion capital of the Asokan Pillar, which is now the symbol of the Indian government. Also, there are remains of monasteries and stupas, and a deer park.
Pre-departure

Health

- **Immunization Information**
  Please work with your healthcare provider to determine what immunizations are needed for your study abroad time in India. Information can also be found at the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) website [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The UW-Madison University Health Services (UHS) also has a travel clinic. To schedule an appointment at UHS, call 265-5600 between 8:30am and 5pm, Monday through Friday. You must be a registered student at UW-Madison to be seen at UHS. UHS asks that you bring a complete copy of your immunization records to your scheduled appointment. The appointment can take up to an hour and a half. You should check with your health insurance to see what coverage you have for immunizations, as they can be expensive. Not all insurance policies will cover immunizations at UHS. Non-UW students should ask their local travel clinic, student health center, or primary care physician for guidance.

- **Medicines**
  Students should discuss with their healthcare provider what medication they should take with them to India. If you do need a prescription drug or if you take a specific type of vitamin, you may need to take with you a full semester supply, since you cannot count on getting it in India. Do not pack all your prescription drugs in one bag but spread them around among your bags and take some in your carry-on in case something happens to your luggage. Carry a written prescription with you so you can produce it if necessary. The prescription drug industry in India is large; so the chances are quite good that you will be able to get any common medicine you need, and that it will be much cheaper in India. This includes cold medicine, allergy medicine, antibiotic ointment, band-aids, aspirin, cough medicine and Lomotil or Immodium (for diarrhea). The availability of Meflaquine and Malarone (for malaria) varies from year to year. Though birth control pills are becoming widely available in India, women should be reminded that they might not be able to find the same pill that they are currently taking. If this might be an issue, female students should plan on bringing a year’s supply of their birth control pill, or any other items you
need to maintain sexual health.

- **Glasses**
  If you wear glasses, bring a copy of your prescription. Glasses are available for 1000 – 2000 rupees (roughly 20-40 dollars). Keeping contact lenses dust-free can be difficult. Daily contact lenses are a good option if they are available for your prescription.

- **Personal Supplies**
  The following are *not* available or are not very good in India:
  - Pepto bismol
  - Good sunscreen
  - Most American brands of Tampons
  - Bug repellent with DEET

- **The following are readily available in India as there are many stores that have western brand products available – Krishna Trading Company in Lanka (10 minutes’ walk from Program House), Jalaans (2 minutes’ walk from Program House), or Srinivas & Sons in Assi (10 minutes’ walk from Program House) are all good options for these supplies.**
  - Contact lens solution
  - Lip balm
  - Bathroom toiletries (shampoo and conditioner, toilet paper, soap, toothpaste, shaving cream, razors, generic tampons, pads, facial cleansers, moisturizer, toothbrushes, Q-tips (or “buds” as they are called in South Asia)
  - Towels
  - Bug repellants (coils and mats for the house and a good repellant for the body called Odomos)
  - Household disinfectants and cleaners

- **Personal Supplies for Women**

  One of the best menstrual products female students can employ in India is a rubber or silicone menstrual cup easily found online in the U.S., such as the Keeper or Diva Cup. It generates no waste, and works easily with Indian toilets. Female students are strongly encouraged to look into this option before departure, as this is the method that allows you to dispose of your menstrual waste in a culturally sensitive way. During orientation, the female students will have a session with the program director about these issues.

  Sanitary napkins are now widely available in India, and many different brands and varieties are available. However tampons in India are in limited variety, and your favorite brand may not be available. Despite their increasingly common use, these products cannot be flushed down Indian toilets, but rather they must be disposed of discreetly. Many women carry around their waste materials in a plastic container until they find a discreet place to dispose of them. It can be difficult to dispose of your used products in a way that is culturally sensitive, so please talk with CET staff in India for guidance.
Packing
The question of what to take and not to take to India is a difficult one. Avoid taking things to India you would be heartbroken to lose. Thefts do not often occur, but it is always possible, and things get lost or broken. This list should help you to decide which things you want to bring and which you want to buy in India by giving you an idea of what is available in India and what is not. Program staff will assist you in purchasing household supplies such as a mattress, sheets, blanket, pillows, towels, and mosquito nets if necessary, as well as any other household necessities that may make you feel more at home.

Luggage
The following bags are suggested:
- One large bag or suitcase for the majority of clothing and items, which will remain in Varanasi during your stay and be used for international travel between the United States and India. If you prefer, a large backpack.
- One smaller bag/backpack for day trips.
- If you plan to go trekking, a daypack, bungee cords, and a lightweight plastic parka (it rains much more in the mountains than on the plains) are all useful.
- Women may also want to bring a cross-body bag as a purse as they are most convenient and are a safe way to carry about personal belongings. You could purchase this in Varanasi if you prefer.

Clothing
In South Asia, dress is an important social marker. A neat appearance is very important to South Asians, and, unless people are completely destitute, they will bathe and wash and iron their clothes daily. In this context, it is understandable that people will take offense at an American who does not bathe or wears dirty or ripped clothing. **You could even unintentionally insult others because of poor dress.** Dressing in Indian clothing is the most appropriate choice in most circumstances. If you dress in Western clothes, you will often be taken for a tourist. If you choose to wear Indian clothes, on-site staff will help you purchase and wear Indian clothes properly so you do not look silly or offend your hosts. Both Indian and Western dress are appropriate; a student should not feel like he or she must wear Indian clothing to be accepted. Wear what is comfortable, as long as modesty and appropriateness is kept in mind. For example, stomachs, shoulders, backs, and thighs should be covered at all times. For men, Western dress is more acceptable. Most Indian men in Varanasi wear Western dress except for formal occasions, such as weddings. Long pants and dress shirts are considered very acceptable.

Shopping in bazaars for clothing can be the source of many days and nights of entertainment. Shops are usually open late. Shopping offers a great chance to interact with locals and to use your developing language skills. When you make local friends, a great thing to do is to ask them where they buy their clothes or what tailor they use and to ask for their help. Wearing the style of clothing of local students shows your respect for their culture and can become a shared experience that builds friendship.

Students will be taken clothes shopping upon arrival in Delhi and again in Varanasi. A basic outfit for a female student will cost about Rs. 600-1,000 for the material and stitching while a basic outfit for a male student will cost about Rs. 700-1,000 for the material and stitching. Keep in mind that shopkeepers tend to raise prices (sometimes a lot) for foreigners, so don’t be afraid to bargain with them a bit. It is advisable for female students to have at least five Indian outfits.
Students will vary a great deal in what they bring with them for their stay in India. Here is a minimal packing list and some ideas of what to bring (and what you can buy in India). But just remember almost everything you could need for almost any occasion can be purchased or a suitable substitute found while in India.

**Women**
- 2 pair jeans or ankle-length skirt
- 2 long-sleeved, opaque cotton shirts
- 2 T-shirts
- 1 flannel shirt, sweatshirt or lightweight sweater
- 2 sweaters or fleece coat for winter months
- 1 nice outfit (for evenings out in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata)
- 1 long cotton shawl or scarf — a wardrobe essential in India. You’ll end up buying a lot, but bring one with you to wear prior to your first shopping trip.
- Cotton underwear, bras, socks: modest, dark colors for underwear, light colors (white) for bras.
- Sleepwear – 1 pair of sleeping shorts and a T-shirt
- Sandals—something you can slip on and off easily!
- Sneakers or Hiking boots
- Bathing suit—one piece, modest

For women, it is also important to dress appropriately when attending festivals or performances or on an outing with their host family. For these types of events traditional clothing is highly recommended.

**Men**
- 2 pair jeans/khaki pants (if the latter, make sure you plan to iron them or have them ironed)
- 2 long button-down or cotton shirts
- 1 pair of shorts
- 2 T-shirts
- 1 flannel shirt, sweatshirt or lightweight sweater
- 1 sweater or fleece coat
- Cotton underwear and socks
- Sleepwear – 1 pair of sleeping shorts and a T-shirt
- Sandals—something easy to slip on and off!
- Sneakers or Hiking boots
- Bathing suit

- Comfortable cotton clothes are readily available everywhere in India. Tailoring is inexpensive and tailors are highly skilled at copying garments or making things from pictures. If you have a favorite dress, skirt, or pair of pants that you would like copied, definitely bring it. It is recommended that you start slow, having one thing made at a time until you learn more about the clothing and tailoring. You do not want to get eight shirts made at once to find out later that they are all too small or a style you really do not like! It is also okay to tell a tailor that you want the outfit they made changed. There are a plethora of shawls and scarves in every shop. Do not pack more than one.
• Basic sandals are readily available, including dressy leather ones and rubber flip-flops that most people wear. Strong and sturdy sandals are not readily available and should be brought from home if that’s what you like. You will be wearing sandals most of the time; so one pair of walking shoes should be enough. If your feet require arch supports, bring a good pair of sandals with you. Keep in mind that when it rains and roads are a muddy mess, so it can be nice to have the option of wearing close-toed, and perhaps waterproof, shoes. Hiking boots are unnecessary unless you are going for a serious trek in the mountains. Most places where people hike have trails for which athletic shoes are fine. Just keep in mind that you’ll constantly be taking your shoes on and off when you enter homes, temples, and even some stores, so bring shoes that are easy on/easy off.

• The 24-hour temperatures in Varanasi range from 85-120º in May to 40-70ºF in January. The hottest season is May to June, with dry, dusty weather. July to October are Monsoon season, with higher temperatures (though not as high as May) and rain every day. Varanasi weather from November to March is very pleasant, with warm sunny days and cooler evenings, though it can get quite cold at night in January and February. Bring heavy sweaters, woolen socks and some warm clothing for the cooler months. To save space, it is a good idea to buy umbrellas and rain gear when you arrive in India (if needed).

• Students will have the opportunity to have their laundry washed by Dhobis (washers) daily or bi-daily for only a few rupees. Bringing your laundry to the Dhobis is a great way to get involved in the community, practice Hindi, and learn about life in India. It is best if students wash their own undergarments. You can easily purchase laundry detergent and supplies for washing clothes for undergarments and any other clothes you wish to wash yourself. Most homes will not have a washer/dryer, so only bring undergarments that you’re comfortable with others seeing! (That usually means dark-colored underwear and white bras that are modest and in good condition.) Many hotels offer laundry services that may be useful before you settle in or while traveling.

**Miscellaneous**

**Sleeping Bag:** useful in the winter as a blanket and when traveling on trains or in the mountains. Nothing as light and compact as a sleeping bag is available in India. Many students have made a sleeping bag from two sheets; this is easy to travel with and ideal for train travels in the summer.

**Water Bottle:** high quality plastic bottle (Nalgene) or a metal canteen has the advantage that it can hold boiled water before you drink it. Both types are hard to find in India and are useful for travel.

**Movies:** be sure to bring lots of your favorite DVDs. English films are not commonly sold in Varanasi and since there is not much to do after it gets dark it is common to spend nights in, dinner and a movie-style. Movies are also a great way to improve your language skills so consider buying Indian films as well. There are some places in Varanasi where you can get Indian films on DVD for very cheap!

**Musical Instruments:** consider carefully the weight and hassle of bringing an instrument versus its importance to you. If you bring an instrument, you should also bring any necessary accessories like sheet music, strings, capos, etc. The Program House does have some instruments on hand (guitar, tabla, etc.). However, they are not in the best condition.
**Household Supplies:** most people will be living in apartments either independently or shared. There are a few things you might be glad to have: zip-lock plastic bags (bring several sizes), 1 or 2 number-combination locks, and a Swiss Army-style knife (don’t pack this in your carry-on!).

**Books:** The program maintains its own library which has hundreds of books on many Indian subjects. It is a great resource. Consult with the Varanasi Program Staff and your fellow participants before buying any books to take to India with you. If you choose to purchase additional books related to your tutorial or independent study project to take with you to India, you may request the program to buy these books from you at the end of your program. Depending on library needs and budget, as well as staff discretion, the program may be willing to buy certain books from you.

**Recording Equipment:** Most electronic and photographic equipment of high international quality is available in India, though at a higher price. However, digital voice recorders are not that common or easy to buy in India. An audio recorder is an important tool for research. The program provides a few digital recorders, but they are not the best quality and it might be nice to have your own. You may be able to use existing applications on your phone or mp3 player, or you might consider purchasing additional equipment, to allow you to record audio.

**Computers in India**
Many things can go wrong with computers when traveling abroad including electrical, software, and hardware damage. There is always the possibility of theft and, even more possible, breakage. Computer maintenance facilities for PCs are available in India. However, this is not the case with Macs.

WIFI is available at the Program Center when the internet is functioning. There are computers at the program Center, which is open Monday to Friday until 5 p.m. Students can usually access the internet from the program house computers. Keep in mind there are not enough computers for every student to have their own and technological problems often strike in India, sometimes taking away the best computer available. During busy academic periods, such as when the independent project deadline is looming, students may have to share the computers with one another.

If you are bringing a computer, consider the following:
1. Before you leave the United States, call your computer dealer to verify the latest conventional wisdom regarding traveling with a computer.
2. Bring a flash drive or external hard drive to backup and save all work.
3. Bring a copy of your installation software. In case you need to do a system restore.

**Make sure you back up your coursework that you save on your computer in case your computer is lost or stolen. Saving work weekly on a flash drive and keeping it in a safe place in your room is a good habit to get into.**

We recommend that you get **travel insurance** for your computer (preferably for both theft and breakage). Filing proper police forms for the in-India theft of your computer and explaining to the customs officials why you are leaving India without the computer you entered with may be a difficult matter. You will also want to make sure that your computer is under warranty (most companies sell extended warranties for their machines when the purchase warranty runs out). While you may not be able to get your computer serviced in India under the warranty, you will be able to get your computer serviced when you return to the United States.
Verify that your computer can function on 220 volts (India's voltage). Many computers can work on both 110v and 220v, (where the power-supply self-adjusts to the voltage level), and all you will need is a plug-adapter. If your computer does not self-adjust to the voltage level, you will need a converter. Pay attention to the heat of your computer and adapter, so you can turn them off and unplug them if they become too hot.

Money
The best way to travel around India is with an ATM card. There are ATMs in every city. Students in the past have said that the best way to manage money in India is to take out money once a month because ATM fees in India and with your banks at home can add up. Students should take out enough money to cover personal expenses for the month. Students should be advised not to carry large amounts of Rupees with them. Carry at least 500 Rupees with you for emergencies, and keep the remaining cash in a safe place. It is also convenient to change a sum of money before you arrive so that you do not have to worry about finding an ATM during your first days in India.

Varanasi's Weather
Late August is the tail end of the summer monsoons. By this time, the rains are a week or two apart; the temperature rises slightly with the consequent clearing of skies. If you are used to a mild or cold climate, be prepared for some very hot days. After the middle of October, the temperature gradually falls, but the cool breeze of the winter monsoon is not felt before November. There will be mosquitoes at all times of the year.

The cold weather (when the temperature varies from 40-70 degrees F) extends from the middle of December to the middle of February. Very good and inexpensive sweatshirts and sweaters, as well as woolen blankets can be purchased in Varanasi. The temperature drops below 40 degrees F at night. Keep in mind Varanasi buildings are meant to keep heat out, so your housing will be very cold at night during the winter months. From March on, the temperature rises very rapidly, reaching a peak in April / May when the range is from 85-120 degrees F.

CUSTOMS, EXPECTATIONS AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Some Guidelines for living in an Indian environment
A successful study abroad experience is based on courtesy, compromise and adaptation. You will be living in a foreign community with markedly different values from your own. As a result, it is your responsibility to compromise and adapt in order to live harmoniously in this new culture. If you take initiative and maintain open communication, you may find that your friends and host family will be more than willing to meet you halfway.

Remember that your actions reflect not only on yourself, but on the entire program as well!

Courteous, Cleanliness, and Customs of Courteous Behavior
Common rules of courtesy apply to any situation, but you might want to keep the following tips in mind for your stay in India. You will find that many actions associated with courteous behavior and cleanliness in the U.S. do not have the same meaning in India, and vice versa. Here is a short list of do's and don'ts for you to add to over the course of the year:
• Please do your best to be respectful to the people associated with the program in culturally appropriate ways. The future of the program and its continued good relationship with its surrounding community depend on this. Often the host family mothers and other friends will remind you of ways to be respectful and culturally sensitive.

• When at someone’s house, sit cross-legged or with your feet folded underneath you - you want to make sure that you don’t point your toes or the soles of your feet at anyone, since this will be construed as an insult. If a chair is offered however, avoid tucking your feet up on the chair as this is too casual.

• Try not to hand anything (i.e. money, a gift, etc.) to anyone with your left hand - use your right hand whenever possible. The left hand is considered your ‘soiled’ hand, because it is the one designated for the toilet.

• Always eat with your right hand (never with your left). It is perfectly acceptable, however, to use your left hand to pick up your glass, etc., if your right hand is soiled with food.

• Do not share food off of your plate while eating a meal. Once you have started your meal, the food on your plate will be considered JhuuThaa (unclean/used/not fit for consumption by others). Do not encourage Indians to eat or drink from a utensil, plate or glass that you have used or touched your lips to. They might feel pressured to appear modern and this could create an awkward situation.

• Water washes away all. It is the universal purifier. Those of you who are encountering the "Indian toilet" for the first time may find it difficult to accept. However, it is considered by many to be much cleaner than America’s paper-heavy system, since paper does nothing more than move the impurity from one place to another, while water has the ability to purify all. Some Indians find it funny or disgusting that people in the West use toilet paper. An Indian bathroom requires you to squat to use a toilet and there is a small faucet next to the toilet with a basin for pouring water with your right hand while you wipe with your left. This may feel awkward at first but is sanitary as long as you wash your hands with soap afterwards.

• The use of courteous phrases such as please and thank you, or giving and accepting compliments, is very different in India. The verbalization of such formulaic expressions is limited. Though verbalization of gratitude is appreciated, it is not always expected.

• When greeting Indians it is important to keep religion and social status in mind. When in doubt, greet someone with “Namaste.” When addressing or talking about others who are older than you or are socially senior (e.g., older brother’s wife, teacher) it is appropriate not to address them or talk about them by their first name. Some socially appropriate honorific prefix or suffix or the use of a kinship term is often needed.

• Do not blow your nose into a napkin or a handkerchief in the company of others. Please turn aside or go into another room to blow your nose.

• When someone offers you food or drink, it is more polite to accept than to refuse. You do not have to eat or drink anything you don’t want, but try to refuse as kindly and sensitively as possible. For Hindus, food is often seen as a gift from the gods, so not accepting it may seem like you are insulting not only your host but the gods as well.

Student-Teacher Relationship and Classroom Etiquette
Classroom etiquette in India tends to be very different from that of the United States. Teachers are used to being treated in a formal respectful way by students. Some honorific linguistic device (e.g., -ji after the first name) is expected. Indian students may touch their teachers’ feet and stand up when teachers
enter the room. Although you are not expected to follow such examples, it is a good idea to be aware of the type of behavior teachers in India may be used to. A few tips to remember:

- Please arrive in the classroom on time.
- Please stop talking when the teacher enters the classroom and wish him or her good morning/afternoon.
- Refrain from talking or using your phone.
- If you feel that you have communication difficulty with a teacher, or instructor, please discuss with the Program Director.

When studying an art form in the context of the traditional teacher/student relationship of your tutorial, part of the learning process is learning how to navigate the teacher/student dynamic. In most situations, any comparison with a Western model, in which you pay your teacher a fee and in return you get a one-hour lesson, does not apply. The teacher will probably welcome you into his/her family and home, and you might be invited to accompany his/her family on outings and activities. These opportunities will give you a valuable glimpse into traditional Indian knowledge. If you feel uncomfortable with demands that you do not consider part of your teaching "contract", then do please talk to the Program Director. Teaching styles may also be much different than what you are used to, so if you are not learning what you expected or are having trouble, talk with the Program Director as early as possible to figure out how to make your tutorial experience more productive for you and your teacher.

**Homestay and Local Roommate Guidelines**

Following are a few guidelines based on feedback from other students and families. Remember, we are always here to assist and hope that you will feel comfortable coming to us with any questions or concerns during the course of the semester.

- The most important thing you can do for a successful homestay or roommate experience is to keep the channels of communication open. If you are not sure how, what or when to do something, ask! No question is a stupid question, and speaking up can save embarrassing or awkward moments.
- The burden of adaptation lies with you. This means that you cannot expect the people around you to accommodate your cultural needs, but rather it is your responsibility to adapt your behavior to the local culture. Discuss potential differences and confusing points so that you understand cultural expectations and feel comfortable. Although communication can be difficult, it is the most important tool in avoiding misunderstandings and assuring a rewarding experience for everyone. Bottling-up emotions is unhealthy and unproductive. If you are in a delicate situation that you are unable to understand, discuss it with the Program Director immediately.
- Remember that, in any situation with new roommates, there are both smooth and awkward moments. Give everyone, including yourself, time to get used to new personalities, schedules, habits, etc.
- Although you will be treated like a member of the family, don’t forget your manners! Eating all the food in the fridge, not cleaning up after yourself, or demonstrating rude behavior will not leave a good impression. At the end of your stay in India, you may leave a thank-you note and/or a small token of your appreciation for your host family, staff, roommates and other locals with whom you feel this is appropriate.
- In India, it is unusual and unacceptable that elders are called casually by their first names. India maintains strong hierarchical structures, and the ideals of respect are a predominant part of the culture. We recommend that you maintain the respectful cultural norms when you make initial introductions and continue this throughout your stay in the host country.
- Your homestay families expect you to return home by a certain agreed time in the evening. If you are late and do not inform them, they will be worried about your safety. If you are going to be late, call your family and let them know your plans, but do not make it a habit of staying out past curfew. This simple courtesy could save you and your family endless grief!
- Indians are very hospitable. Bear in mind that most Indians will not say “no” when you ask their permission. If you have any doubts about the appropriateness of your request or their offer, check with program staff beforehand.
- Using the family’s telephone, computer and internet on a regular basis is not a good idea. Your family probably will not say “no” when you ask their permission, but they may have to pay extra bills or limit their own access to these facilities to accommodate you.
- Female students should to keep some distance between themselves and male family members. They may be your host relatives, but they are not your blood relatives, so it may not be appropriate to behave as you would with your own blood relatives. Talk with your Program Director if you have any concerns or questions about this.
- If there are items that you do not want people to see, keep them in a locked cupboard, trunk or bag. This will not offend your host family or roommate – in fact many may recommend that you do so. Our concept of privacy in the U.S. is not the same as that which you will encounter in India.
- No one in your homestay family, including household servants, should ask you for money. If this happens, please refuse politely and let the Program Director know immediately.
- In the case of a conflict (i.e. disagreement about curfew, boundaries of privacy, or even harassment) with your host family or roommate, please discuss it with the Program Director and sort out the cross cultural issues and communication gaps. Then you can decide together how to proceed.
- Some of you may have young brothers and sisters in the house. While they can be great fun, they can also be pesky. If you find this is a problem, do not be afraid to tell them “no!” and communicate about your preferred boundaries.
- Do not feel obligated to eat or drink anything that you do not want, or that may make you sick. You can always refuse gracefully by blaming your sensitive foreign tummy.
- Do not be afraid to say “no” to second helpings at dinner. Indian hospitality can be overabundant. While a day of uncomfortable overeating happens to all of us from time to time, months of it will only make you miserable. Please refuse politely.
- There will be both happy and awkward times. This is natural and normal for people living together in any circumstance. Assume positive intent in the people around you, and you’re your lines of communication open to avoid problems.
- If you encounter problems with your host family or roommate, it is better to discuss them with the program director or staff rather than members of the community. Indians are very private about “family matters” and will not appreciate community members’ gossip.

*Home stay Guidelines were adapted from SIT India Orientation Packet*
Avoid Discussing Sensitive Topics with Local People
Politics and religious conflict are two sensitive topics and people can sometimes become emotional about their viewpoints. In such cases, it is best to listen to others and not to contribute to any argument. Try to view conversations about religion and politics as opportunities to learn about local opinions, not as opportunities to spread your own. Alternatively, Indians are more liberal in sharing personal information. Do not be surprised or offended if Indians ask you what your salary is or if you are married within the first five minutes of conversation! If you are uncomfortable, try to gently steer the conversation in another direction.

Participation in the Public Sphere
Certain behaviors may be considered normal in many academic or professional situations in the US and in many cosmopolitan parts of India. In other parts of India, however, such behavior might be seen as inviting unwelcome sexual attention. Female students should watch for cues from other women in the environment and follow their examples. Any negative or unwelcome social or sexual attention can interfere with your social and academic experience. For example, we recommend that female students not smoke in public, especially not in the company of males or by sharing the same cigarette. The same goes for public drinking of liquor. Likewise, male students should try to avoid being the cause for Indian women to end up in places, situations, or sections of town, or at times of day that might gain them disrepute. Furthermore, male students should ensure that their behavior towards women is not misunderstood. These guidelines need not be hard and fast rules (depending upon region and class), but you should be aware of, and avoid transgressing, the norms of people with whom one is dealing.

Some Guidelines for Living In An Indian Environment were adapted from SIT India Orientation Packet

HEALTH AND SAFETY
Alcohol
All students should avoid consuming alcohol while in India. In traditional India, alcohol is associated with licentiousness, sexual availability and promiscuity, especially for women. If a woman accepts a drink from a man, this may be considered an agreement to more than just having a drink together. Drinking in a public place may incite harassment. A female student may find herself in social situations where it appears that drinking alcohol is acceptable. Please be aware that by having a drink you make a statement about yourself and how you want to be perceived. We recommend that you observe the Indian women in a social situation. If no other women are present or drinking alcohol, a female student should absolutely not drink either.

There are some public places in Varanasi where alcohol is served. If you decide to go there, please make sure you have other (and ideally some male) students with you, that you will not travel home by yourself, and that you limit yourself to one or two drinks. If possible, please avoid being observed in such a place by anyone you are living, working, or studying with.

You are expected to abide by the UW-Madison and CET Code of Conduct while abroad. The Code of Conduct explains that if a student is arrested or cited for possession of alcohol or is found to have consumed alcohol in an illegal, unsafe or irresponsible manner — particularly on university property — it is a violation of the University of Wisconsin System and CET Code of Conduct and may be referred to
Student Assistance and Judicial Affairs. A breach of the Code of Conduct could result in dismissal from the program.

Harassment
Refer to the Anti-Harassment Guidelines in your CET online account.

Gender Relations
Both men and women:
• Always remember that you will be living in the same neighborhood for nearly your whole time abroad, so it is in your (as well as your program’s and university’s) best interest to establish and maintain a good “reputation”. This means acting culturally respectful around not only professors and your host family or landlords, but around the people you pass on the streets each day, shopkeepers or waiters at local establishments, etc.
• In India, any displays of physical affection between unmarried or even married men and women are considered inappropriate, even holding hands.
• If you wish to spend time one-on-one with a student of the opposite gender on the program, meet in public (or a public place in your home) or in a group. This way, a harmless study session or hang out will not be misconstrued as promiscuity.

For Men:
• Do not behave the same way with Indian women as you would with American women. Many gestures or messages that may be conveying only friendship or harmless flirting could be interpreted as offensive to Indian women.
• Be aware that Indian men and women will view the American females on your program differently based on the way you act towards them. If you act flirty or spend time with them one-on-one or in private, they may view you as acting inappropriately or offensively. If the female students do not object to this, they may view the females in a similar light.
• It is usually not appropriate for a man to approach or talk to a women that he does not know unless introduced by a mutual friend, colleague, relative, etc.
• Be willing to walk female students to their homes if they are unaccompanied, especially at night. Plan ahead so you can be home before curfew as well!
• Appropriate wardrobe consists of long pants and a traditional kurta or a dress shirt in formal settings.

For women:
• Do not drink or smoke in public, especially around men. This may be misconstrued as inviting sexual attention.
• Travel with at least one other male or female when going to new places. Avoid travelling anywhere alone at night; it is best to be accompanied by a trusted male if you must be out at night. During the day, getting around town alone is fine. If you are going somewhere far away, let your family or Program Director know where you are going and when you will be back, and check in with them regularly. Keep your phone charged and make sure you have minutes on it.
• You will be stared at, but it is not necessarily with ill intent. Sometimes locals simply do not expect Americans to be in India or they want you to buy something from them. This kind of staring can be ignored. If this attention goes beyond staring or is obviously negative or sexual attention, remove yourself from the situation, get to a safe place, and contact your Program Director.

• On many trains and some buses, there are “women’s sections” that are separate from men. Females are welcome to sit in the women’s cars on trains or the women’s side on a bus. If a male is in a section obviously reserved for women, it is acceptable to ask him to leave (although the Indian women will probably take care of this first).

• Appropriate wardrobe consists of a sari, salwar-kameez, or loose-fitting western style clothes that cover legs (down to the ankles), chest, and shoulders.

• For some more tips and information about traveling as a woman in South Asia, go to http://travelingwhilefemale.blogspot.com.

Some of these cultural expectations will seem sexist, stereotypical, or unfair to you. You might feel personally or emotionally affected by them, and that is very normal. If you have concerns, you are encouraged to talk to the Program Director about them. Also, discussing your experience among your peers on the program is very helpful in dealing with culture shock. We provide this information not to scare you or make you feel anxious, but to keep you informed and safe. Ideally, you will never have to deal with these situations, but it is better to be prepared than to be surprised.

Some useful phone numbers:
• Police: 100
• Ambulance for accident/trauma: 102
• Women in distress helpline (24/7): 181

Staying healthy
Prevention is the name of the game. It is not fun to be sick and feeling lousy when you are abroad. Although taking precautions may require a little extra time and forethought, they are well worth it if they keep you healthy.

Where adequate water-treatment and sewage disposal are not maintained, animal and human feces can readily contaminate water and food either directly or indirectly by flies and other insects. In markets, foods are often exposed to a variety of flies and other filth-bearing insects and are handled by numerous individuals who may have different hygienic standards than you do. In addition, such foods are frequently freshened by being sprinkled with contaminated water. Just because something "looks safe" to eat or drink does not mean that it is safe to eat and drink. It is recommended that you only eat fruits that can be peeled, or things that your Program Director explicitly tells you are safe.

Water
The water you are given to drink at the Program House is safe. Almost all host families have Reverse Osmosis water filters as well, which is potable. Bottled water is also safe to purchase and drink. Do not drink tap water. Bottled water can be purchased from any shop. Be careful to make sure any bottled
drinks are properly sealed before you purchase them; some shops might try to resell tap water in a used bottle. Go only for sealed bottled water with this stamp. This means it is properly purified.

Foods
Meat inspection procedures may be spotty. Locally obtained meat must be thoroughly cooked in order to avoid tapeworm, trichinosis, and toxoplasmosis. In hot weather, even cooked meats can quickly spoil and become dangerous.

Fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed with potable water to remove dirt and other extraneous materials. It is virtually impossible to wash away all microorganisms from vegetables with many tiny cracks and crevices such as lettuce, celery and cabbage. It is, therefore, unwise to use these items for salads. On the other hand, tomatoes, cucumbers and onions with smooth skins are easily washed and can be peeled. If you choose to eat salads, it is wise to restrict your salads to these items. The Program house provides safe salad options, since all the vegetables are treated and washed with potable water.

Dairy Products
All milk purchased should be boiled before drinking, as it might not have been always refrigerated. Packet milk such as “Amul Tazza” (a national brand) is safe to drink. You can eat ice cream (ie, drumsticks, packaged ice-cream cones) if it is wrapped. Be sure that you are the one to open the wrapper. Eggs are available in a few locations around Assi. Though they are not refrigerated, they are safe to eat, as they are always fresh. Be careful about your egg consumption and purchasing on unusually hot days. It is best to attempt to buy eggs prior to peak heat of the day.

Air Quality
The air in Varanasi is very dusty and polluted by motor vehicles, cigarette smoke, and burning garbage, and can sometimes trigger reactions in students with asthma or other breathing difficulties. This is worse in the early months of the fall semester and spring semester as the humidity of the season can add dramatically to breathing problems. Students are advised to speak with their doctor about suggestions for minimizing the impact of the inhalation of polluted air. Masks can be purchased in Varanasi but it is recommended that students with asthma pack a mask in their luggage.

WHAT TO DO AND GETTING AROUND

Places of Interest in Varanasi
Temples: Bharatmata Mandir, Durga Temple, Sankatamochan (Hanuman) Temple, Viswanath Temple (Golden Temple) and Nepali Temple.

Mosques and Sufi Shrines: Alamgir mosque is in the old city and was built on a Hindu temple. Another beautiful mosque in the old city is Gyanvapi mosque, built by Emperor Aurangzeb. There are also multiple Sufi shrines in the city, one of note is the grave of Karman Baba.

Ghats and Manamandir (Singh) observatory: The most interesting way to see most of this is by boat. You can take a large party down to Panchagana ghat (where mythically four rivers join the Ganga underground), then stop at the Nepali temple, Singh observatory, Aurangzeb’s mosque, Manikarnika (burning) ghat, Jalsain (burning) ghat, then get off at Dashsheshwamedh ghat and go to the Golden Temple. Rates vary with the number of people in the party more than distance.
Ramnagar Palace is directly across the Ganga from the University ghats and can be viewed from the Varanasi side. For a closer look, go by rickshaw or boat. There is also a Durga Temple on the other side, as well as a large flatland where the Ramlila drama is reenacted during several weeks in October.

Rajghat is a mound, which represents the ancient site of the city when it was situated on the Varuna and Ganga Rivers. Archaeological excavations undertaken by the Indology College have revealed signs of a city as far back as 1000 B.C.E. One day, Rajghat will represent an open history book through which students will walk through habitation levels from 1000 B.C.E. to the present. Also located at the Rajghat are the Sarva Seva Sangh(SSS) Prahashan and the Gandhian Institute of Studies (GIS). The SSS is the executive organ of the Gandhian Sarvodaya Movement. The SSS coordinates the gramdan programs in India and publishes a great deal of material on philosophy, economics, and social organization. The GIS undertakes research projects in community development and is the site for regular seminars, drawing many of India’s top economists. There is a good library at the GIS, and it is one of the only places with current periodicals. Also at Rajghat is located the Foundation for New Education, an experimental school designed to implement the ideas of philosopher, J. Krishnamurti. Annie Besant College for Women is also at Rajghat.

Sarnath is a beautiful place for an all-day picnic. Come by auto rickshaw or bicycle, climb to the top of the stupa, see the museum and monastery, the pipal tree, the deer park under the shade of bamboo trees, relax, then see the little town, the Mahabodi society, the library, and stay for evening puja. The Sri Lankan monks perform their evening worship at about dusk in the Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) Temple. It is well worth staying to see; you sit on the rug before the golden Buddha as they chant. Then a boy carries the lantern, and the monks go out and do a brief puja before the stupa. The Cultural Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies is also located in Sarnath on a small, attractive campus.

Favorite Shops
The most successful way to get to know the shops is to explore. Going with an Indian friend who knows the prices can be helpful. Another point, which needs reemphasis, is the use of Hindi as an essential tool for making those contacts. After a few trips into the gullies, the shopkeepers will begin to recognize you and most are delighted to talk with you in Hindi. Even in the more westernized touristy shops, the use of Hindi is useful in getting fair prices.

Weaving in Varanasi: Varanasi is famous for its beautiful silk saris and weavers. You will hear the clatter of looms in most of the Muslim quarters of Varanasi. Many of the wholesale shop owners will be happy to show you where and how their products are made.

Shopping Areas
The core of commercial activity conforms, more or less, with the heart of the city, the Chowk. This area is hemmed in between the Dasashwamedh-Godowlia road and Maidagin-Kabirchaura road.

Gullies
1) Kachauri Gully- which begins on top of the hill in the center of Chowk, famous for sweetmeats, colored paper and for being one of the dirtiest gullies...it eventually runs onto
2) Vishwanath Gully-which is the main market for religious articles, brass, wooden toys and feminine commodities, jewelry, bindis, etc.
3) Kunji Gully- which runs from Chowk eastwards to Rajghat on the Ganga and is noted for the famous silk fabrics of Varanasi. It possesses the chief wholesale cloth market of the city.
4) Lohar Gully-(means blacksmith), which runs north of and parallel to the Kunji Gully has been the main shopping area for brass and copper wares since ancient times.
5) Godowlia- Great place for bangles and clothes. It is a little less crowded and cramped than the gullies.

Other areas
Bischeswargani grain market, with its narrow cobblestone street, is an interesting place to visit; it is the oldest market in the city. Lanka is at the University gate ready to fulfill your immediate needs for a bit more money. The Sardar store is the closest thing to our dime stores.

Malls
There are a few malls in Varanasi. IP Vijay mall, IP Sigra and JHV mall are the three major ones. These malls have movie theaters, food courts, sunglass shops, high end Indian clothing stores, music, American pizza and DVD stores. IP Vijay and IP Sigra house Domino’s Pizza. JHV houses Pizza Hut. Both JHV and IP Sigra have McDonalds as well. It is worth trying Indian McDonalds at least once, as it is a totally different experience from eating at McDonalds in the US.

Transportation
Forms of transportation within India vary. The form you chose depends on distance, urgency, price, etc.

Auto rickshaws: a three-wheeled device powered by a motorcycle engine with a driver up front and seats for two (sometimes more) passengers behind. Most lack doors and have a canvas top over the part where passengers sit. They are generally about half the price of a taxi; fares should be agreed upon in advance.

Bicycle rickshaws: effectively a three-wheeled bicycle with a seat for two passengers behind the driver. Fares should be agreed upon in advance. Bicycle rickshaws are a common form of transportation that students take and do not cost that much.

Bicycles: You may choose to purchase a bicycle. Riding around is a great way to get to know the city for free and can save you a lot of walking time!

Taxis: Most towns have taxis (and in most major cities they are metered). Before getting into a taxi, you should have an idea of what the taxi ride should cost. You can also ask friends or the program director what the cost of your taxi should be. You will probably only need taxis for rides to places farther away or outside the city.

Trains: Some Indian cities have suburban train networks. The Indian Railways website is www.indianrailways.gov.in. For comprehensive online information about the Indian railway system look at www.seat61.com/India.htm; you can also find pictures of the different train classes on this website.

Shatabdi express trains are same-day services between major and regional cities. These are the fastest and most expensive trains, with only two classes: AC executive chair and AC chair.
Rajdhani express trains are long-distance express services between Delhi and state capitals, and offer AC 1st class, two-tier AC, three-tier AC, and 2nd class. Two-tier means that there are two levels of bunks in each compartment.

Other express and mail trains have two-tier AC coaches, chair car, non-AC sleeper, non AC 2nd class and finally there’s unreserved tickers.

Air: There are several low-cost domestic airlines within India.
Air India www.airindia.com
Kingfisher Airlines www.flykingfisher.com
Jet Airways www.jetairways.com
IndiGo https://book.goindigo.in/

http://www.makemytrip.com This website is a great resource for finding cheap flights throughout India and South/South East Asia. Another such website is http://www.yatra.com

Travel Agencies: There are a number of travel agencies on Assi Ghat and scattered throughout the city. One good one is Swadha Services, located in Assi Ghat. Hotel Haifa also offers help for making travel plans. It is good to cross check prices with a travel website, such as yatra.com before making a purchase. Going through a travel agent to book train and plane tickets can save a huge headache.

Books
The bookstores of Varanasi have a very limited selection.

In Chowk locality (by cycle rickshaw about 30 minutes from the Program House)
Motilal Banarsi Das- is good for Indology books.
Chowkambha Book Store - is good for Indology books.

In Raj Ghat locality (by auto rickshaw about 1 hours from the Program House)
Gandhian Institute - good for books on Gandhi and Vinoba.

In Lanka locality (10 minute walk from Program House)
People’s Book Stall

Indica books- have an extensive collection and can order anything they do not have in stock. One part of the book store is in Assi Ghat (10 minute walk from the Program House) and another part of the bookstore is in Godolia locality (by cycle rickshaw about 20 minutes from the Program House).

In Assi Ghat locality (10 minute walk from the Program House)
Harmony Books - has the feel of an America bookstore. The owner also gives Wisconsin students a discount and can order anything he does not carry. Modern Indian literature in English, Modern Indian fiction, philosophy and many religious texts. Also has a good collection of anthropological books

In Godolia locality (by cycle rickshaw about 20 minutes from the Program House).
Universal Bookstore – good for Indiology, modern Indian history, modern Indian literature in English, Modern Indian fictions, philosophy, and many religious texts. They also have a good collection of anthropological books.
In Durga Temple locality (10 minute walk from the Program House)
Pilgrim Books – Good for religious books and music as well as modern Indian history.

In Gurubagh locality (by cycle rickshaw about 20 minutes from the Program House)
Oddysy - Good for religious books and music as well as modern Indian history.

In Nichigagh (by cycle rickshaw about 30 minutes from the Program House)
Sasta Sahitya – Good religious books and children’s stories.

Delhi is the best place to buy books, especially on Modern India. For government publications, economics, law, sociology, etc., see Jain Book Agency, 69 Connaught Place. Allahabad and Lucknow also have a few good bookstores.

Eating Out
Assi Area:
Haifa – good Middle Eastern thali and their Haifa special breakfast comes with hot chocolate.
Karki’s – it’s hard to find the entrance, but handmade pasta dishes are great.
Yafah – also good Middle Eastern food and delicious pita bread.
Open Hand – their mocha lattes and cheese cake are amongst our favorites. It operates as a shop with a café and is a great place to study with free wireless access and (when electricity is on) air conditioning!
Om Cafe– open for breakfast and lunch. It is a vegan restaurant with delicious breakfast burritos and flapjacks. It has free wireless access.
Hayat- known for its Middle Eastern food, with tasty lafahs and pizza. It also has hookah, but it is a pricier choice for food.
Cozy Corner- cheaper option with good sanitation standards.
The Pizzeria Vatica- located on Assi Ghat. It has great apple pie, pizza, and pasta.

Lanka:
Flavors Café- Great place for coffee, internet and Garlic Cheesy bread! This café is off the street above the axis bank next to Lanka Gate.

Godowlia:
Phulwari- has a great ambience and comfortable sofas with great Middle Eastern food.
Brown Bread Bakery- great variety of cuisines from Indian to Italian to German. Live music many nights of the week, comfy seating, rooftop dining, and has an amazing 10-15 page menu with many imported meats.
Bread of Life- on the way to Godowalia, it has cookies, cakes, good German bread, omelettes, American pancakes, and bagels.
Iba Café- also on the way to Godowlia, has delicious Japanese food.

Bengali Tola
Shiva Cafe/German Bakery– one of the few places where pad thai and red and green curries are served. This German Bakery has a rooftop table with a great view of the surrounding gullies.

Vishwanath
German Bakery Gali- has fondue, homemade breads, and a great selection of cheeses.
Sweet shops
Jayshree- on the left just before Godowlia crossing.
The shop on the right as you enter Vishwanath Gully from the Godowlia end has the best gulab jaman in town.
Ksheer Sagar- on the way to Godowlia, is also famous in the city for its sweets.
Raj Bhog- on the main road from Godowlia to Lanka, is a favorite of musicians.
Vaishali – in Lanka

Exercise
There are some gyms in Varanasi, but membership can be difficult and they are not very close to Assi. Benares Hindu University is a great location for morning workouts. Even at 6 AM the campus is in use (and very safe) with Indian men, mostly, on their morning walks. Students frequently go there for a run around the campus and track. Women are advised to run with another person as they may be harassed if they are running alone. There are four large fields complete with a track, tennis courts, and basketball courts. Bring your own sporting equipment. Also, there are swimming pools in some of the hotels such as Hotel Taz, Radisson, Hotel Suieya, and Hotel Clarkes.

COMMUNICATION
When making calls, keep time zone differences in mind. To make an international call to the United States from India, dial 00 1 followed by the appropriate U.S. area code and local number. This method can vary if you are using a calling card.

Cell Phones
During orientation, the staff will provide you with a basic cell phone. You can add minutes to your phone by “recharging” at various points around Varanasi. Local calls cost less than Rs5 and international calls cost around Rs9/minute. It is much cheaper to call the US from your Indian cell phone than for someone in the US to call you in India unless they are calling through a company such as Reliance Global Call. In the case of losing your phone, you can lock the number with the service provider in India, but the phone numbers saved on your SIM card may not be recoverable. It is advised that you keep a written list of important numbers.

Postal Mail
Generally letters to or from India arrive within two weeks. Padded envelopes are the most reliable way to send small or medium packages. Boxes are much more likely to be opened by the customs officers in India and rummaged through. Be sure to register every package or box you send to or from India. The post office will give you a registration number with which you can track the package or box. You may also want to pay for a return-receipt. You will receive the return-receipt after your package or box has been signed for at the other end. Courier service (such as DHL) is very reliable to India, as is International Express Mail (at the Post Office), but cash, check or money orders should not be enclosed. Sending things like chocolate, cheese, other perishable food items are best avoided, as they may melt in transit or have gone bad by the time they arrive.
RESOURCES

Films on Northern India at UW-Madison
Videos (including but not limited to the ones below) are available in Learning Support Services (LSS) in Room 259 Van Hise, open 11am-5pm Monday through Friday. They are listed under their AS (Asian Studies) call number.

- “An Appointment with the Astrologer” (AS 2.002) (Four Astrologers in Varanasi)
- “Banaras Muharram and the Coals of Karbala” (AS 2.054) (A Shi’ite mourning celebration in Varanasi)
- “Being Muslim in India” (AS 2.017) (A Sunni family in Lucknow, North India)
- “Dadi and Her Family: A Rural Mother-in-law in North India” (AS 2.011)
- “The Fourth Stage: A Hindu’s Quest for Release” (AS 2.024) (scenes filmed in Varanasi)
- “Holy Hey: A Festival of Color, Love and Life” (AS 2.047) (filmed in Varanasi)
- “Modern Brides: Arranged Marriage in South India” (AS 2.019)
- “A Musical Tradition in Banaras” (AS 2.037) (A tabla-player’s life in Varanasi)
- “Tulsidas and the Fire of the Veda” (AS 2.050) (Vedic and contemporary Hindu devotions in Varanasi)
- “Wages of Action: Religion in a Hindu Village” (AS 2.009) (Religious observances in a village outside Varanasi)
- “Forest of Bliss” (AS) (Documentary about Varanasi)

Varanasi Websites:
Art and Music www.varanasionline.com/index.htm
Banaras Hindu University www.bhu.ac.in/
Photopage http://www.rudyowens.com/galleries/india/
Uttar Pradesh Tourism www.indiatouristoffice.org/North/varanasi.htm

India Websites:
Cinema & Music http://www.bollywoodhungama.com/
www.bollywoodmusic.com
http://www.imcow.org/

Indian Dance http://www.culturalindia.net/indian-dance/classical/index.html
www.sruti.com

Newspapers www.indiapress.org
www.indianexpress.com

Sacred Sites www.sacredsites.com/explore/asia.htm
Travel
www.indid-journeys.com
www.tsiindia.com
http://www.incredibleindia.org/

Past Participant blogs and written pieces:

Lydia Greve (AY 2013-14) and Lydia Odegaard (Spring 2014) blog here:
http://blog.studyabroad.wisc.edu/