Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City
SPRING 2009 PROGRAM HANDBOOK

This program is offered by International Academic Programs (IAP) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in partnership with the Council for International Educational Exchange (CIEE). Throughout the course of your study abroad experience you will be communicating with both IAP and CIEE staff. It is essential that you pay close attention to all information provided to you from both organizations. This IAP Program Handbook supplements handbook(s) or materials you receive from CIEE as well as the IAP Study Abroad Handbook and provides you with the most up-to-date information and advice available at the time of printing. Changes may occur before your departure or while you are abroad.

CIEE handles the program's day-to-day operations. Generally, questions about aspects of your program abroad should be directed to CIEE (e.g., program housing options, program facilities abroad, cultural tours offered as part of the program, etc.) Questions relating to your relationship with UW-Madison or your academics should be addressed to International Academic Programs at UW-Madison (e.g., course credits, equivalents, UW Madison registration, etc.)

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Contact Information

ON-SITE PROGRAM INFORMATION

Your contacts will be:

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UW-MADISON INFORMATION

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Madison, WI 53706
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(608) 262 6998 fax
www.studyabroad.wisc.edu

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Erin Polnaszek
IAP Study Abroad Advisor
(608) 262 1446
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For Financial Matters:
Judy Humphrey
IAP Financial Specialist
(608) 262 6785
jhumphrey@bascom.wisc.edu
EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION
In case of an emergency, call the main IAP number (608) 265 6329 between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday; after-hours or on weekends call the IAP staff on call at (608) 516 9440.

U.S. EMBASSY REGISTRATION
All program participants who are U.S. citizens must register at the U.S. Embassy before departure as this will help in case of a lost passport or other mishap. You can register online at https://travelregistration.state.gov. If you are not a U.S. citizen, register at your home country’s embassy or consulate.

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4 Le Duan Blvd., District 1
Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam
+84 (0)8 822 9433
+84 (0)8 822 9434 fax
uscongenhcmc@state.gov
http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov

Program Dates

**Spring Semester 2009**
- **Arrive in Ho Chi Minh City**: February 3
- **Orientation**: February 4-8
- **Classes Begin**: February 9
- **Midterms**: March 18-19
- **Exams for HCMC-based courses**: April 20-22
- **Group travel throughout Vietnam**: March 20-28
- **Group goes to Cambodia**: April 24
- **Orientation in Phnom Penh**: April 24-26
- **Cambodia course work begins**: April 27
- **Group travels to Siem Reap**: May 23
- **Final Exam (Cambodia course)**: May 29
- **Departure Day (depart from Siem Reap)**: May 31

*All students must participate in the orientation and must arrive at the CIEE Study Center office in Ho Chi Minh City between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on the arrival day. Students are not permitted to arrive after the official program arrival date.*
Preparation Before Leaving

**IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS**

**Passport:** A passport is needed to travel to Vietnam. Apply immediately for a passport if you do not already have one. Passport information and application forms can be found on the U.S. State Department website [http://travel.state.gov/passport/](http://travel.state.gov/passport/). If you already have your passport, make sure it will be valid for at least 6 months beyond the length of your stay abroad.

**Visa:** Participants will need to obtain a student visa for this program. CIEE provides detailed information on the visa process in their acceptance materials online, which you should follow closely. Contact CIEE with questions regarding the visa process.

**Travel and Arrival**

Travel and arrival information will be provided by CIEE.

**The Academic Program**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Newly established in 2007, the CIEE Study Center at Ho Chi Minh International University offers students the opportunity to gain meaningful insight into Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos through studies in language, history, culture, literature, economics, and society. All courses offered provide a deeper understanding of the region while encouraging interaction with local scholars, students, and citizens.

The program is located in Ho Chi Minh City. In the fall, students spend the last 5 weeks of the program in Hanoi while spring students spend 4 weeks in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The goal of the 5-week course in Hanoi is for students to gain an understanding of northern Vietnamese cultures, including those of minority hill tribes, and to be able to delineate aspects of the relationship between northern and southern Vietnam which have historically sometimes led to tragic conflict, and at other times to fruitful collaboration and growth.

The goal of the 4-week course in Siem Reap is for students to gain an understanding of Cambodia’s history and culture with particular focus on the causes and effects of the genocide of 1975-1979. Students are encouraged to approach Cambodia as a case study for several of the world’s most pressing geopolitical problems, including nation-building in societies recently at war, confronting radicalism, combating official corruption, and promoting democracy and stable economic development in smaller, less-developed countries.
HO CHI MINH CITY INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Ho Chi Minh International University, a division of the Vietnam National University, is the first public international university of Vietnam, and its faculty is 60% Vietnamese and 40% invited foreign instructors. Students study at the Hanoi College of Social Sciences and Humanities for the last five weeks of the fall program. The Center for Khmer Studies where students spend the last four weeks of the spring program, promotes research, teaching, and public service in the social sciences, arts, and humanities, as they relate to Cambodia.

Vietnam National University www.vnuhcm.edu.vn/en/
Ho Chi Minh International University www.hcmiu.edu.vn
Hanoi College of Social Sciences www.ussh.edu.vn

ORIENTATION

A four-day orientation session, conducted in Ho Chi Minh City at the beginning of the program, introduces students to the country, the culture, and the academic program, and provides practical information about living in Vietnam. The Resident Director leads a similar, two-day orientation at the beginning of the Hanoi- and Siem Reap-based modules. Students receive ongoing orientation on various topics in Vietnamese culture through the courses and individual appointments with the Resident Director.

COURSE INFORMATION

Courses: Students attend classes Monday through Friday. Language classes are a mandatory and key component of the curriculum. You will choose from several elective area studies courses. Two elective area studies courses, Economic Development and Contemporary Society, are held entirely during the time in Ho Chi Minh City. A third elective area studies course, History, meets throughout the semester with classes in both Vietnam and Cambodia. There is also a required area studies course, Nation Building in Cambodia After the Khmer Rouge, that is offered entirely during the period in Cambodia. Areas studies courses are taught in English and include lectures, discussion of readings, field trips, class papers or projects, and exams. In Ho Chi Minh City, these courses typically meet three times per week. A detailed course schedule will be handed out along with the course syllabi during program orientation.

For all students, each academic course requires approximately six to eight hours of reading and other preparation per week. Class sessions normally consist of lectures, discussion of readings, field trips, field reports, and presentations. Especially in lectures taught by local scholars, students are encouraged to be flexible in adapting to new teaching styles and ways of organizing academic material.

Language classes are offered at beginning through advanced levels. Students are placed in appropriate language classes based on a proficiency examination given in Ho Chi Minh City at the beginning of the program. Beginning level students are usually grouped into a
class of 5–6 program participants. Area studies courses, taught in English, include a variety of full-day and weekend study trips that are taken in addition to the three-week course in Cambodia.

From time to time, local students from Ho Chi Minh International University may audit the CIEE content courses. However, the vast majority of class participants are CIEE students.

**Registration:** Registration information will be provided by CIEE. In general, CIEE will communicate with you by email. You will receive detailed information on courses and requirements in your online CIEE acceptance materials. Read all of the CIEE materials carefully and return all CIEE forms directly to CIEE by their deadline date.

**Equivalents and Course Equivalent Request Form (CERF):** Each course you take abroad must be assigned a UW-Madison “equivalent” course in order for your grades and credits to be recorded on your UW-Madison transcript. In order to establish UW-Madison course equivalents for your study abroad courses, you will submit a Course Equivalent Request Form (CERF). Information on the UW course equivalent process is available in the IAP Study Abroad Handbook.

**CREDITS**

**Conversions:** All of the courses offered in Vietnam are CIEE courses. The majority of courses are assigned 3 UW-Madison credits and have 45 contact hours.

**Limits and Load:** The recommended course load for UW-Madison students is 15 credits per semester.

**PASS/FAIL/DROP/AUDIT**

Please refer to the IAP Study Abroad Handbook for academic policies.

**GRADES AND GRADE CONVERSIONS**

In content courses, students are graded on the basis of attendance, quizzes, exams, presentations, and sometimes a final paper. In the language courses, assessment is based on a mid-term and final exam, quizzes, homework, and participation. Final examinations or term papers count up to 40%. Letter grades of A, B, C, D to F are given with pluses or minuses.

CIEE will report grades to UW Madison using their CIEE equivalent grades. The grade conversion scale for this program is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnam National University</th>
<th>CIEE Equivalent</th>
<th>UW-Madison Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.3-10.0</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.0-9.2</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Range</td>
<td>Letter Grade</td>
<td>Course Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4-7.9</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6-7.3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0-6.5</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7-5.9</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0-5.6</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1-4.9</td>
<td>D+ or D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4.0</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Testimonials**

The testimonials below are from past participants; they reflect various students’ experiences and are included to provide different perspectives. IAP does not endorse any specific view expressed in this section.

**PACKING**

Don’t pack a lot. No need to pack toiletries, Vietnam has most of your usual American brands in the shopping malls, etc., although for the ladies, tampons were harder to find.

Bring a laptop.

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

The Vietnamese testing and grading system is much different. Academically speaking, history was the best class that fulfilled my expectations of the structure, complexity or learning, and degree of difficulty.

I didn’t always feel challenged in my classes.

Be prepared to have a lot of homework.

I found myself spending so much time on classes, and wished I would have had more time to get involved with the community and city in other ways (volunteering, internships, etc).

**STUDENT LIFE**

True immersion into foreign culture requires adaptability of personal values. The best aspect of the program was getting to know about Vietnamese culture and life. The worst was struggling with the cultural differences and language difficulties.

Central Vietnam was really hot – I got a heat rash from the sun.
Living with a Vietnamese roommate was one of the best. She helped me not only learn how to live in Vietnam, but she taught me very personal things about Vietnam that you do not see on the outside.

I loved living in Vietnam. There is such a wide range of landscapes, lifestyles and environments to see. Hanoi was a great city to live in. Despite the smog and the insane traffic, the people there were warm and friendly.

It was definitely a challenge not being able to speak Vietnamese, and not to have any previous experience with Vietnamese or any Asian culture. But I found this challenge the most rewarding in the end - it was truly an eye opening experience, and I learned and grew so much because of the cultural and linguistic differences. I really think Vietnam is a great place to go for everyone, whether familiar or completely unfamiliar with the country.

My favorite places in Vietnam were away from the cities, up in the mountains in the smaller villages. The quiet and beauty of places like Sapa and Ba Be Lake, and it was really great learning about the cultures and communities of the minority groups in Vietnam.

The best field trip was Sapa!

**SAFETY**

As a woman, I found that I always felt really safe in Vietnam - safer than I sometimes feel in the United States.