



During the week of November 14th-21st, the Office of Global Programs hosted a series of events to discuss how various social identities may play out during students' time abroad. These conversations engaged with student questions and experiences, exploring resources and reflections in preparation for travel. This packet is intended to give all students the opportunity to also consider their identity during the pre-departure process, even if they weren't able to attend our in-person events.

Regardless of study away location, you will encounter varying norms once you arrive in-country. Preparing to be open-minded in advance of your semester away will help you better recognize and respect these differences.

While this packet focuses on specific identity groups, we acknowledge that individual experience is complex and intersectional. These topics are not monolithic. There is intersectionality between our social identities, including, but not limited to LGBTQ, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and disability.

The following sections will give more insight into each topic, as well as some points for reflection for all students to consider as they prepare for their time away.

"Intersectionality. There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we don't live single-issue lives."

- Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*

Gender and Dating

As indicated in the Marquette University publication provided below, “when students study abroad, many do so having an understanding of gender only from their home culture. Study abroad experiences offer a unique opportunity for students to reconsider the assumption with which they have framed their understanding of the world in which they live (Jessup-Anger, 2008).”

This quote provided the basis for our conversation. Global Peer Mentors (our study abroad alumni) shared thoughtful considerations about their initial expectations, how they felt their gender was perceived, any surprising moments, and how they ultimately met people, if they chose to date. This conversation was complemented and made especially rich by follow up questions from those preparing to study away.

Recognizing that each individual’s experience will differ, students of all genders may experience a shift in the importance their gender plays in their identities while away. Although we are sociologically trained to understand the common gender norms in our home-country, gender norms may differ during an experience abroad. For example, in Buenos Aires, men often kiss one another on the cheeks as a form of greeting or saying hello. This may or may not be something that you are used to in your home culture, and in the grand scheme of things, this is just one example.

Here are some key take-aways from the session:

- As mentioned in the packet’s introduction, this topic is not monolithic. There is intersectionality between gender and the other topics covered during our identity-based workshops, including but not limited to: LGBTQ life abroad, students of color abroad, and religion & spiritual life abroad.
 - Language is incredibly valuable. While this may seem obvious, take the time to truly engage with the local language. Even in English-speaking cities, cultural misunderstandings can occur depending on how language or slang is used. Communication is critical for the success of any relationship – how will you challenge yourself to understand the various complexities of a different language, both verbal and nonverbal?
 - Every experience is valid. There may be aspects you are not used to, whether cat-calling or otherwise. While culture is an important component to strive to understand, it is complex - what you feel and experience is valid.
- 📌 You have allies within your study away cohort. Take care of each other. Participate in [NYU’s Action Zone Bystander Intervention](#) training if you have not already.

If you would like to connect to a former student and ask about their experience, email global-peer-mentors@nyu.edu. This will go to staff members who can see about connecting you directly with a student to answer your questions and share their experiences. Also feel free to reach out to your [Study Away Advisor](#) with questions!

Here are some additional resources for your continued reference:

- ❓ [Gender Observations and Study Abroad: How Students Reconcile Cross-Cultural Differences Related to Gender](#)
- ❓ [Gender and Communication in Intercultural and Global Contexts](#)
- ❓ [What I Learned Tindering My Way Across Europe](#)
- ❓ [Diversity Abroad: Women Abroad](#)
- ❓ [NAFSA: What Students Need to Know: Sexual Health Abroad](#)
- ❓ [For These Millennials, Gender Norms Have Gone Out Of Style](#)

LGBTQ

In the LGBTQ Student Workshop, we thought through current experiences and lenses of our own gender and sexual identities, and considered how living in another cultural context may be similar and different. We also explored how and where to find resources for specific student needs and interests.

Beliefs and norms towards sexual identity and expression vary widely from country to country, city to city, urban to rural, and person to person. It is never too early to start thinking critically about your experience as a member of the LGBTQ community who is studying away at an NYU global site.

REFLECT on your current understanding of gender and sexual identity in your own cultural sphere, and in what ways it is important or present in your life right now.

- How do you define gender? How do you define sexuality? How universal are these?
- What does LGBTQ life look like in your current city and at NYU?

Thinking specifically about your own experiences,

- Are you open about your sexual identity and expression? With whom?
- Are you involved within the NYU or local LGBTQ community?
- Are there specific places you go socially?
- What resources do you use on campus?

CONSIDER: Using these questions, you can then reflect on what might be important to you, regarding your gender/sexual identity, while studying away.

- What are the social attitudes and laws towards the LGBTQ community in my host country?
- How do I want to be present in my host country, in regards to my gender/sexual identity?
- What might I notice about the LGBTQ community there? How might I be perceived?
- What resources do I know that I want/need now? How can I learn more about them?

Key Reflections

- Experiences of gender and sexual identity are incredibly individual. If your gender/sexual identity is salient for you in your current city, it may not be incredibly important to you while studying away. The opposite can also be true.
- Understandings of gender/sexual identity (including terminology) are incredibly diverse, and the definitions in your host country may not align with your current conception of these identities. Being open to learning about these differences in a safe way is important for your own engagement, but also can provide a lot of insight and growth.

- Our identities are intersectional, so how we experience gender and sexuality is influenced by other aspects of ourselves. This is true for students at home, at school, and while studying away...but may be different from place to place.
- As in the U.S., gender norms often impact LGBTQ identity, so learning about both aspects of culture can be important.
- Start to figure out how you want to be engaged with your LGBTQ identity, and how you might be able to do so while studying away. Start asking staff in NY and at the site about what opportunities do exist.

Resources

The resources students want and need vary from person to person, and the resources that will support you may look different from site to site and city to city. Having a conversation and asking questions of people you trust is a good place to start.

You can reach out to your [Study Away Advisor](#) in the Office of Global Programs to ask questions and be connected with the resources and individuals in NY or at your site. If you are interested in talking to a student who has previously studied away, you can reach out to global-peer-mentors@nyu.edu. This will go to staff members who can see about connecting you directly with a student to answer your questions and share their experiences.

Race and Ethnicity

This session was hosted by the Office of Global Programs, Opportunity Programs and the Center for Multicultural Education and Programs. Joined by former study away students and those preparing to travel, we engaged in a conversation about how race and ethnicity are understood in the United States, as well as students' home countries. Students then shared how they believe their race or ethnicity has been perceived during study abroad, and if it impacted their experience.

Here are some key take-aways from the session:

- Once you are abroad, keep an open mind. The way you view your race or ethnicity may shift, and the way locals view your race or ethnicity may be different than what you are used to at home. This may or may not be a challenging experience. Just remember every experience is valid.
- Be confident about setting comfortable boundaries for yourself as you meet new people.
- Take a critical approach in understanding/observing the diversity that exists in the local culture. Who are the various racial and/or ethnic groups in the society, and what are their histories?

As noted above, our social identities are constantly interplaying (i.e. race, gender, ability, religion, etc.), creating a dynamic experience for all of us as we delve into new cities and cultures.

Resources

As you may have read above, the resources students want and need vary from person to person, and the resources that will support you may look different from site to site and city to city. Having a conversation and asking questions of people you trust is a good place to start.

You can reach out to your Study Away Advisor in the Office of Global Programs or cmep@nyu.edu. If you are interested in talking to a student who has previously studied away, you can reach out to global-peer-mentors@nyu.edu. This will go to staff members who can see about connecting you directly with a student to answer your questions and share their experiences.

Diversity Abroad also offers great resources to continue exploring:

<http://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/racial-ethnic-minority-students-abroad>

Religion and Spiritual Life

This session was hosted by the Office of Global Programs and the Office of Global Spiritual Life at NYU. The goal of this conversation was to start thinking about how religion and spirituality may vary in a student's study away location. Students considered what they may need and how that may impact their time abroad, both logistically and on a more personal level. The questions below will hopefully help you think about these points.

REFLECT on the role that religion and spirituality play in your life now.

- Do you have a strong connection and/or sense of belonging to a religious or spiritual group?
- Do you have a prayer or meditation space?
- Do you go to certain places for dietary needs?
- Do you celebrate certain holidays? Are these holidays you would want to celebrate during study away?

CONSIDER: What do you already know about your study away location and what should you research before you go?

- What is the dominant religion in my host country? Will my faith/tradition be represented in my study away city?
- How tolerant is the host country of other religions?
- Are there any laws regarding religion or religious expression?
- Is it safe for me to wear religious symbols or clothing? How might signifiers of my faith or my religious practices be perceived?
- Will I want access to worship or meditation space?
- How is atheism or agnosticism perceived?

Resources

If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, simply inform your professor and academic staff at your site at least 7 days in advance (also email your Study Away Advisor now!). If you need accommodations for dietary restrictions, make sure to explain the details in your housing application. You can also inform your Study Away Advisor and they will connect you to the local NYU staff in your new city. The staff is also happy to help you find a place or worship or meditation space.

You can reach out to your [Study Away Advisor](#) in the Office of Global Programs with questions, and if you are interested in talking to a student who has previously studied away, you can reach out to global-peer-mentors@nyu.edu. This will go to staff members who can see about connecting you directly with a student to answer your questions and share their experiences.

NYU Accra: Religion and Spiritual Life Resource Sheet

Background Information

According to the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, about 71% of citizens identify as Christian in Ghana (including Pentecostal/ Charismatic, Protestant and Catholic), and about 18% identify as Muslim (including Sunni, Ahmadi, the Tijani and Qadiriyya orders of Sufism, as well as a small number of Shia). Many Ghanaians practice their religion in tandem with a traditional religion. Zetahil, a practice unique to Ghana, combines elements of Christianity and Islam. Other religious communities include the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Eckankar and Rastafarianism.

Being a highly religious country, students are often advised not to tell people they are atheists since that may spark many questions the student may find offensive. Instead, they are advised to say they respect all religions but do not practice one in particular.

NYU Resources

The Student Life Team at NYU Accra is available to help students find the necessary resources for their religious and/or spiritual needs. Students can specifically reach out to Marian Ansa-Otu, Program Manager of Student Services. Marian can help students connect to places of worship in the city, as well as try to accommodate dietary needs. If space permits, students may be able to have a space for prayer or meditation in the NYU facilities, upon their request.

Students may excuse themselves from class for a religious holiday. They must notify their instructor and the NYU Accra Academic Office at least one week in advance. More details will be provided during the orientation in Accra.

During orientation students will learn about various religions in Ghana with one of the highly regarded professors from the University of Ghana. Additionally, NYU sponsors a trip to northern Ghana where students have the opportunity to visit a mosque, a center for inter-religious dialogue and some selected traditional spiritualists in the city of Tamale.

Questions? Reach out to us!

Jessica Levin, Office of Global Programs jessica.levin@nyu.edu
Ariel Ennis, Office of Spiritual Life ariel.ennis@nyu.edu

Places of Worship and Meditation

It is generally easy for students to find a Christian or Muslim place of worship. Most places of worship are open to the public and students are generally warmly welcomed. Jewish students have had challenges finding a synagogue, but they have organized Shabbat dinners and other festivities. The restaurants in the meal plan have been able to accommodate dietary needs for religious holidays, and all students have enjoyed these special meals.

There are a few yoga and meditation centers in Accra. Students have free access to Pippa's Gym and can take yoga classes. Students have also gone to Bliss Yoga Studio where they may sign up for group classes, private instruction, consultations, retreats and workshops. All levels are welcome and a fee is usually required.

Dietary Considerations

Students at NYU Accra have a meal plan for dinners Monday through Friday. They should note dietary restrictions in their housing application. Buka serves mostly traditional Nigerian and Ghanaian food, and Sunshine serves anything from Indian to Mediterranean food. At both restaurants, there can be gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian options. You may also find these options in the supermarket, but unlike NYC, it is more limited. The staff will also direct you to a few restaurants that may satisfy your dietary needs.