

**Sociology of Food
London
Winter 2019
December 31, 2018 – January 21, 2019**



**Study Abroad Program Guide
Prepared by Debi Street and Olga Crombie**

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¹ We appreciate helpful advice from earlier London winter session students, in the preparation of this Handbook.

DESTINATION: LONDON



SPECIAL NOTES REGARDING OUR DESTINATION

Climate

Winter can be grey and cold, sunny and cold, or wet and cold. Every variation of cold will be available for our adventure! Dress in layers. Hats, scarves, gloves and warm socks are a must. While it is unlikely to snow, it will often feel very cold. London is full of old buildings that typically alternate between drafty/chilly and overheated, so having a layer to peel off (and put back on) is important. We also spend much more time outdoors in the elements (walking between destinations, waiting at bus stops) than people from car/taxi cultures might expect. Jeans and sweaters are appropriate dress for most of our activities. Although you may find them most comfortable, sweats, pajamas, tracksuits and running shoes (called trainers in the UK) may make people sneer and think “tacky” in very fashionable London. For at least one or two occasions,

having something dressier to wear than daily jeans and sweaters would be nice: dress, skirt, or trousers for women and casual business dress shirt/trousers for men would be most appropriate.

Currency

The pound sterling (symbol: £; ISO, which stands for International Organization for Standardization, code is GBP), commonly known as the pound and less commonly referred to as Sterling, is the official currency of the United Kingdom. The Office of Study Abroad Programs uses the currency converter found at <https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/> which on September 20, 2018, showed that 1 USD = 0.76 GBP and 1 GBP = 1.32 USD.

Transportation

Every student will receive an Oyster card upon arrival that is good for the Underground for Zones 1 and 2 for the duration of the program. We will travel to program activities via foot, the Tube (underground), buses, and over ground trains. You will learn how to “queue up” (line up) politely to board public transportation in our first few transportation experiences. Remember, putting a bag or (worse) your feet on an empty seat in public transportation is the height of rudeness on a crowded public transportation system. Your public transport travel fare entitles you only to occupy the space of a single seat—if you can find one! Impress people with how courteous UB students are, even in unfamiliar surroundings. Pay attention and be sure to surrender your seat voluntarily to disabled or injured passengers, the elderly, or pregnant women—in short, anyone who is less able to stand than you are.

You will do more—much more—walking than you are accustomed to; having VERY comfortable footwear is essential. Wear your most comfortable shoes on the plane and pack another equally comfortable pair. That way, your feet can always be dry/warm. Wet feet get cold; London is cold. Wet feet are prone to blisters; London is wet. This is essential: bring/wear comfortable shoes.

Don't take cruising mini-cabs, call a taxi or take one of London's iconic regular taxis, if needed.

Food

We will certainly pay a lot of attention to food in London! Along with learning more about the sociological aspects of food, you will have opportunities to dine at restaurants featuring different types of cuisines and at popular markets for course-related activities. Depending on student interests, we may have a “full English breakfast” or fish and chips from one of London's best “chippies.” Stay Club has equipped kitchenettes that you should use, especially with good supermarkets nearby and street markets on our academic agenda. Preparing some meals (breakfast and packed lunches especially) is a real money saver in expensive London—spend the pounds you save on dining “at home” for other activities. Most prior students said that they did not really understand how expensive food can be in London, and wished they had prepared more meals for themselves (cereal for breakfast, packing rather than buying a sandwich for lunch, bringing along snacks). Buying water is kind of silly/wasteful if done daily—it becomes expensive fast—especially since tap water in London is perfectly safe to drink.

There are restaurants and cafés everywhere, some spectacular, others awful. There is decent food at the Camden Market, but even market food “adds up” and can be very expensive if you are not careful. Many supermarkets and street markets have high quality, reasonably priced food. However, prices in restaurants range from somewhat to very expensive and serving sizes are often small by US standards (but sensible by any other standards) and expensive by hawker standards. Buying food to take away is usually cheaper than eating in. If you see two prices on

the board when you order food at a café counter, the lower price is for takeaway. Nearly any type of cuisine imaginable can be found in London. Expect to contribute to at least one potluck meal.

Alcohol

All participants will be of legal drinking age while in London. Every participant must behave responsibly in choices involving alcohol, as the abuse of alcohol endangers not only the individual who does, but other participants in the program as well. Alcohol **abuse** is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program, at the discretion of the Program Director. However, wine and beer (especially in friendly pubs) are certainly staples of the British culture of food and drink, and can be enjoyed in moderation. Remember, alcohol consumption is never mandatory and students should feel no pressure or obligation whatsoever to participate in the consumption of alcohol.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Official London Tourism Page: <http://www.visitlondon.com/>
<http://www.visitbritain.com/en/US/>
<http://www.timeout.com/london>

From <http://london.usembassy.gov/uk4us.html>, you can access many useful London/UK sites.

U.S. Department of State: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Government of Canada: <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/united-kingdom>

THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Debra (Debi) Street, PhD, is a Professor of Sociology at the University at Buffalo. She spent a semester doing dissertation research in London and has also led London programs for Purdue University and the Florida State University. She was a Senior Research Fellow at King's College, London; she is a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America and an elected member of the National Academy of Social Insurance (United States). Besides teaching on UB's north campus, Dr. Street also directs a spring semester-long study abroad program in London (north-north campus) and frequently teaches during the summer at UB's south-south campus at SIM-UB in Singapore.

An award-winning teacher, she received the 2011 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching and 2016 CISP award for Outstanding Contributions to International Education. Debi is also a theatre nut, a proud Canadian, a patriotic American, a Singaporean at heart, and an Anglophile who also happens to also be a citizen of the United Kingdom! She is an internationally recognized expert on issues associated with economic and health security across the life course, and she researches those topics comparatively. The Sociology of Food is a relatively new and growing academic interest for her.

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Work: CAPA Centre, 148 Cromwell Road
South Kensington

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Our program begins with a pre-departure orientation session that includes an overview of London and program specifics. Students are expected to monitor their UB email at least several times a week after program admission through December 18 to keep up with important information about activities and travel. After December 18, students must check UB email daily for late-breaking and/or important information about the program. This is especially important for accessing up-to-date information about coordinating airline arrangements, transportation, and student housing in London. Plan flights to arrive in London by 8-11 am on December 31 (when you can check-in to your accommodations). There is an expectation that students will have finished some of the readings (see UB Learns) BEFORE arriving in London.

Program Description

2019 marks the sixth year of the Winter Session in London program, SOC 358: The Sociology of Food (for undergraduate students). Graduate students will complete additional work and receive credit for SOC 555: Advanced Topics: Sociology of Food. The program includes classroom lectures, readings, written reaction papers, homework, plus visits to many sites associated with expanding knowledge about the processes and relationships that characterize social experiences of food and water in the 21st century. We have a busy cultural program. All course-related site visits will be on foot or via public transportation. All required activities are covered by the program fee. Optional activities are often free to students, but may sometimes have out of pocket costs associated with participation.

Course Description

Sociology of Food in London is an intensive 3-credit elective course focusing on the systematic study of the social processes and relationships associated with the production, distribution, consumption and disposal of food (and water). Students must be competent and confident in spoken and written English to get the most out of the program, which requires some concentrated reading and writing.

Objectives

- Learn how to adopt a sociological perspective to ask/answer questions about food
- Understand the globalizing political economy of food production and consumption
- Consider the roles of class, gender, age, and culture in food consumption and how food patterns both reflect and shape social inequalities
- Identify a variety of methods and techniques that might be used to explore the sociological and substantive importance of food production and consumption in the 21st century
- Exhibit cultural competence when interacting with persons from different cultures and backgrounds, including people we encounter in London, especially our fellow UB companions

Assignments

Students will receive a formal syllabus/description of assignments in mid-December. The required readings are very accessible for non-sociology majors (written in a straightforward style that all students will find easy to understand), and should be purchased and/or downloaded and brought to London. Tentative plans for graded undergraduate work include short essays and a group project. Graduate students should contact Professor Street to arrange the additional work required for graduate credit. Non-sociology majors are encouraged to think sociologically, but to also link course activities and themes to important components of their majors. Communicate with Professor Street (dastreet@buffalo.edu) to discuss ideas about course assignments that can inform your major. Class assignments will be submitted via email to a dedicated email account:

London.Winter.Session@gmail.com unless otherwise instructed. All course work must be submitted by the last program day. Skipping assignments/missing deadlines/late work/failing to fully participate in course and program activities will definitely result in lower grades.

Grading and Conduct

Students will receive a letter grade for the course. Expectations for students will be appropriate for their level of education and experience. One expectation is that students will read the entire textbook, much of it before they arrive in London. Student grades can be enhanced or deteriorate depending on students' willingness to acclimate and adapt to the study abroad experience.

Frequent debriefing will be available to help students discuss concerns or resolve conflicts, to accommodate needs and requests, and to assist students with assignments. Students must behave in ways that reflect favorably on our home nations and the University at Buffalo, who we represent.

While behavioral problems are not anticipated, any that arise will be dealt with quickly, firmly, and fairly. Serious infractions (such as substance/alcohol abuse, illegal activity, aggressive behavior, failure to attend class activities without a valid excuse, or willful damage of property) may result in dismissal from the program.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students will stay in shared accommodation in Camden, a vibrant area of central London. Each two-student studio has an equipped kitchenette, private en-suite shower/toilet, and a small study area.

Same sex students will share rooms. Costs for accommodations are included in the Program Fee. We will occasionally meet at Stay Club, but mainly out classes will be held at the CAPA Study Center in South Kensington.

ADVICE ON MONEY, COMPUTERS, PHONES, ETC.

You can withdraw money at ATM machines or exchange cash at currency exchange bureaus. Both currency exchange bureaus and ATMs are located in every airport terminal. Many Marks and Spencer (a UK department chain) service desks offer favorable rates of exchange and low commissions. Avoid using storefront non-bank exchange bureaus, they often have hidden charges that mean you get fewer pounds for your dollars. There are many ATMs all around London, just like in any US city or in Singapore. However, making many small withdrawals from an ATM machine can rack up expensive bank fees; it is usually less expensive to withdraw one larger amount and pay a single bank fee than to make a series of small withdrawals with a fee each time. Check with your bank before you leave home and select a debit card with no or small fees for foreign transactions and ATM withdrawals. Credit cards can be used in many places, although some small cafés, street markets, and pubs operate on cash only. I recommend that you notify your bank and/or credit card companies and tell them you will be traveling to London. Most banks question purchases and withdrawals made abroad and if they have not been notified they are likely to put a stop on your debit card withdrawals and credit card purchases.

Money for Students from the US

Your credit card will automatically convert the local charges for any purchases into dollars, often with a service fee (in most cases) that shows up on your monthly statement. The advantage is the written record of purchases and that you won't need to pay until billed. However, the convenience of carrying a credit card (highly recommended) can also make it very easy to overspend. Always have at least some cash and be disciplined about purchases. I mainly operate with cash, using an

ATM/debit card. There are ATMs at all arrival airports. You get the bank's exchange rate, but there is usually also a fee per transaction. Before departure, find out how much your bank charges per transaction and make sure your bank account allows international withdrawals. Double check that your PIN number will work abroad! Not all ATM cards automatically do: some need activation. There also may be problems if your debit card is linked to a savings account vs. a checking account. Make sure you contact your bank and ask about using both debit and credit cards in London from home, before departure.

Do not buy traveler's checks, no one uses them any longer. Do not carry large amounts of US currency, but it is handy to have some as a back-up that you can exchange in a pinch, in case of difficulties with your credit or debit card. It is probably a good idea to arrive in London with at least 100 GBP (Great Britain Pounds) which you can order ahead from your bank (plan ahead, it takes several days) or get at your international departure airport. To summarize: Use cash whenever possible (using an ATM card to withdraw cash as necessary) and keep very close track of debit and credit card usage and fees.

Money for Students from Singapore

In general, the advice is not very different in terms of “general” suggestions for handling money. According to Singapore experts, best to change currency at money-changers away from the airport, where rates may be slightly better. Popular places include People's Park Complex (near Chinatown), Mustafa (near Serangoon) and Lucky Plaza—it also depends on which of the many money-changers you use. Some heartland money-changers offer good rates too. You want to have enough GBP cash for small purchases/daily use. Credit cards are useful for booking coach/train/plane tickets and hotels for short trips, although many charge a higher than prevailing exchange rate and add a 1% commission charge on top of it, which can add up. The advantage is that you get some reward points and have less cash to carry around. Debit cards are good for point-of-sale purchases, because there is no commission other than the exchange rates, but for ATM withdrawals there is a bank service charge from the Singapore side, and only British debit cards can be used for online purchases. Notify your bank/credit card holder that you will be traveling internationally. Activate credit/debit cards for overseas transactions before departure.

Computers and other electronic equipment

Your accommodation has wifi access and free wifi is widely available in London (many libraries and museums, some cafés, McDonalds, Starbucks, etc.) You will be able to access computers in the Study Center routinely (after the first few days) for email and course work during business hours. While you are not required to bring your laptop to London—having one is very convenient for course work. One thing I cannot emphasize enough: you will enjoy London MUCH more if you REALLY limit time online/using social media/IMing back home. Streaming movies and constantly updating Facebook/Instagram will actually undermine your enjoyment of the program. We'll have a 24 hour challenge early in the program to “go bare”—spending an entire day without using any personal electronic equipment...it may be one of your best days in London! Limit calls/texts/messages home to an absolute minimum—if you are mature enough to be in London, you are mature enough to go for several days without talking to your parents. Let them know you have safely arrived, and then ask them to treat you like a mature adult who will be away for a few weeks. You'll enjoy London more if you are fully (mind, body, soul) IN London. Brag about your adventures and show spectacular travel photos once you get back home. Doing that from London verges on gloating, and that's not nice.

Phones

Constant texting/chatting/talking undermines the intensity and value of the study abroad experience. When we are involved in any program activity—that is, in a classroom, on a walk, traveling to or from a site, in a museum or library, at a meal—during ALL class/program time, texting and talking on the phone are off limits (unless you have my prior permission). If you must be in communication with someone not in our program, keep conversations brief and texts to a minimum. Chronic texting/talking during program activities will result in grade deductions.

CAPA London has very specific requirements for student phones, for which you will be informed pre-departure and briefed thoroughly in London. Any “unlocked” cell phone (that is, not tied exclusively to a service provider) should work, in theory. Everyone must have phones that can be used in case of an emergency. There will be drills about how to do that once we are in London.

Please advise family and friends not to expect daily contact—and then stick to that. Communicating back home takes you out of the London social mix, heightens homesickness, undermines social relationship formation, and actually makes you something of a nuisance to your professor, and fellow students. For students who want to be in constant contact with people at home, staying home is probably the best choice. Otherwise, liberate yourself from constant contact with the familiar—dare to live “offline” and fully embrace the adventure—new city, new people, new ideas, new friends, and new conversations. Students can only immerse themselves in London if they are fully present, not tethered to their technology.

As a matter of courtesy/safety in a busy, crowded city, do not walk in/obstruct public places while reading or sending texts or taking photographs. Step out of the way and stop to do those things, so that busy passersby who work and live in London can get where they need to go. Otherwise your awareness of surroundings declines, making you a potential target for pickpockets and your slow pace really inconveniences busy people who need to dodge around those who thoughtlessly stroll and scroll. Discourteous/self-centered behavior singles out such individuals as thoughtless persons who are not smart enough to appreciate and adapt to a culture where courtesy is still highly valued and where paying attention keeps one safe.

There are MANY feasible options with UK mobile operators (like Orange, Vodafone and 3E), but please wait for CAPA to advise you which mobile phone provider to use once you are in London. The appropriate SIM card for the carrier most appropriate for CAPA’s emergency system, or a cheap new phone compliant with CAPA’s emergency system, will be easy to obtain (within blocks of where you are staying) and CAPA staff will show you where you can do that on arrival day.

Time

There is a five-hour time difference between US Eastern time and London, and eight between Singapore and London. You will have some jet lag the first few days in London, but it passes quickly. Despite having somewhat warmer weather typically, London is further north than Buffalo—so daylight hours are very short for the first week we are in London. It gets dark around 4:30/5:00 pm. For Singaporeans, expect a HUGE change in heat and light—from the typical tropical 12 hours of daylight and warmth to which you are accustomed. But that’s okay, London is beautiful when she wears her cloak of city lights at night.

Londoners are noted for punctuality and good manners, so do not be surprised if lateness draws unwelcome attention to such inconsiderate behavior. All class activities will start on schedule, we will not wait for stragglers. Late students make the mistaken assumption that they are more

important than others, who should be kept waiting. No. Students who are late are being incredibly disrespectful of others and risk being left behind. I am a stickler for punctuality—barring an emergency, I will always be on time (early). The same should apply to you.

Water

Water is safe to drink from all taps in homes/businesses in London. Save money and plastic waste by using a refillable water bottle rather than unnecessarily purchasing bottled water.

Food

There are no special warnings about food. European and British food safety laws seem to keep most people free of food-borne illness most of the time. Use common sense in terms of safe temperatures for cooking and storing food items for consumption in your accommodations. Kosher, halal, vegetarian and vegan foods are all readily available in London.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Students are responsible for arranging their own air travel and ground transfer from the London airport to central London. It is best not to purchase your airline ticket until we know what time, exactly, we can start to check into student accommodations, usually around noon. Planning well will save hours of sitting around (tired) surrounded by luggage if you arrive too early, or check-in hassles if you arrive too late. Two years ago, several students traveled to other European cities before the program and arrived late to London=bad outcome. Additional travel is best done at the end of the program. Get your bearings, figure travel-related things out, finish the course, then travel.

The main international airports are London Heathrow (LHR) and London Gatwick (LGW). If you want to coordinate travel with other students let me know when you fill out the program survey (coming in late October) and I'll put you in touch with others who want to do the same thing. I usually fly into LHR because I find it most convenient for where I live (also in Camden). You will receive clear directions for traveling to the Stay Club from both major London airports. Housing is likely available for check in around noon Dec 31. Departure is the morning of Jan 21st.

Early arrivals/late departures cannot be accommodated. Students should plan travel to arrive in London at an appropriate time on December 31, arriving early is no advantage. That likely means an overnight flight the evening of Dec 30, to arrive in London Dec 31. Triple check tickets to be sure you are booked to ARRIVE in London on Dec 31. What a way to end 2018/kick off 2019!!

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

All program participants must have a valid passport for travel to the United Kingdom that will be valid for at least six months beyond the end of the program. You will be issued a letter on official letterhead stating that you are a university student who has prepaid tuition and accommodation costs, and which you should carry with you to show upon arrival in London.

US and Singapore citizens do not need visas to enter the UK for the winter study abroad program (although you must be able to show an airline ticket that proves you will exit the country at the end of the program). Citizens of other countries must check with the UK Border Agency to see what visa arrangements are necessary to enter the UK from Dec 31, 2018 to January 21, 2019 for a short prepaid study program. Students of other nationalities, who may require visas to visit the UK, are responsible for making their own visa arrangements. Study Abroad staff can offer limited advice, but only enough to help you get started. CAPA staff may have other pointers, or

be able to issue a helpful letter. Failure to make timely and appropriate visa arrangements would mean you cannot join the program in London and may result in the loss of program fees.

KEEP YOUR IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS AND ITEMS SAFE

Do not bring irreplaceable items to London. Carry money, credit cards, passport, securely with you or store safely. Purchase a “wallet” to wear under clothes (available online and at many stores, including even Walmart and Target in the U.S.), whether on a cord for around your neck and under shirts, or for under clothing around the waist. Losing money, credit cards, cash or (worst of all) your passport will make London memorable, but unpleasant. Be careful. Scan your passport and credit cards and leave a copy at home with someone easy to contact, and a PDF file that you store safely elsewhere and can access online can be a lifesaver if you lose such items in London.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

The London standard is 220V; most electronic equipment, including laptops, tablets, phones, etc. have built in conversion capacity, all that is required is a plug adapter. Other US electrical appliances (like curling irons, hair dryers, etc.) typically need expensive and heavy voltage converters (not just plug adapters) to be used. Leave those kinds of electrical appliances at home, they are a hassle. Singaporean voltages (I think) are the same as UK. Regardless of whether your appliances need a voltage converter, you may need a special “plug” to fit into the wall sockets, as they may not match US or Singaporean plugs. I am not sure if your flats will have those plug adaptors or not, but they can be purchased cheaply from many nearby shops if you need one.

LIVING SAFELY IN LONDON

London is quite safe, but like all big cities, there are dangers of which you must be aware. Always travel in groups, especially at night. Avoid areas of demonstrations and be careful within the vicinity of demonstrations. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate to violence. Stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of your surroundings. Ensure that your personal belongings, including passports and other travel documents, are secure at all times. Avoid showing signs of affluence and carrying large sums of cash.

You are strongly encouraged to sign up for the U.S. Department of State [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive up-to-date safety and security information and help them reach you in case of an emergency abroad, whether natural disaster, civil unrest or a family emergency. This will also help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency. Singaporean students may want to avail themselves of a similar notification to the Singaporean High Commission in London.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

Guiding Principles:

- Traveling light is WAY better than struggling with luggage! This can't be overemphasized. You might have fewer "outfits" to choose from, but who cares? Buy a new scarf at a street market!
- Dark clothing, laundered regularly, is best. Pack for a week, not a month, and wash clothes.
- Shopping is plentiful if you ever need something you did not bring.
- Check with your airline for baggage allowances (number and weight varies widely by airline).
- Bring a small bag to use for excursions (a regular campus-sized backpack is ideal). It can double as your personal carry on item (check to be sure about carryon luggage limits).
- Pack your luggage and then walk around the block and up a flight of stairs with it. If that is a struggle, repack and eliminate some items. You must be able to handle your luggage by yourself.

Additional Observations:

- Winter weather in London typically ranges from cold to very cold.
- You will walk A LOT. You must have comfortable shoes. Do not buy new shoes unless you have time to break them in completely before you leave. If your feet hurt, everything hurts. Two pairs of comfortable shoes is best (one on your feet, one (maybe) drying out).
- Plan for rapidly changing temperatures, inside and out, by dressing in layers. Shirt, sweater, and jacket; tights, trousers, jeans, even silk long johns. Most British uni students would rather be caught dead than be seen in public in sweats. Hoodies seem okay; sweats/PJs, not so much.
- Include at least one dress/skirt/dressy trousers for women and casual business attire for men (nice shirt, khakis) for special occasions--performances, dinners, clubbing, etc.
- Although dress is casual for most course activities, if there is any different expectation in attire it will be communicated in plenty of time for students to adjust.
- Obviously, students are free to dress as they prefer for London's nightlife (though be forewarned that young men and women often dress up) and for other informal occasions.

Recommended Clothing

- Jeans/long trousers (two or three)
- Shirts - long sleeves for layering
- T-shirts/turtlenecks/sweat shirts for athletic use and warmth as under/over layers.
- 1-2 warm sweaters, nice enough but also functional enough for everyday use in the cold
- Warm jacket or coat for cold weather and rain
- Underwear, maybe long johns and warm socks/tights
- Scarves, hats, and gloves, maybe ear muffs if you don't like winter hats.
- Casual shoes and/or boots, comfortable for walking. Weather may be chilly and wet.
- Think you will go clubbing? Maybe a nice outfit for that.
- Something to dress up a bit (not formal, but at least something beyond just jeans/t-shirts)
- Stating the obvious: you will NOT likely need a bathing suit, shorts, or sunscreen.

Personal Care**

- Travel size shampoo and conditioner, toothbrush and toothpaste
- Comb and/or hairbrush
- Antiperspirant, skin moisturizer and other creams
- Make up, razor/shaving cream, if needed
- Vitamins, daily OTC medications
- Over-the-counter generic brands of personal use and first-aid items

All of these items are readily available if forgotten and a trip to Boots pharmacy is fun!

Other essentials:

- Small organizer to hold passport etc., such as a "neck wallet" that hangs inside your shirt, that way you don't have to worry about potential thefts or losses.
- Camera/i-device/folding umbrella/sunglasses
- Prescription medication/birth control pills, etc. in original containers, carried on plane with you
- Addresses/phone numbers/etc. for contacting friends and relatives

Important Suggestions:

You are responsible for hauling your own luggage at both ends of the trip. Try to travel with a single wheeled suitcase (small enough for an overhead compartment on board) plus (maybe) a small duffel bag or backpack as your personal item. Verify size and weight limits for carryon luggage and personal items with your airline. Last year, our TA Joanne waited for her lost checked bag for 12 days) But one legendary US student brought a single wheeled carryon and backpack for an ENTIRE four-month semester in London. A carefully packed wheeled carryon and a backpack holds more than enough stuff for three weeks and would mean absolutely no risk of lost luggage!

At minimum, carry essential medications, course readings, contact lenses/glasses, a change of clothes and “starter” toiletries on the plane. Remember that you may need a doctor’s note or prescription to import prescribed drugs or medical necessities into the UK (checking is your responsibility). Carry-on liquids must meet airline size specifications (remember, liquid is very heavy, so why bring it at all?). Checked bags sometimes get lost. In the past four years, there have been three cases for winter session students alone, having “lost” checked luggage—reuniting student and luggage has taken from less than 24 hours to five days...until Joanne’s record breaking 12 days last year.

You will be more comfortable if you have necessary items with you. Lacking a toothbrush or change of underwear after a long journey is not pleasant, and being without needed prescription medication could harm your health. Of course, dragging too much stuff along isn’t pleasant either and your roommate won’t appreciate stepping over your surplus stuff. Know the difference between what you **need** in London (bring that) and what you think you *might want* (leave most of that at home) and you will be well prepared for this experience.

Use your London adventure as an opportunity to live for a couple of weeks as a sophisticated urban minimalist—a savvy traveler, not an annoying tourist. It is not the things you bring to London, but the experiences you take away, that will make this a wonderful learning and life adventure. Acquire knowledge, memories, new friendships, once-in-a-lifetime experiences, magnificent (in)sights and flavors, and manage all of that with as little “baggage” as possible (less stuff, less prejudice, a more open mind than usual). If you do that, you will make the most of this study abroad experience.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

UB Study Abroad Programs

Dr. Trevor Poag
Director, Global Learning Opportunities
University at Buffalo
411 Capen Hall
Buffalo, New York 14260

Office Phone (Direct Line): +1 716 645-2174
Office of Study Abroad Programs: +1 716 645-3912 (business hours: M-F 8:30am-5pm)
Emergency Phone: +1 716 645-2222 (UB Police – 24 hours)
E-mail: trevorpo@buffalo.edu or studyabroad@buffalo.edu

United States Embassy in London

33 Nine Elms Lane
London, SW11 7US
United Kingdom
Switchboard from US: 011 44 20 7499 9000
Direct dial in London: 0207 499-9000

In an emergency involving a U.S. citizen in England or Wales, you can reach the US Embassy during normal business hours and after hours, seven days a week, via the main Embassy telephone number: (0)20-7499-9000 (if dialing from the U.S.: 011-44-20-7499-9000).

Students from UB-SIM who have an emergency (we do not anticipate any) would contact the High Commission of the Republic of Singapore in London for assistance.

High Commission of the Republic of Singapore in London

9 Wilton Crescent
Belgravia London SW1X 8SP

Tel: +44 (0)207 235 8315
Fax: +44 (0)207 245 6583
E-Mail: singhc_lon@sgmfa.gov.sg