Global Aging & Health: 
Enhancing Communities in Nicaragua

Course:

6 credits total for both graduate and undergraduate students

Undergraduate Students (Capstone):*

- UNST 421 – Int’l Capstone: Global Aging & Health – *Enhancing Communities in Nicaragua*  
  6 credits

-OR-

Graduate Students: **

- PHE 562 – Global Aging  
  3 credits

- PHE 563 – Service-Learning in Nicaragua – *Enhancing Communities in Nicaragua*  
  3 credits

* Undergraduate students not interested in taking the course as a Capstone should contact program faculty.

** Graduate students are enrolled in a combination of PHE 562 and PHE 563.

NOTE: Both undergraduate and graduate students participate in the same classes (i.e., they are in the same classroom covering the same materials)

The preparation course consists of regularly scheduled weekly course meetings of approximately 5 hours per week during spring term prior to the summer travel to Nicaragua. It is taught by Drs. Margaret Neal and Alan DeLaTorre (see section “Program Faculty”).

Classroom activities aim to provide the students with knowledge and skills for their service-learning experience in Nicaragua, including the following areas: global aging, service learning; sustainable community development; health and aging in Latin America and Nicaragua; key concepts in gerontology; overview of public health principles; Nicaraguan culture, history, and geography; and issues in cross-cultural communication.

All class sessions are mandatory for students wishing to travel with the group; should extenuating circumstances occur, the student is responsible for reporting these to the course instructors and making alternative arrangements.

Program Travel Dates, Application Deadline, and Online Application:

Visit the Education Abroad application portal for information on current dates and announcements. On this website, you will also find the link to the online application:

https://vikingsabroad.pdx.edu/ (go to "programs" and search for this Capstone)
Program Faculty:

Dr. Margaret B. Neal, Director of the Institute on Aging (IOA) and Professor of Community Health at PSU. Dr. Neal teaches graduate courses in gerontology and data collection and is the lead faculty for the service-learning program to Nicaragua. She has cultivated the program since its inception in 2003 and has helped the IOA (www.pdx.edu/ioa) grow its focus on global aging issues over the past decade. Her current research and teaching interests include issues surrounding global aging, the creation of age-friendly cities, transportation options for older adults, and strategies for promoting healthy aging. In addition to teaching and traveling with the program, Dr. Neal has collaborated with Nicaraguans in developing research and training opportunities related to the needs, assets, and conditions of older adults and their communities.

Dr. Alan DeLaTorre, Program Coordinator and Research Associate, IOA. Dr. DeLaTorre has been involved with the program in varying capacities since 2004. As the program coordinator, he is involved in the program from recruitment through preparing students for travel to Nicaragua. As a research associate in the Institute on Aging, Dr. DeLaTorre works with various partners in Portland and internationally to further the quality of life and well-being for those of all ages and abilities. In addition to being faculty for the PSU program, he has also coordinated JFRF’s service-learning programs at Pacific and Concordia Universities and worked to improve student experiences through ongoing communication with partners in Oregon and in Nicaragua.

The program is offered in cooperation with the Jessie F. Richardson Foundation, which acts as the program’s lead community partner. JFRF and its founder and president, Dr. Keren Brown Wilson, have invested tremendous time, money, and energy in the project since it was established in 2004. JFRF also contracts the services of a Nicaraguan community organizer who acts as JFRF’s appoint of contact and the program’s primary Nicaraguan during the time in Nicaragua.

Program Description:

For more than ten years, PSU students, faculty, and community partners have been working to improve the well-being and quality of life for older adults located in several project sites throughout Nicaragua.

The program connects classroom learning on the topics of gerontology, community development, cross-cultural communication, and public health with collaborative community service and learning in Nicaragua. The classroom learning builds on student knowledge and skill sets in order to prepare teams of students to successfully complete projects in the field while traveling in Nicaragua. Students will work with each other, faculty members, and community partners in the U.S. and Nicaragua on projects identified by partners in Nicaragua. Upon completion of the program, students can expect an improved understanding of gerontology, public health, and community development; furthermore, their international service-learning projects will prepare them for future careers and advanced education.

Spanish language proficiency is not required, but it is encouraged and preferred. Students speaking English only may participate; however, the program seeks at least one Spanish-speaking student for each English-only speaking student.

The course is based on a service-learning model which attempts to foster deliberate and mutually beneficial learning among older adults and community partners in Nicaragua and PSU students. The program operates within a sustainability framework that stresses the importance of engaging Nicaraguans in a way that will benefit members of today’s and tomorrow’s communities with the long-term goal of building community capacity.

In Nicaragua, students will meet with government officials and other local leaders, work in homes for the elderly, and conduct projects focused around community development and public health aimed at enhanced quality of life for older adults living in homes and in community settings.
The two weeks during which students are in Nicaragua will have four components: building group dynamics (within the PSU group and with community partners), engaging in service-learning activities, scheduled time off, and community presentations. Students will have limited dedicated time off, including one day which will include an optional tour. After becoming oriented to the country, students will work to build bonds with identified community partners and engage in the selected service-learning projects. The final days of the trip will be dedicated to travel between cities, finalizing reports, and additional tourist activities (e.g., shopping and group meals). Most days will be busy and likely tiring; students should not view this program as a vacation and should expect to work hard in an attempt to achieve individual and group goals that serve the identified needs of older Nicaraguans and community partners. Shortly after returning from Nicaragua, students and instructors will convene for a debriefing to reflect on their international service-learning experience.

**Itinerary:**

After applying for and being accepted into the program, participants will be involved in a mandatory Education Abroad education toward the end of the winter term (enrollment in the study-abroad program is carried out by Education Abroad). Students will take the required six credits of coursework in spring term and will be formed into teams to work on the projects to be implemented in Nicaragua. After the term ends, students will travel to Nicaragua for approximately two weeks. Once in Nicaragua, students will spend the first days becoming acclimated to Nicaraguan culture by visiting local sites and engaging in team building and logistical preparation. After the acclimatization phase, students and faculty will travel to the main project site(s).

Students and faculty will stay at the project site(s) for approximately eight days performing daily activities which will include work on intergenerational projects and visits to schools, medical facilities, and community organizations. Students will participate in public health and community development projects with older adults, local leaders, and other community stakeholders. Each day, teams will work together on project activities and reflect on lessons learned. Presentations to community partners will be given at various times throughout the time in Nicaragua. Upon return to the U.S., students will have a debriefing meeting, and in fall or early winter term, some will give a voluntary final presentation to program supporters and the PSU community.

### Example Schedule

*This information is provided to give students a general sense of the program structure and activities. As with any international travel of this nature, participants should expect that program itineraries and activities will change during the course of the program in response to local conditions and needs.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Depart PDX for Nicaragua <em>(Portland - Managua)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Managua – Tour of Managua; debrief and overview of schedule and activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Days 3-6</td>
<td>Community location 1 – project work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Off day/tourist activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days 8-12</td>
<td>Community location 2 – project work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 13</td>
<td>Off day/tourist activities (shopping); final group meal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 14</td>
<td>Travel back from Managua to Portland</td>
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Scholarships Opportunities:

Students will have the opportunity to earn scholarships to aid with program expenses. These scholarships are provided by the Jessie F. Richardson Foundation based on merit- and need-based qualifications. Students will receive the application form once they are enrolled in the program. For questions about the scholarships, students can contact Dr. Alan DeLaTorre (aland@pdx.edu).

Pre-requisites/Qualifications:

- GPA 2.75 for undergraduate students, 3.0 for graduate students.
- Spanish-language skills are helpful and preferred. Although non-Spanish speakers are welcome and encouraged to apply, the program seeks at least a one-to-one parity between Spanish- and English-speaking students.
- The program is open to graduate students, as well as senior and junior undergraduates who are seeking Capstone credit. Also, undergraduate students may be allowed to participate in the program for upper-division, non-Capstone credit.
- A valid passport is needed (to be on the safe side, passports should be valid for at least six months beyond the expected return date, including time after the program ends if students plan to stay in Nicaragua or travel to another country).

Cost:

- **Tuition**: The program-related courses are offered as a zero-billing (no-cost) option for Capstone and students enrolling in the Public Health Education Section (PHE 562 & 563); this option allows for six credits to be taken without paying tuition. Student health service eligibility may be affected, so please inquire with the Center for Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) for additional information (http://www.pdx.edu/shac/center-for-student-health-and-counseling).
- **Program fee**: Students will pay a program fee that includes: direct program costs, accommodation, most meals (travel days are not covered in the program fee), group transportation, mandatory overseas health insurance, and a mandatory study abroad fee. The final amount will be billed to your student account. Please refer to the Education Abroad online application portal for the current program fee (https://vikingsabroad.pdx.edu).
- **Not included**: Roundtrip airfare, visa/tourist card fees, meals for travel days, personal expenses (e.g., souvenirs), recreational fees for free days, and immunizations. Please refer to the Education Abroad online application portal for a current estimate on these additional out-of-pocket costs.
- **Financial Aid**: Most forms of financial aid apply. Most forms of financial aid can be applied to this program. PSU’s Office of Education Abroad will submit fully inclusive student budgets to the Financial Aid Office, who will then incorporate program and travel costs into students’ cost of attendance. Scholarships are also available through the Jessie F. Richardson Foundation.
Payment Schedule:

- Timely payment of all program costs is a requisite condition for participation in the program. Portland State University reserves the right to cancel participation of students not in compliance.
- A $50 application fee is due at the time of application. Payment may be made via credit card or billed to a student account. Payment instructions are provided as part of the online application.
- Acceptance notifications will be sent via e-mail, which will require that students log into the application portal to confirm their participation in the program and complete supplementary required forms.
- Once participants confirm their participation and complete the supplementary forms, the Education Abroad office will begin the registration and billing process.

Refund Policy:

- Student withdrawals must be received in writing by the Office of Education Abroad. Verbal notifications are not acceptable. Please send all written notifications of withdrawals to Jennifer Hamlow, Director of Education Abroad (jhamlow@pdx.edu).
- Application fees and program deposits are non-refundable.
- Once written notification is received by Education Abroad, only uncommitted portions of the program fee can be refunded.
- After confirmation of participation, no refunds are guaranteed.

Nicaragua: Accessibility & Environment:

Nicaragua is not considered to be a very accessible country. Although the capital city of Managua has some accessible infrastructure for older adults and people with disabilities, the city lacks a true center and has been ravaged by war, hurricanes, and earthquakes over the past 30 years. Some hotels visited by program participants did not offer accessibility aids such as ramps, grab bars, or wide doorways or hallways. Transportation in mini-buses is provided, but there are no ramps and lifts on the vehicles. Taxis offering accessible services are not available. Outside of Managua, the accessibility situation is no better. Streets often have various gradations, are cobbled or made of dirt, and could be considered inhospitable to older adults and people with disabilities. Most communities that program participants have traveled to in the past have substantially less infrastructure than Managua. One year, a faculty member fell and broke her leg while walking on the streets on a steep hill. Project members often walk throughout the towns and cities for over 30 minutes or take taxis if they prefer. However, taxis may not always be available. Students sensitive to heat should be aware that temperatures can reach over 100° F, and air condition may not always be available. June is the beginning of the rainy season, so students should be prepared for heavy downpours and high humidity. Physical projects are anticipated for all students (e.g., construction, painting, creating gardens, etc.) although this is not a requirement. Planned activities such hiking and local shopping in a small market in Masaya do not have accessibility options (these activities are optional for all students).

Students with accommodations approved through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) are responsible for informing program coordinators after acceptance decisions have been made. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through the DRC should contact the DRC immediately.
**Contact:**

For information on cost, travel, health insurance, financial aid, and application process:
**Nicole Sisco,** Faculty-Led Programs Advisor, Education Abroad, nsisco@pdx.edu; 503-725-5346.

For course- and program-related information:
**Iris Wernher,** Assistant Program Coordinator, Institute on Aging, wernher@pdx.edu; 503-725-5236.

For information on scholarships:
**Alan DeLaTorre,** Program Coordinator/Research Associate, Institute on Aging, aland@pdx.edu; 503-725-5134.
Application Instructions

Course: Global Aging and Health: Enhancing Communities in Nicaragua
Quarter: Spring Course with Summer Travel

Application Components:

1) Transcripts: (Unofficial transcripts are acceptable.) Upload transcripts in online application where prompted. [If you have trouble uploading transcripts, please submit print version to Education Abroad, ATTN: Nicole Sisco]
   - All Students: Include transcripts for all courses taken at Portland State University.
   - Undergraduate Transfer Students: Submit transcripts from your prior institutions for your last 90 credits of coursework attempted.
   - Graduate Students: Include transcripts for all graduate coursework attempted.

2) Statement of Purpose: Please write 2-3 paragraphs on each of the following three topics/questions and enter into the textbox fields where prompted on the online application.
   a. How will your participation in this program contribute to your academic, career, and/or personal goals? How will your participation contribute to the overall goals of the program?
   b. What do you feel could be the biggest challenge you may face while working towards achieving your goals for this program?

3) References: In the application portal, references can be prompted via email to fill out an online reference form. Their responses will be logged in the system, however students will not have access to read them. Please select a reference who can objectively evaluate you. At least one reference from a current/former academic instructor is required; the second reference, required for undergraduate students, can be from another academic instructor, an employer, youth leader, living group adviser, or counselor. Do not use peers, family, or friends as a reference.
   - Undergraduate Students: Two references are required, at least one from an academic instructor
   - Graduate Students: One reference from an academic instructor is required

4) Interviews:
   - Undergraduate Students: Required to complete an in-person study abroad interview with Institute on Aging and Education Abroad program coordinators (1 interview total); to be scheduled after completed applications are received.
   - Graduate Students: Interviews may be required at the discretion of the faculty director.

5) Application Fee: All students pay $50 via credit card or will be billed to their student account. Payment instructions can be found in the online application.

Application Process: You will not be considered applied until ALL sections of the application are completed. DO NOT leave fields blank in the application form as all information fields in the form are necessary and relevant. A decision on your application will not be issued until all of the above components are received and your interview is completed (if interviewed). Please note that instructor approval is required and the final decision for acceptance will be made by the instructor AFTER you have completed your personal interview with an application committee in the Office of International Affairs.

Questions about the application process? Please feel free to call the PSU Office of International Affairs/Education Abroad Office, 503-725-5346.