**Major/Minor:** Global Studies, Minors: French and Spanish.  
**Country:** Chile  
**Term & Year Abroad:** Spring 2009  
**Program:** Immersion, Universidad de Chile

### Instructors

- **What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?** Similar, though less rigid with scheduling.

- **Could you call them by their first names?** No, it was not customary (equal to UCSB).

- **Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?** No, I don’t think it was. In fact, many of my classes there were very small (less than 15 students), so it was possible to develop a closer and less formal relationship with the professors.

- **Were they available for help during office hours?** Well, the professors don’t really have office hours in Chile, unless they specifically state that they do. Mine were available when I needed them, after class, or via email and/or individual appointments. Something to note about Chilean professors is that many of them are professionals who are involved with the universities part-time—that was a neat difference about them as compared to UCSB profs.

### Courses

- **Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?** I think that they were about the same. Maybe they would have been easier if they would have been in English, but since they were in Spanish, it created an extra challenge, which put them on the same difficulty level as UCSB courses. The professors were also understanding of the fact that we were foreign students, whose first language was not Spanish, and took that into consideration for grading.

- **Was the grading system similar to UCSB?** No, in Chile they use a scale from 1 to 7, but we had an easy conversion chart.

- **How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?** Overall, there was more group work than at UCSB. For example, in one of my classes, the 4 short essays we had could be done in groups (which was good because it allowed us to split up the reading). Otherwise I had about the same number of assignments as I usually have here in Santa Barbara; a few big papers and a final. One of my classes had weekly quizzes, but they were short—1 paragraph answer to one question about the course material. The finals were worth a little more than they usually are in my classes at UCSB (about 30-40% of your grade). The biggest difference was that in-class tests (if we had them) were either written or oral, not multiple choice.

- **Did you have oral and/or written exams?** Yes (see above answer).

- **What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?** The UC study center (our home base of sorts in Santiago) was really helpful with any logistical questions and problems. The professors were also helpful if you were seeking their advice (via email, talking to them before and after class, etc.). However, at the beginning of the semester, signing up for classes at la Universidad de Chile can be challenging—you just have to keep asking questions and you should be persistent.
- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad? Yes, in terms of social situations. It was important to connect with the professors more than I usually do at UCSB because many of them are used to having exchange students, and they’ll give you extra help once they know you’re engaged in the course.

- Was classroom participation expected? Yes, I think so. However, that’s how it is at UCSB too.

- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses? My classes (which I took for my major) were small because I was taking “electives” at the Universidad de Chile. Most exchange students in my position took these classes that were electives for the local students—they’re more fun, they’re small, and there isn’t the pressure of getting the best grades and doing lots of work like there can be in their core classes.

- Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long? Yes, there was a set class schedule. For students at two of the other campuses, their classes were often cancelled or rescheduled due to student protests, but mine, at el Instituto de Asuntos Públicos, were pretty regular, save a few exceptions for protests and a few days when the professors were sick.

- What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class? Students participate in class, and have debates amongst each other and even with the professor. However, the classes I took were set up lecture style, and except for a few names and dates written on the black board, there were no visual aids. Punctuality varied by professor. I had one professor who always started on time, to the minute. However, most professors were more laid back about punctuality, even arriving late themselves sometimes. About 15 min late was acceptable.

Language
- In which languages were the courses offered? Spanish.
- What language did you take your courses in? Spanish.
- If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc. After the first few classes, I felt comfortable enough with the language to follow the professors’ lectures. I took a lot of notes, and talked to my classmates outside of class about the material. Some of my Chilean classmates helped me a lot with understanding the class content—I even made good friends with a few of them as a result of these interactions.

Host University
- How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building? I think that there were about 18,000 students at la Universidad de Chile, which is the same number of undergrads that we have at UCSB. However, the set-up is really different. Each college (there are about 5 around the city) has its own campus, so the campus feel varies based on where you are. As a global studies major, I took classes at the Instituto de Asuntos Públicos, which was in downtown Santiago, in a business sector. The building actually used to be a
mansion, which was cool. Since I lived downtown for the duration of the regular semester, it was pretty close to where I lived—about a 30 minute walk or about 10-15 minutes away by public transportation.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?** On campus housing does not exist. Almost all of the students live at home with their families, unless they’re not from Santiago, in which case they live in apartments with their friends, or possibly with relatives. One thing to note about this is that they still have parties and still go out and get back home late; even though Chile is a Catholic country, many parents understand that their kids go out and have a good time (and are permissive of such activities).

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?** It depends on the campus. All of them are in the city, technically. The two campuses where you would most likely have class are in the main part—one is downtown, and the other is in a more suburban area relatively close to downtown (about 40 min on the bus).
  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?** The bus and metro or a combination thereof will get you anywhere you need to go—it’s amazing. It’s called Transantiago; it’s a new system, put in about in about 2007 that has had some kinks, but functions very well now (especially compared to the pitiful public transportation available in So Cal). It costs about 400 Chilean pesos (CLP) per ride (which includes transfers), which is about US$0.75, depending on the conversion rate. I would usually spend about 4000 CLP per week on public transportation.
  - **Could students take cabs -cost?** Yes. Cabs are very affordable in Chile, especially compared to the US. A short ride would cost about 1500 CLP, and a very long one would be about 6000. They’re great for when you first get there and don’t know your way around very well, but once you get a hang of the public transportation system (with buses that run all night), you’ll become more Chilean and use it a lot.
  - **How long would it take to get to the city center?** N/a

- Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join? Not really. La Catolica offers more clubs, but if you’re at La Chile, like I was, your only options are sports teams.

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?** No, there is not a bookstore, and (unfortunately?) there aren’t any university clothes either. One word: photocopies. All of your reading material will be in the form of photocopies. A lot of times, the professor will leave a reader at the campus’s “fotocopiadora,” or will give you a list of books to copy from your major’s library (every major has its own library).

- **Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?** Yes, there are computer labs, and there is wi-fi on some parts of the campus. You should take your laptop to Chile, but if you’re used to taking it to class, you might change your routine there, as laptops aren’t as common (except for the new mini ones).

- **What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)** It depends on the campus. El Instituto de Asuntos Públicos has office buildings and little eateries for lunch near it, and if you venture a little further away (maybe 5 blocks), you’ll be right in the heart of downtown (bustling; lots of historic monuments and sites). The Juan Gómez Millas campus is in a more suburban neighborhood, but it’s also a big campus, so it’s self-contained. There is a huge supermarket about a block away from it, and otherwise, mostly just houses.
Housing
- What types of accommodations are available to UC students? You can either live with a host family or find an apartment.

- How close are they to campus? It depends where you decide to live. You’ll probably decide to live in a fairly central area (Ñuñoa, Providencia, or Santiago Centro).

- How did you find your housing? I got advice from the study center staff, and I looked on compartodepto.cl to find roommates. I went and looked at places in different neighborhoods, usually with a friend in tow—a few times with a Chilean friend (to help me scope out good neighborhoods and people).

- Where did you live and with whom? Once I moved out of my required 1 month homestay, I lived downtown (Santiago Centro), right by the metro stop called Universidad Católica, in an apartment building that’s part of a group of apartment buildings called las Torres San Borja. I would recommend the area and the adjacent little sub-neighborhoods (Lastarria and Bellas Artes). Some people will tell you that it’s dangerous to live downtown. I disagree. There are always people around, and you live right near a huge boulevard called Alameda where there are lots of busses (which means easy transportation anywhere). Plus, lots of students live in this area.

- If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate? It was a bit of a challenge because I wasn’t sure where I wanted to live—what neighborhood—and I wasn’t very well acquainted with the city when I had to start looking. However, if you follow my advice from the above 2 questions, you should be fine.

- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms? You’ll be able to find a nicer place than where you live in I.V., but you might also find something comparable to I.V. that you like too (that’s sort of what I had). The good thing is that you’ll be able to find a furnished place.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars? Three words: So. Much. Cheaper. My rent was about US$215/month for a furnished apartment where I had my own room, including all utility, internet and landline phone bills. You can definitely pay about $300/month or less for your own room in a pretty nice college-style apartment.

- How/who did you pay for housing? I paid one of my roommates (the Chilean one). He was on the lease.

Food
- What was the food like? Basically, the food is not that exciting in Chile, but it’s not bad either. Everything is homemade-style, and is sort of bland; they love salt and fear anything spicy. Empanadas and “completos” (hot dogs with lots of toppings) are the most common prepared foods that you’ll find. You’ll also find a lot of pollo asado (grilled chicken) and papas fritas (french fries), which are delicious. Also, Chile has the best fruits and vegetables I have ever eaten in my life! During summer, especially when you’re in vacation spots, you’ll see a lot of “jugo natural” (natural juice), which was probably my favorite thing to eat in Chile.
- **Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?** When I was living on my own, I probably cooked most of my meals at home. However, for lunch, I often ate at school—the campuses have good cafeterias with homemade food at great prices.

- **How much was an average meal?** You could have a full-sized lunch combination for 1300-2400 CLP (about $2.25 to $5max). That was pretty awesome.

- **What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?** Lunch was around 1:30 pm, and dinner was around 9 pm. “Once” (tea time, which many families substitute for dinner) was around 6-7:30pm.

- **Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?** I don’t think it would be too difficult, especially at school. The Universidad de Chile has a lot of hippies who are vegetarians (this is not by any means a representation of Chile as a whole—most people are meat eaters).

**Travel/Safety**

- **If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?** It was very easy, close and accessible. See “What type of public transportation could you take – cost?”

- **Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?** Yes, I felt safe in Santiago, although not as safe as I feel in Isla Vista and Santa Barbara. It’s a big city, so just like in any big city, you have to be cautious. Walking alone at night is not recommended, but you can always take a cab (if you’re in a relatively busy area, cabs are abundant).

- **Describe the public transportation in your host country?** In Santiago, the public transportation is great, as mentioned above. Also, getting around the country in Greyhound-style busses is easy and reasonably priced. However, in cities outside Santiago, the public transportation is disorganized, though it is available and many locals rely on it.

- **Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?** Travelling to other countries was pretty easy. I went to Argentina and the visa process just happened when I took the plane at the airport (no prior plans were necessary). However, if you want to go to Brazil, you’ll have to go through some Chilean bureaucracy to get a visa (which costs over US$100)

**Host City/Country**

- **What was the weather like?** The weather in Santiago was about 10 degrees warmer and cooler than Santa Barbara during all seasons. It’s also pretty dry climate. The winter is COLD for all of us from Southern California.

- **Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?** Things like cars, highways, streets, etc., are not quite as big as they are in the US, but not small like they are in many European countries. I think that my mom described it well when she said that it’s like New York City 25 years ago.

- **What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?** I loved going to the Cerro Santa Lucia and the Cerro San Cristobal, which are hills that are parks right in the
center of the city. I also liked la Vega, which is a huge market for fruit, vegetables, meat, etc. Just walking around downtown, where there are lots of monuments was neat too. Plus, exploring the city’s various neighborhoods was interesting and fun. I would recommend checking out the Circuito Cultural in Quinta Normal. Also, if you’re there during Spring semester, you should not miss out on the Día del Patrimonio Cultural—you get to see and visit (via guided tours) tons government buildings for free!

- **How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?** The city is open and friendly to tourism but it isn’t a touristy city. Chile is a country very centered on its capital, so all of its major national government buildings (except Congress which is in Valparaiso) are there. That also means that most of the international businesses and people live in Santiago too.

**Culture**

- **Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.**
  - **Time & punctuality** In general, people are not punctual. Expect a 15-45 minute late window, so specify if you’re planning to arrive on the dot.
  - **Eye contact & staring** Expect people to stare at you if you don’t look Hispanic. Blonde, fair, light-eyed women: expect to be stared at, but don’t take it personally—you’re just getting that sort of attention because you don’t look like most Chileans.
  - **Relationships** I cannot even begin to answer this question. Relationships are strange there. Public displays of affection are everywhere. Women are expected to reject men’s advances for a while, i.e. play hard to get. Casual hookups are sort of frowned upon, and are not as easy and simple as they can be here.
  - **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?** No, it’s not really more formal. When I was there, the styles were very 1980’s. The only thing I would suggest is to NOT wear your pajamas to school.
  - **Alcohol consumption** Students party there like here. However, their parties are like marathons rather than sprints (in length), and getting drunk is not usually the main focus. Also, there’s no beer pong.
  - **What culture shock did you go through?** Almost all the young people live with their parents. That was weird for me because I was used to school being the place where everyone was away from home.
  - **Other?** Almost every adult you’ll meet smokes cigarettes there. Clubs and bars are filled with smoke. However, marijuana is not very common (except by many hippie students at the Universidad de Chile, Juan Gómez Millas campus).

**Banking**

- **Were credit cards widely accepted?** Yes, but it was easier to just use cash everywhere. I would just go to the ATM about once every two weeks and keep the extra money in my room.

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?** No. It didn’t seem like it was very possible for foreigners.

- **If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM? Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?** Yes, it was easy to get money from the ATM. All the banks were fine. Most of the ATMs didn’t really have fees for the majority of the time that I was there, but just as I was leaving they added a fee (about US$5). Your bank in the U.S. is the one that will charge you a lot, so talk to them before you leave.
- **Were there ATMs on campus?** At La Chile, I don’t think that there were, but ATMs were everywhere, so if you couldn’t find one on campus, there was probably one close by.