Instructors

- **What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?**
  The instructors in Spain in terms of academic caliber weren’t quite on par with those of the University of California. Nonetheless, all of my professors were very qualified and gave interesting lectures. Furthermore, all of my professors were very sympathetic to the fact that Spanish was my second language.

- **Could you call them by their first names?**
  Not only could I call the professors by their first names, it was the norm. All of the Spanish students referred to their professors on the first name basis. However, it is best when talking to your professors to use the usted form to show respect and formality.

- **Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?**
  No, the student-instructor relationship was much less formal than at UCSB. For example it is not uncommon to talk about course material over a beer or tapas with your professor. At the end of the quarter in my Anthropology of Ethnicity class, the professor bought a round of tapas for all of the students. All of my professors were very approachable and very friendly.

- **Were they available for help during office hours?**
  Yes, all of the professors are required to hold office hours just like at the University of California. The office hours are known as tutorías and their offices are despachos, not oficinas. Not only are the professors available during their tutorías, they are often also available by appointment. I would highly recommend going to these office hours because if the professor understands that Spanish is not your native language and if you demonstrate interest in the material, he or she will likely grade you more laxly.

Courses

- **Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?**
  The courses in humanities and social sciences, I found to be much easier than the courses offered at UCSB. However, it is possible that I found them easier because I intentionally chose classes with professors who other students had labeled as lenient and accommodating to foreigners. Conversely, a lot of the sciences classes seem to be very difficult and the professors less lenient than those who teach in the social sciences.

- **Was the grading system similar to UCSB?**
  The grading system is similar to UCSB, however the Spanish universities use a numerical system instead of an alphabetical one. The system is on a scale from one to ten; for example an A is equivalent to a Spanish grade around 8.5 to 10.

- **How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?**
  A lot of the classes lacked assignments and papers with the grade almost entirely based on a final. However, I also had classes that had grades based on papers, presentations, and participation. The structure varies based on the professor and the course, but one major characteristic difference of structure was that there were no midterms.
- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
All of my exams were either written blue book-like exams or final papers.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
I made a point to talk to my professors in their office hours and to ask for help from other students. In Spanish culture it is actually common to share notes, so make sure to ask your peers for help.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
I felt that I needed to be more independent and take more initiative in an overall broad sense, but not academically. In other words, I felt that the academic system was somewhat easier than that of the University of California and because of that, my normal study habits were sufficient for doing well in my classes.

- Was classroom participation expected?
Yes, the lectures in Spanish universities often entail discussions among students and professors. This is possible because the class size, both in terms of physical space and number of students, is much smaller than that of the UC.

- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
One of the major differences between the host university and UCSB’s courses was the lack of section in any of my classes. Another difference is that students and professors normally get into discussions and arguments on a regular basis regarding material as opposed to the professor just lecturing.

- Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?
The majority of my classes were on Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday for about ninety minutes each day.

- What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?
One could drink, but not eat in class and punctuality was important only in the sense of being respectful. In one of my classes there was a group of students who were consistently twenty minutes late, and the professor never addressed the issue.

Language
- In which languages were the courses offered?
  Almost all of the courses were only taught in Spanish.

- What language did you take your courses in?
I took all of my classes in Spanish. However, there were some aspects of a few courses that could be done in English. For example, one of my courses I could do summaries on articles written in English, and in another course I wrote the final paper in English because we were working with another university in Belgium.

- If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.
Taking classes entirely in Spanish was much easier than I had originally anticipated. The majority of my professors were very understanding of the plight of foreigners in their classes. Often times my professors made sure that I understood their lectures and also checked to see if they were speaking too quickly. Taking classes entirely in Spanish also drastically approved my vocabulary and language acquisition.
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?
The University of Granada, is smaller than UCSB, but the fundamental differences is in the layout of the University. Instead of having one single campus, the University is spread throughout the city in different faculties about the size of large highschools. For example one of the faculties is for sociology and business while another, (in a different location in the city), specialized in business and economics.

- Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?
Almost all of the students live in their own apartments off campus. However, there is a small percentage of students who live in the dorms.

- If not located in the city center,
  o How far or close is it to the city?
    Not all of the faculties are in the center, but all of them are definitely walking distance to the downtown area.

  o What type of public transportation could you take – cost?
    There is a really good public bus system (that goes to most places including the faculties), in Granada that costs about 1.10 euro per trip. But if you buy a rechargeable bus card it is about half that price.

  o Could students take cabs -cost?
    Students tend to take cabs infrequently because you can walk or take the bus almost anywhere in Granada and the cabs are pretty expensive.

  o How long would it take to get to the city center?
    Distance to the center depends on which faculty in the University you’re coming from. While some faculties are about a twenty-minute walk away, other faculties are actually located in the city center.

- Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?
Yes, there are clubs on campus that UC students can join. For example one of my friends joined a swim club/team.

- Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?
No, each faculty has its respective library, but there is no bookstore comparable to that on UC campuses. Students bought their books at specific bookstores throughout the city.

- Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?
Yes the faculties have both computer labs and wireless.

- What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)
The type of establishments that surround the neighborhood again depend on which faculty one goes to. However, the majority of faculties are close to restaurants, tapas bars, and miscellaneous stores.

Housing
- What types of accommodations are available to UC students?
UC students can stay in a homestay, in university owned housing, or in their own apartments. However almost all of the students chose their own off campus housing.

- How close are they to campus?
All of the housing was either walking distance or a bus ride away from the faculties spread throughout the city.

- How did you find your housing?
I personally found my housing by looking online and at advertisements posted throughout the city advertising people looking for roommates. I would then contact the person and look at the apartment. After finding both an apartment and roommates who seemed ideal, I paid a downpayment and moved in.

- Where did you live and with whom?
I lived in an apartment in the plaza de toros (the bullfighting ring), which also has a large student population and a lot of tapas bars.

- If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?
It wasn’t difficult at all to find an apartment or roommates especially if you’re not picky.

- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?
The rooms were both nicer and cheaper than what you would get in IV for the same price. My room and apartment was much larger and much cheaper than anything in Isla Vista.

- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?
The cost of living was much cheaper than IV. A typical apartment in Granada only costs around $300-400 per month and is not shared.

- How/who did you pay for housing?
I never signed any sort of contract or lease because my roommates had already taken care of everything, so I paid my roommate directly each month.

Food
- What was the food like?
Spanish cuisine is heavy on meat (especially pork) and olive oil. Many of the people in my program had problems adjusting to the large amount of oil used in dishes like vegetables.

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
I ate the majority of my meals at home, tapas bars, or in the school cafeteria. Tapas bars are very common in Granada and are a very cheap way to eat a meal. Granada is the last city in Spain to practice free tapas, so every drink (which costs less than two euros), comes with a free tapa.

- How much was an average meal?
The average lunch or dinner of tapas only cost 4-6 Euros. However, if one was to order a set menu (el menu del día) with three courses cost about 6-10 Euros.

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
Most Spaniards eat lunch around 2-3 and dinner from 8-11.
Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
Yes, it would be slightly difficult for vegetarians to find meals out.

Travel/Safety
If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?

Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
Yes, I always felt safe in Granada, but there are certain areas of the city that one would want to avoid late at night because they are known as less safe. For example the albaicin is known as a slightly more dangerous area than the downtown area. Nonetheless, I don’t think that anyone had a problem with safety all year in Granada.

Describe the public transportation in your host country?
Spain has a very good bus system (compared to greyhound) that one can take all over the country. For example, I took the bus up to the mountains to go snowboarding and also to Madrid to go to the airport. Many students often take these Alsa buses to local beaches.

Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
No, it was relatively easy to travel to neighboring countries. I took a long bus ride to Portugal and a flight to Paris during my year abroad in Spain.

Host City/Country
What was the weather like?
The weather varied greatly in Granada. Having lived in California all of my life, I was not accustomed to living somewhere with actual seasons; it was sweltering hot during the summer and even snowed several times during the winter.

Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?
Granada is a beautiful city with a lot of history and a huge Arab influence. It is home to the beautiful Muslim palace the Alhambra, where Cristopher Columbus asked Isabel and Ferdinand for permission to go to the new world. The city is also close to the Sierra Nevadas where one can go skiing and snowboarding. Lastly because of the huge student population, there is a plethora of bars and clubs and vibrant nightlife.

What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?
I saw flamenco shows, took several tours of the Alhambra, ate an unprecedented amount of tapas, and even went snowboarding in the Sierra Nevadas.

How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
Granada is a very international city with a large international student population and a large amount of tourism. The Alhambra is the number one most visited monument in all of Spain, and that alone brings a lot of tourists to the city. However, Granada maintains a very unique Andalucian culture in the face of the large amount of tourists who flock there.

Culture
Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
**Time & punctuality**
It seems that punctuality is much less important in Spain than in the US. In fact it was common to be about 30 minutes late to any occasion. More broadly speaking, the pace of life was much slower and much more relaxed in Spain compared to the US.

**Eye contact & staring**
Women are often stared at by men and are even called. Other than that, making eye contact is very similar to US culture.

**Relationships**

**More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
People, especially women tend to dress more nicely than the average comparably aged American. For example girls often wore high heels just to class.

**Alcohol consumption**
Alcohol consumption is a normal aspect of Spanish culture. Beer and wine are often served with meals in Spanish university cafeterias and it is common to drink while eating tapas. Although Spaniards love to go out and drink, the pace of drinking is much slower than the pace that in the US. Instead of trying to get drunk, Spaniards try to maintain a buzz for a long duration of a much longer evening (because it is not uncommon to stay at a club until 7am).

**What culture shock did you go through?**
It took a while to get accustomed to siesta. Essentially everything but the large department stores are closed between 2 and 5pm.

**Other?**
Spaniards touch each other much more than Americans. It is not uncommon for a Spaniard, (even someone you don’t even know) to touch you multiple times while talking to you. Also when being introduced for the first time, (if it is a male and female being introduced), it is expected to give a kiss on each cheek.

**Banking**
- **Were credit cards widely accepted?**
No, credit cards were only accepted in large department stores, grocery stores, and pharmacies. Places like the post office, tapas bars, fast food, and most other places do not accept credit cards.

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?**
No, my bank charged such a minimal fee that it wasn’t necessary.

- **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?**

- **Were there ATMs on campus?**
Yes, there were ATMs on campus and all over the city.