Program Overview and Background

This study abroad program to Colombia will be an educational experience and trip of a lifetime. The purpose of this program is to develop in students an understanding of the rich and complex politics, culture and history of the peoples of Colombia as that nation moves into a new era of peace and prosperity. Students who successfully complete this study abroad program will develop an appreciation for the complexities of building peace, bringing development and confronting the legacies of decades of conflict. Students will travel and experience the great diversity of Colombia, from the urban and political centers of Bogota and Medellin, to the indigenous communities living in the highlands near the Andes mountains and in the Amazon river port of Leticia. Students will learn from lectures by UNT faculty and faculty at partner universities in Bogota and Medellin, but also from visiting these diverse communities and seeing their cultural practices up close. These locations were chosen to provide students with a more thorough understanding of the topography of Colombia and the different social, political and economic challenges facing communities in these very different regions.

After many years of conflict and notoriety Colombia is poised to become one of the economic powerhouses of Latin America. It is a country rich in natural resources, cultural diversity, and topography with a long history of democratic government. Former President Santos won the Nobel Peace prize for his working in negotiating with the FARC guerillas to put an end to conflict and confront the troubled history of violence in Colombia. To understand how Colombians are seeking to move forward we will study three interrelated questions. First, what are the requirements and the challenges of building peace in Colombia? Students will learn from US and Colombian faculty, international experts, government officials, and through interactions with Colombians throughout the country. Students will learn how the peace agreement seeks to address the most compelling issues of the day including, the truth about the past, justice for wrongdoers, and providing opportunities for those sidelined from politics. We will study the peace agreement, the special institutions it creates for providing truth and justice, and what role the United States and other international actors have played in these efforts.

Second, students will explore how the interests of Colombia’s diverse peoples can best be advanced in the new era of peace. We will visit with leaders and people both in government and in the urban centers, but especially in the indigenous communities to learn about their interests and what people expect from the government. Because the causes of past conflicts were often rooted in a lack of development and political opportunity for many ordinary Colombians, sustaining the
peace will require bringing greater prosperity and opportunity to people. We will learn about the dilemmas in providing economic development for these different groups while at the same time protecting the natural environment, which is home to so many of the riches of Colombia.

Third, students will develop an understanding for the challenges involved in reconciling the diverse groups of Colombia. The conflict in Colombia led to tragic loss of life, displacement, discrimination, and social and political upheaval. Knitting together a society of peoples who experienced violence as victims and as villains; those who are politically disenfranchised and those who are the elite; those in the cities and those in the countryside will require years of concentrated effort. In our short time in Colombia we will provide students with a broad introduction to these challenges of reconciliation after violence through visits with affected communities, lectures and trips to the museums of memory in Bogota and Medellin.

Upon successful completion of this study abroad course students will:

1) acquire a solid foundation and background of Colombian politics, history and society to help understand the present;

2) develop an awareness of the contemporary challenges facing Colombia in building peace and prosperity, especially in such a socially, economically and culturally diverse nation;

3) develop the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to assess, analyze and reach conclusions regarding the challenges of building peace and security, and identify the key factors facilitating and hindering the provision of truth and justice to address the violence of the past;

4) develop the necessary knowledge and skills to assess, analyze and reach conclusions regarding the role of economic development and its impact on the environment on contemporary Colombian society, especially the indigenous populations.

5) develop the necessary knowledge and skills to assess, analyze and reach conclusions regarding the prospects for reconciliation among the peoples of Colombia who have experienced violence for many years and in all of its complexities; and

6) produce a research paper on a topic related to peace, development and people and communicate their findings to a general audience

Program Schedule

Selection Process

Students should be majoring in one of the social science disciplines of political science (including international studies), sociology, anthropology, economics, geography, or psychology; have at least a 2.5 gpa; and be recommended for this program by a professor or supervisor who can attest to the student’s commitment and maturity. Decisions will be made by the faculty supervisors.

Pre Trip Meetings and Requirements

There will be 10 hours of educational presentations prior to departure. The instructor and other faculty in the Department of Political Science will meet five times with the students to
provide background information on 1) Colombian history and political development; 2) the current peace; 3) the indigenous communities of Colombia; 4) Health, safety and other practical issues involved in traveling to Colombia and 5) a final farewell party prior to departure to go over any final issues and better acquaint the students with one another. While in Colombia, students will spend 6-8 hours per day engaged in one or more of the following learning activities: 1) classroom lecture by UNT and Colombian instructors; 2) visits to indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities; and 3) visits to museums and other important historical and cultural sites.

Students are required to have or arrange the following in order to travel on this study abroad program: 1) valid US passport; 2) vaccinations recommended by the US Centers for Disease Control including yellow fever, Hepatitis A and tetanus/diphtheria; and 3) a prescription for an anti-malarial prophylactic, such as Mefluquine. Students should be in good physical condition as most of the places we will be visiting will be above 8000 feet and are also hilly. There will be 2-3 miles of walking (to and from sites) so students should be prepared for this.

Students who are not US citizens will need to be sure to obtain the necessary visa to visit Colombia. The faculty supervisors will also provide information on the required clothing and necessary supplies as we will be traveling in many diverse, climate zones.

**Estimated Itinerary**

June 5: Departure from DFW to Bogota, Colombia  
June 6: Day in Bogota to relax, acclimatize and become familiar with the city  
June 7: Visits to Colombian museums and landmarks  
June 8: Visits to government and IGO offices  
June 9: Visits to government and IGO offices  
June 10: Lectures on Colombian politics and peace process  
June 11: Visits to Colombian museums and landmarks  
June 12: Lectures on Colombian politics and peace process  
June 13: Departure to Sibundoy via Pasto  
June 14: Introduction to the indigenous communities of the Andean highlands  
June 15: Visits with the indigenous communities of the Andean highlands  
June 16: Visits with the indigenous communities of the Andean highlands  
June 17: Departure to Medellin via Pasto  
June 18: Visits to Museum of Memory and other key historical and political sites  
June 19: Lectures on Colombian politics and peace process  
June 20: Lectures on Colombian politics and peace process  
June 21: Visits to key historical and political sites  
June 22: Visits to key historical and political sites  
June 23: Departure to Leticia via Bogota  
June 24: Introduction to the indigenous communities of the Amazon river basin  
June 25: Visits with the indigenous communities of the Amazon river basin  
June 26: Visits with the indigenous communities of the Amazon river basin  
June 27: Final visits, lectures and farewell dinner  
June 28: Departure to USA via Bogota
The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class.

For study abroad courses, students requesting accommodations should notify their faculty leader as early as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Note that while the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not extend beyond US borders, and international accessibility requirements vary broadly from US standards, UNT study abroad programs will endeavor to provide accommodations wherever practicable.

Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at http://disability.unt.edu/. You may also contact ODA by phone at 940.565.4323.