

**McGill University**  
**PANAMA FIELD STUDY SEMESTER**  
**PROGRAM'S DESCRIPTION**

Tentative schedule

<b>Courses</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Prof.</b>
Arrival in Panama	7 January	
Orientation /Security	10 January	L. Mancilla
Intro BIOL 553 AM	11 January	C. Potvin/ H. Barrios
Intro ENV 451 PM	11 January	A. Espino/ H. Barrios
Internship cocktail 17:00-19:00	11 January	L. Mancilla
ENV 451 <i>week 1</i>	14-18 January	A. Espino/ H. Barrios
BIOL 553 Terrestrial part	21-30 January	C. Potvin/ H. Barrios
<i>JMJ</i>	<i>22-27 January</i>	
ENV 451 <i>week 2</i>	31 January-8 February	A. Espino/ H. Barrios
HIST 510	11-22 February	D. Studnicki-Gizbert C
HIST 510 (Urban module)	25-27 February	A. Espino
<b>Carnival week</b>	<b>1-6 March</b>	
ENV 451 <i>week 3</i>	11-15 March	A. Espino/ H. Barrios
GEOG 404	18 -29 March	T. Meredith
BIO 553 Marine part	1 - 4 April	C. Potvin/H. Guzman
ENV 451	8 - 25 April	A. Espino/ H. Barrios
<b>Easter holiday</b>	<b>18-20 April</b>	
Internship Symposium	23 April	A. Espino/ H. Barrios
Graduation dinner	24 April	
Out of the houses	26 April	

Communication and living information

**Communication**

Long distance phone calls can be made from/to the building where you will live in Clayton, Panamá providing you charge them to a calling card (for approximately 5 cents a minute).

**Our mailing address is:**

**Panama Field Study Semester**  
**Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute**  
**Unit 0948**

**Tupper Research Center**  
**APO AA 34002 0948**  
**U.S.A.**  
**Fax: 507-212-8148**

### **Health related issue**

Dehydration is a potential problem in Panama. Given the heat, you need to drink more than in Montreal. We recommend 3 litres of liquids containing electrolytes per day. Water is not enough to ward away dehydration. You can prepare your own electrolite solution by adding a pinch of salt to a sweet and acidic juice (orange juice, lemonade etc) or use sports drinks such as Gatorade. In case of dehydration, rehydration salts (eg. Gastrolite) are very useful. To avoid dehydration and heat stroke, light long sleeved clothes and head cover are indispensable. If you have a fever or diarrhoea, you must increase your intake of such solutions. If you develop a fever and diarrhoea, you should consult a physician.

During the PFSS we will bring you to a few locations where tap water is not drinkable. Please follow precautionary steps to avoid digestive problems (e.g. be cautious of street meat, make sure of the water quality)

Furthermore, insects are usually much less bothersome than when camping in North America, but potentially more dangerous. If we travel to places where there is a risk of malaria, you will be given medication before departure and during your entire stay. In the forest, wear long pants, cover your arms, and use liberal amounts of DEET or sulphur, especially around your ankles. This will prevent biting by insects that can transmit diseases. Chiggers are especially annoying and you will be instructed on how to avoid them.

### **Useful web sites**

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/catmat-ccmtmv/index-eng.php> (Committee to Advise on Tropical Medicine and Travel)

<http://www.stri.org/> (Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute)

### **Personal effects list**

#### **Required equipment**

1. A large duffle bag or backpack to carry everything (hiking packs are the most versatile);
2. A pair of bed sheets;
3. Bath towels & face cloth;
4. Day pack (small packsack that will serve as your carry on bag and to lug your daily needs);
5. Small toilet kit;

6. A lock for the lockers at your disposal in the houses;
7. Personal first aid kit;
8. Contraceptive supplies;
9. Pocket knife;
10. Sturdy flashlight or headlamp;
11. Sunscreen (30 SPF and greater);
12. One notebook to hold a journal and for note taking, pens and pencils, address book (further notebooks and office material can easily be purchased in Panama as necessity arises);
- 13. 2 XEROX COPIES OF YOUR PASSPORT AND PLANE TICKET;**
- 14. TWO PICTURES FOR I.D. IN PANAMA;**
15. A second bank card and credit card;
16. A USB key (memory stick).

#### **Recommended**

1. Binoculars;
2. Camera;
3. A sleeping bag liner (cotton or silk sleeping bag that can be brought everywhere);
4. Your laptop with a computer lock.

#### **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- We suggest that you do NOT bring unnecessary valuable possessions along with you; they will only be a source of stress.
- DO NOT OVERPACK! Leave empty space to bring back souvenirs.
- If you are short a few clothes, you will enjoy buying some in Panama!
- Be aware of airline luggage limitations, both in size and weight. Contact the airline directly to inquire.

#### **First Aid kit**

Most medicine can be purchased in Panama. However if you want to bring some with you here is a list of recommended medication:

1. Band-aids;
2. Steri-Strips;
3. Elastic bandage;
4. Antibiotic ointment (i.e., Polysporin, etc.);
5. Blister treatments (eg. moleskin or second skin);
6. Burn cream (some type of aloe vera);
7. Spare prescription glasses, if required (or a copy of the prescription);
8. Safety pins;
9. Scissors;
10. Tweezers;
11. Needle and thread;
12. Rehydration salts (eg. Gastrolite);

13. Immodium;
14. Antihistamine (eg. Benadryl);
15. Fansidar or other preventative malaria drug, depending on where you may travel;
16. Calamine with antihistamine and/or cortisone cream;
17. **Prescription medicines**, if regularly required.

### **Carry-on luggage and day pack**

Important personal possessions and necessities should be in your day-pack which can be carried on a plane and wherever you are in Panamá. We recommend that you NEVER carry large sums of money or wear gold or silver jewellery. Money can be easily obtained with a debit card (interact or plus). The daypack should include the following:

1. The day-pack (small backpack);
2. Toilet paper;
3. Camera and binoculars;
4. Water bottles (1 litre or more);
5. STRI ID card;
6. Xerox copy of your passport;
7. Sunglasses;
8. Sun screen & lip balm (SPF 30);
9. Insect repellent (30% DEET);
10. Sun hat;
11. Sleeping bag liner for overnight trips.

### **Recommended clothing**

**In Panama the dress code is much more formal than in Canada.** We recommend that you pay special attention to this issue when we receive guest speakers and on internship days.

You should bring one formal ensemble (dress pants and shoes, shirt and tie for men; dress, skirt or dress pants with shirt for women) as you will have a cocktail with the internship representatives and possibly other social events before you can go shopping.

Long sleeved light clothes will keep the sun and bugs off your skin, while light colors will keep you cool. Plan your wardrobe for great heat (the hottest Montreal summer day, every day!):

1. 10 pairs of socks: 3 thick (wool), 7 light (cotton);
2. 10 pairs of underwear;
3. Running shoes or light hiking boots - suitably broken in (hiking boots are ideal as they will keep your feet dry and keep leeches, ticks and other critters away from your feet);
4. Sandals;
5. 2 walking shorts for the beach (not recommended in small villages or rural areas);
6. Swimsuit;

7. 5 T-shirts or sport shirts (tank tops not recommended in small villages or rural areas);
8. 3 long-sleeved shirts (very light cotton);
9. 1 polar fleece or wool sweater (yes, there are a few rare cold places in Panama!);
10. Raincoat (coated nylon or Gore-Tex type, that can double as a shell over you fleece or wool sweater);
11. 3 pairs of loose-fitting long pants;
12. Bandanna or large handkerchief;
13. 1 business casual style outfit (for cocktail night, final presentations, etc.)

You will be better suited to know what you need once on location and you will want to buy clothes anyway; they are very cheap, so pack light!

### Program Safety

Courses offered will be undertaken in a number of exciting and interesting, but potentially hazardous, environments. All participants are expected to behave in a mature and prudent manner when it comes to personal or group safety. In the field, you should follow the instructions of faculty and guides/rangers explicitly! In the preliminary meetings, we established guidelines of appropriate behaviour. These guidelines must be obeyed for your safety and for the safety of others. Please note that the Panama Field Study Semester takes place between January 9<sup>th</sup> and April 28<sup>th</sup> – before and after these dates, if you plan to be in Panama it would be on your own. Here are a few specific issues that we want to bring to your attention.

1. If you suffer from any medical conditions please note it on the Medical Form and inform Dr. Catherine Potvin immediately so that appropriate measures can be taken.
2. Please note that while you are in Panama you should carry your STRI I.D. at all times as well as carry a copy of your passport and tourist card.
3. Note that in Panama “DRUG” possession or use is a serious offence and punishment is imprisonment. We therefore expect you to follow the Panamanian laws to avoid any problems of this nature.

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Read this statement carefully, print your name and sign the form.

*I have read the description of the Panama Field Study and the present document on the Panama Field Study Semester and I understand and accept that the program involves at times physically and mentally strenuous activities in a remote area far removed from hospitals.*

*I am aware that four mandatory preparatory sessions will take place during the fall term to explain these risks and discuss appropriate behaviour and I will make every attempt to participate in these sessions.*

*Furthermore, I understand that as a student of McGill, throughout the Field Study Semester, I am subject to the rules, regulations and policies of McGill, including but not limited to those contained in the Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities.*

Applicant's name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print clearly)

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Or via email: ifso.science@mcgill.ca**