

## SAMPLE JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

By engaging in an intentional, critical reflection process, participants can experience deeper emotional and intellectual transformation during short-term study programs. The following questions are designed to help us deconstruct the interpretive frameworks through which we make sense of our travel experiences.

### PRETRAVEL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Who am I? Who are we as “study tourists”? Discuss the value systems, roles, background that are part of you and shape how you view the world.
- 2) Stereotypes and Assumptions: Set a timer for 7 minutes and brainstorm a list of all the stereotypes and assumptions you have about how you think (country of travel) and its people will be. Write continually, letting any idea come out, even if it’s not 100% true for you. Once you’ve done that, read over your list and write a brief narrative of reflection on your list. Did anything you wrote surprise you? Why do you think you wrote that down? What does it say about your assumptions, generalizations and preconceived notions of what Spain will be like? Do you see any stereotypes or prejudices emerging? How do you feel about those?
- 3) What do we assume we can learn from travel to another place, about that place and about our own? For this journal entry, consider your purpose for joining the study program, and what you hope to get out of it. What is it possible to learn in a 3 week visit to a country? What are you hoping to get out of the program? What are your expectations for the program? How do you think you’ll get those expectations met?

### IN-COUNTRY QUESTIONS:

- 4) By your third day in country, your assignment is to observe and record things that are different for you in as much detail as possible and reflect on yourself and your reactions to those things that are different.

*Observation:* Record at least one “scene”. It could be an incident that you observed on the street, in a shop or in a restaurant. It could be an experience with your family, faculty or other students. It might be something that you participated in or it might be something you observed. It might be something that jarred or disturbed you or it might be something that appeared commonplace or ordinary.

*Analysis and Reflection:* What do you think is going on here? How do you know what is happening? What is familiar to you that helps you understand what is going on? Are your generalizations and assumptions playing a role here? Are they helping you make sense of the unfamiliar? Or are they creating a sense of discomfort? What is unfamiliar that makes it difficult to understand what is going on? What are some alternate interpretations for what is happening that you did not originally consider? Who were you in this scene (a participant? A bystander?) How did you feel? What is it about your identity, background, assumptions that led you to interpret the scene the way you did?

- 5) ) By the end of Week 1: As you move into the end of week one/beginning of week two in Spain, reflect on what you’re learning about the people, culture and language. Consider HOW you’re learning these things, and who are your “informant(s).” In what ways are they introducing you to their culture? What assumption(s) do you think he/she/they made about you? What is their purpose in working with you? How might their perception of you, or their goal in sharing their culture with you, shape what you are learning?

- 6) By the end of Week 2: Describe an assumption you had, and how through critical reflection, you were able to interrogate that assumption. Are your assumptions and stereotypes being challenged? How? Is this process enhancing your travel experience?
- 7) By the end of week 2: Just as you have an individual identity which includes different categories that make up who you are (gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, other categories such as student) the group also has an identity. And, just as your individual identity comes from both who you think you are and who others think you are, the group's identity comes from an emerging sense of who the group thinks it is as well as how others treat the group.

You will go on various activities with entire group. At some point during one of our group activities, pause and observe the group in its social setting.

How do you think the group is acting? How are others outside the group engaging with the group? (Are they ignoring the group? Laughing at the group? Trying to engage with the group?) What is the reaction of group members? How does that make you feel? Do you identify with the group? Do you think you are identified by others with the group? Think about the different speakers and guides--how did they seem to interact with the group? What did they seem to expect of the group? How did different group members interact with them? Did you feel well represented by all members of your group or did you sometimes feel like someone was not representing your group well? What does all of this tell you about the nature of this group, your individual understanding of the meaning of the group and how it should behave, other group members' understanding of the group and how it should behave, and the understanding of those who are meeting with the group?

- 8) By the end of your time in country: As we move into the final few days of the program, consider if your understanding of the world has been transformed by this experience, or did this experience reify and legitimize preconceived notions and stereotypes about the world. Discuss your emotional and intellectual transformation during your program of study. Write any final thoughts about your time in Spain, having lived with a family for some time. Was this family very different than other families (and your own) that you've known? Are roles similar/different? Expectations? How were you treated as compared to other family members? Is it what you'd have expected, or how someone might be treated if he/she were staying in your home? Contrast your experience in staying at a hotel on one of our weekend excursions. Would your experience have been different if we'd just stayed in hotels the entire time, or in the dorms with other travelers? How?

### REFLECTION UPON RETURN TO THE U.S.

#### 9) DUE BY FINAL CLASS MEETING

How do you think you impacted the environment (and its people) you just came back from? As you interact once again in your familiar environment, what do you think has changed? How do you view your home country? Before our final meeting, read over your journal and reflect on the course as a whole. What have you learned? How did you learn this? What did you learn through the content of classes, speakers, field trips and readings? What kinds of things did you learn through the process of reflecting on your experiences? How have you changed as a result of this trip? How have you become more aware of the world? More aware of yourself?