

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (August 28, 2011)

Introduction. The main motivation of this summer field course in Bolivia is to train PhD students in cultural anthropology at universities in the USA in methods of data collection for their dissertation. For the summer course to be useful to students, there has to be an overlap between the methods of data collection that were used in the Tsimane' Amazonian Panel Study (and that are still being used in other studies in the area by the research team) and the methods of data collection (and topics) of interest to the student. As a result, we typically do not accept students interested only in issues of political economy, Amazonian ethnography, cosmology, rituals, or topics in urban settings. Students who seem to have benefitted most from the program are students with several of the following characteristics:

- Training in quantitative methods
- A sharp sense of problem and a reverence for quantitative analysis
- Exposure to courses on research design
- Comfort living in tropical rain forests (e.g., heat, humidity, mosquitoes, monotonous diet) and tolerance for bouts of medical problems common in tropical conditions (e.g., parasites). If you are anxious about what might happen to you in case of a medical emergency in the rain forest, then this is probably not the right training program for you.
- People who see the training program as a dress rehearsal for their dissertations. By this we mean that the student who comes to us with a sharp sense of problem but needs help in developing formal methods to collect data for her/his dissertation will be served best. This means that the students accepted to the program should view the program as a place where they will do preliminary research on their dissertation, but where the methods of data collection will be pilot tested in a real case situation. We say the training is a dress rehearsal and that the research will be preliminary in the sense also that it will take place in a venue that might not be the venue where the student ends up doing her/his dissertation research.
- The ideal student brings with him/her a sharp outcome or sharp puzzle, one or two competing explanations for the puzzle or outcome, but needs help in developing the methods to collect the data to answer the puzzle.
- Lots of energy and curiosity.

The stress of the course is on methods of data collection because if the data has been collected with care and the student has thought carefully about the confounding variables, then the analysis of the data can be done back home. You do not need to be in the Amazon to learn how to analyze data, but you do need to be in the village to learn how to collect data. As a result, students should not expect much formal training in data analysis – not because it is not important (which it is) – but because you can do this once back at home. This said, we leave it up to each student to ask the field school faculty how much analysis to do. For example, students who collect data on A and B during the field school and would like some exposure on how to analyze the links between A and B can ask for

help, and could work with them one-on-one, but only if the student takes the initiative to ask for such mentoring.

In the interest of full disclosure, we recommend that students interested in this training program contact a couple of the recent alumni from the program to evaluate whether this is the right program for them. The list of alumni is in the TAPS web page under the “training” icon.

1. Where does the NSF training take place?

The research/training is scheduled to take place in the village of Yaranda along the Maniqui River in the department of Beni. Depending on the weather, the village is about 6-8 hours by motorized canoe from the town of San Borja. The most important town in the area is San Borja (pop ~19,000), about 18 hours in bus from La Paz and one hour by airplane (if it is a direct flight). San Borja has electricity, running water, telephones, a hospital, pharmacies, and email connections. Amazonas and Comsur, two Bolivian airline companies, have flights into and out of San Borja from La Paz via Rurrenabaque (a tourist center in the lowlands) and Trinidad (the capital of the Department of Beni) several times a week, weather permitting. The project has a house in San Borja where you can leave valuables (e.g., passports) when going to the field.

2. When does the training take place?

June 3-July 7 (departure date from San Borja to La Paz), 2012. 5 weeks. In planning the date of your return from La Paz back to the USA (or elsewhere), make sure it is at least 2-3 days *after* the planned departure from San Borja to La Paz. For example, in this case, make sure you leave from La Paz on or about **July 10-12**. Sometimes the flights from San Borja get delayed or are cancelled due to poor visibility/weather, so you want to avoid creating a tight return schedule for yourself. Flights to La Paz from the USA leave on or about mid-night from Miami. Try to get to Miami early evening (e.g., 6pm) so you have ample time in Miami in case your luggage gets lost from your point of destination in the USA to Miami; don't arrive to Miami shortly before the Miami to La Paz flight because then you will have to wait in La Paz until they find your luggage.

3. How do we get to the training site?

To Bolivia. Because of federal regulations governing NSF funding, students must fly in a USA carrier, unless there are no other options. At the time of this writing (**August 28, 2011**), the only USA airline flying to Bolivia (La Paz or Santa Cruz) is American Airlines. Try to fly to La Paz. Once you know your departure and return date and place, contact **Julie Yiu (julieyu@brandeis.edu)** and we will get an electronic ticket for you.

When you contact us about your itinerary, include the following information:

- (i) your full name as it appears in your passport,
- (ii) your passport number and place and date of issue,
- (iii) the dates and place of departure and return, and
- (iv) an indication of whether you want a ticket with a flexible return option (see point 4).

To San Borja. Once in La Paz, we will travel as a group to San Borja in an airline or, if not possible, then we will travel by road. If we travel to Rurrenabaque or Trinidad, and there are no flights to San Borja, we will go by road from Rurrenabaque or Trinidad to San Borja (about 6 hours). It is possible that there are no flights from La Paz to the Beni owing to weather or to other unforeseen events. In that case, we might have to travel by road.

Visa. Get the Visa in the USA. If you cannot get the Visa in the USA get it at the airport in La Paz, but ***ask for a 90-day tourist visa***. Starting in late 2007, the Bolivian government charges all USA citizens entering Bolivia ~\$US130 for a visa, so make sure to have cash with you when you enter Bolivia so you can pay the fee; we will reimburse you for the fee.

4.Can I stay in Bolivia longer than the lengths of the program?

If you think you might want to stay longer, either to travel in the region or to continue working at the research sites, you should get an airline ticket that allows you the flexibility to return after the program ends. NSF does not reimburse additional fees related to the ticket exchange.

5.Are there any additional documents that I have to fill out before going to Bolivia?

Legal waiver. Every participant funded by NSF needs to sign and send to Ricardo Godoy a legal waiver that is given to participants (see point 16 below). You can download the form at the following web site: <http://www.tsimane.org/training/pgs/application.html>

Note you need a witness when signing the form; the witness can be any adult who can write.

Medical form. Before departing to Bolivia students must submit to Brandeis a letter from their physician indicating that the applicant is in good health and without medical impediments that might hamper them from carrying out training in Bolivia. You can have the doctor send the letter to R. Godoy, or you can send R. Godoy the letter yourself. The letter does not have to include medical details; it just has to say the applicant is in good health to do fieldwork.

6.How do I get reimbursed for my expenses before and during the training?

Keep all your receipts (medical exams, vaccinations, insurance, visa, etc.). You will not be reimbursed if the original receipts are not presented. You will need to provide actual transaction receipts and your social security number. Most likely it will be your credit card statement, or if you paid with cash - cash receipt, or if you paid with check – cancelled checks or a bank statement. Copies of receipts are not enough to process reimbursement. If you need to get back your documents please put a sticky note that you would like receipts to be returned (they will be returned to you along with reimbursement checks). You will NOT be reimbursed WITHOUT the originals. When submitting receipts go to the following web address:

<http://www.brandeis.edu/financialaffairs/forms/ap-forms.html>

and click on the icon called “Expense report”. If you get stuck and do not know how to fill out the expense form, contact **Ms Yehfang Mok (mok@brandeis.edu)**. After you have filled out the form, send the form to **Julie Yiu (julieyiu@brandeis.edu)**, with your receipts or evidence of having incurred the expense (see point #16 below for address). *You have one month after your return to the USA to submit your expenses for reimbursement.*

7. Vaccinations and health

Besides the medical form under # 5 above, every participant has to visit her/his own local travel clinic or medical center to get appropriate vaccinations. The NSF program will reimburse you up to \$300 total on costs for vaccinations and malaria prophylactics and any other expense related to health while in training and while traveling to and from Bolivia. If you foresee expenses surpassing the \$300 limit before you have to leave Bolivia, contact Ricardo Godoy. Your medical clinic will have the current recommendations for vaccinations and medical needs in Bolivia (tetanus, yellow fever and meningitis are probably the most important, but you may elect to have the other vaccinations as well). For additional information visit the CDC website @ www.cdc.gov/travel/tropsam.htm. Here you can find a list of all the vaccinations that are necessary to go to tropical South America, particularly to Bolivia. See your doctor at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for some immunizations to take effect (e.g., rabies).

- You can buy antibiotics in Bolivia over the counter; they are cheaper
- We will give you an initial briefing on health and medicinal issues once you are in Bolivia
- The project will provide you with mosquito nets.
- Malaria has not been a problem in the area so far
- During Jan-Feb 2009 outbreak of dengue fever and yellow fever in parts of the Bolivian lowlands were reported, including the Beni.

You will not be reimbursed for any medical expenses incurred after you return from Bolivia. For example, if you are treated for parasitic illnesses after you return from Bolivia, then this program will not cover those expenses. You have one month after your return to the USA to submit your expenses for reimbursement.

8. What type of medical insurance do I use while on the trip and medical emergencies?

Medical insurance. Visit your university international travel/study abroad office, where you should be able to get an “International Student ID Card.” One of the most valuable parts of this card is the medical/evacuation insurance that comes with it. The card should cost about 25\$. Make sure you have some type of medical insurance that covers evacuation in case of emergency.

The program encourages participants to buy **TravMed Global** insurance from MedEx insurance company. To buy your medical insurance, visit the website:

http://www.medexassist.com/travmed_globe.cfm (if the link does not work, go to <http://www.medexassist.com/index3.cfm>, on the left panel find “Individuals” and the insurance would be **TravMed Global**). Buy the insurance for six weeks starting from **June 3 2012 until mid July 2012**. *We will only cover medical insurance for six weeks. If you buy medical insurance for over six weeks, then you must pay for the excess yourself.* You need to choose the \$100 deductible; the cost of the insurance will be \$21 per week. Read the description of the policy, so you would know what the insurance covers. You will pay for your insurance by yourself and send me receipts to the address mentioned at the end of this memo.

Medical emergencies in the field. The training site for 2012 is about a day’s away from the nearest town (San Borja), including not just the canoe ride from the town to the village, but the road trip from the river port to the town of San Borja. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to provide professional medical care to students who experience a medical emergency in the field (e.g., bone fracture, a burst appendix, poisonous snake bite), particularly if the emergency takes place in the evening because travel by river is difficult/hard in the evening, and may be more dangerous than the broken bone. The project does not have funding to pay for a nurse or a doctor to be in the field during the training program. We have found that satellite telephones often do not work in the area, so calling for help might be a theoretical possibility. For all these reasons, students who decide to come must be very comfortable with the health/medical risks of training in the site and it is partly for this reason that we ask you to sign a legal waiver.

9. What currency is used in Bolivia and where should I change money for the trip?

You can use CIRRUS, MAC, or PLUS in La Paz. In San Borja, you will not find ATM machines. It may be safest to bring travelers checks, and change some into bolivianos while in La Paz. If you need more bolivianos while in San Borja or in the field, we can arrange with the other members of the staff to get your travelers checks changed. If you want to have cash with you, \$US100-200 should be enough while in field school (e.g., to buy crafts produced in the villages). You can use a credit card for many purchases and hotels in La Paz when you are not with the program.

10. How can I make telephone calls from Bolivia?

In San Borja there are many places from which you can make international calls. You can make international calls with a card or by paying with money. You cannot use project facilities to make international calls.

11. Is there Internet access on the site?

In the last few years, there have been a couple of cyber cafes in San Borja. Connections are typically slow and you won’t be able to send/receive large volumes of material, but you won’t be out of touch. You cannot use the project facilities to send emails.

12. Are there any additional rules for the participants while on the site?

There is a code of conduct for every member of the program that includes the following.

1. No sex with people from the area, either Tsimane' or non-Tsimane'
2. No drinking of alcoholic beverages in the towns with indigenous peoples. Only drinking allowed is: **(a)** in the privacy of your home, **(b)** by yourselves in town, or **(c)** in public in the community when it is part of a communal event. Under no circumstance should researchers buy subjects an alcoholic drink.
3. No use of any drug that is illegal in Bolivia.
4. Researchers should refrain from providing credit to subjects.
5. Should someone in the community require emergency medical evacuation (even if unrelated to the project) the project should pay for it. We will request that the patient repay the costs incurred in the medical evacuation, but should the patient or her/his family refuse to repay or be unable to repay, we will cover the costs incurred.
6. Policies on stealing by subjects: ignore it unless the item stolen is very valuable; do not hold a grudge.
7. Policy on distribution of cigarettes and coca to locals: do not distribute them to subjects.
8. Unless there is an emergency or medical condition, you must remain with the group at all times.
9. If for some reason you find that you want to leave the training program, you must return to the USA; that is, you cannot hang around the town of San Borja or the region.
10. No jokes or teasing about another student's sexual, religious, or political orientation
11. If you break any of the above rules, the project reserves the right to dismiss you from the training at no extra cost to the project.

While in the summer field school, do not expect to finish overdue schoolwork (e.g., incomplete papers), articles, or presentations. You can certainly bring such work, but you will likely be frustrated by the lack of time and facilities to finish this work. It is best to leave all schoolwork behind you when you come so you can focus on the experience and training.

13. What portion of expenses is covered by NSF?

The program will cover roundtrip *economy* airfare in an American carrier (or a foreign carrier if there are no American carriers), travel to/ from airports, group lodging (no deluxe hotels etc.) and meals, vaccines, and regular medical insurance. We will give students \$100 USA to cover ground transport to and from their USA airport. We will give students \$130 for one-night room and board in La Paz + exit tax (US\$25) from Bolivia before their return to the USA at the end of the training program. At this time (or earlier if the student wants it) we will reimburse you for the US\$100 visa to enter Bolivia.

14. What expenses are not covered by the program?

The program does not cover the following expenses:

- Tourist activities
- Food and beverages outside of group meals
- Communication costs (e.g., emailing or telephoning USA)

15. What to bring

- Light sleeping bag and sleeping pad or mat to sleep (in the field, you will place your sleeping bag/pad on a raised wooden structure so a thick sleeping mat helps). Cold front during May-August can bring night temperatures down to 10-12 Celsius.
- Tarp for sleeping (i.e., tarp to put under the sleeping pad or mat)
- Sweater and rain/windbreak (it can be cold in the Beni, especially at night)
- Flashlight/headlamp (bring two just in case one breaks)
- Bug repellent, sun screen, antibiotic cream, antihistamine or anti-itch cream and pills versus allergic reaction (e.g., pollen)
- Rain jacket and/or poncho
- Long-sleeve cotton shirts and pants (they dry faster than blue jeans)
- Iodine tablets to put in water when traveling and we do not have time to boil water
- Sandals and sneakers and/or comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots
- Duck tape
- Swiss army knife or pocket knife
- Shorts for bathing in the river
- Baseball cap
- Cotton clothing
- Computers: You won't need a laptop in the training site since we have several computers, and most of the stress of the training will be in collecting data. However, if you plan to work in Bolivia after the field school, you may want to bring a laptop and leave it in the project house (or in La Paz) while we are in the village. You might want to bring a flash drive to the village; in this way, you could keep data collected during the field school.
- Sense of humor and patience

16. Who should I send forms and expenses?

Send legal waiver and medical form (#5 above) to:

Ricardo Godoy
MS 078
Heller School for Social Policy & Management
Brandeis University
South Street
Waltham, MA 02454

Send receipts and expense forms to get reimbursed to the R. Godoy's assistant:

Julie Yiu

c/o Ricardo Godoy
MS 078
Heller School for Social Policy & Management
Brandeis University
South Street
Waltham, MA 02454

Remember that *you have one month after your return to the USA to submit your expenses for reimbursement.*

17. What is food like in the site?

San Borja has a market, many restaurants, and many food stores where you can buy food. Most meals in restaurants include meat or fish, but you can order meals without meat in some places. Foods in the villages include cassava, plantains, rice, hard bread, noodles, canned fish, and fresh or sun-dried fish and meat. The diet can get monotonous. We cook separately for vegetarians. Some students in the past have brought their own spices or treats to add variety to the diet. Students might want to bring extra food that they would like, specifically protein sources.

18. How do we meet in Bolivia?

In La Paz we will stay at Hostal República; Godoy stays in Hostal Illimani, a couple of blocks away from Hostal República. R Godoy will arrive in La Paz a few days before you. Someone from the team (maybe R. Godoy) will wait for you at the airport, and take you to Hostal República

Calle Comercio 1445 (corner with calle Bueno)
Barrio Miraflores
Tel. 5912-2202742, 2203448
Fax. 5912-2202782
Email: marynela@ceibo.entelnet.bo

The address of Hostal Illimani (administrators are Mrs Filomena and Mr Miguel):

Hostal Illimani
Calle Illimani #1817
Barrio Miraflores (1/2 a block from the national soccer stadium)
Tel. 591-2-220-2346; emergency 220-0413 (591=Bolivia country code; 2=La Paz city code)

Hostal Illimani and República are on the same general street, and about 10 min walk from each other.

We will make reservations for you at Hostal República. Although there will be someone there waiting for you, if for some reason you arrive and find nobody, then take a taxi to Hostal República. The taxi from the airport should cost about \$40 bolivianos (exchange rate is about \$8.00 bolivianos/1 US dollar). We might have to spend a day or two in La Paz doing paper work (e.g., registering in the USA embassy, changing money) before going to the Beni.

19. Contact information and emergency information

Send R. Godoy the name, address, telephone numbers, relationship, and email address of a person we could contact in case of an emergency.

In case of emergency, you might also want to give your relatives the emails of Tomas Huanca, Viki Reyes-García, or R. Godoy:

rgodoy@brandeis.edu (Godoy)

vreyes@brandeis.edu (Reyes-García)

tomashi@brandeis.edu (Huanca)

The project telephone # in San Borja is 591-3-895-4283. Ask for Tomás Huanca, our point man in the field and one of the instructors. The address of Amazonas airlines in La Paz is:

Avenida Saavedra 1649

Barrio Miraflores (about 1 block from the National stadium and close to Hostal Illimani)

Telephone in La Paz: 22244705

Telephone in San Borja: 8953185

20. What do I need to send to Brandeis once admitted and before going to the field?

- Legal waiver (to R. Godoy)
- Medical form (to R. Godoy)
- To book your flight, contact the assistant of R. Godoy, **Julie Yiu** (julieyi@brandeis.edu), after you have been admitted and send **Julie Yiu** the following information, *all at one time* once you have decided on your departure and return date (do not send her some information now and other information later):
 - Legal name as it appears on passport
 - Passport # and nationality
 - Date/place of departure (for booking plane ticket)
 - Date/place of return (for booking plane ticket)
 - The following information about a person we could contact in an emergency:
 - Name and relationship

- Telephone #
- Email address
- Expenses related to the trip incurred before leaving for Bolivia, including your social security # (to R. Godoy or his assistant)

See #16 above for postal address.

21. **Waste disposal**. Where possible try to bring bio-degradable products. We bury organic and other waste products in the village.