



CASA CUBA ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



BROWN



Consortium for
Advanced Studies Abroad

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As a full-immersion program, CASA Cuba offers a variety of carefully designed courses at the CASA Center in Havana, taught by some of Cuba's most distinguished intellectuals, in addition to the opportunity to study alongside Cuban students at the University of Havana. Homestays with diverse Cuban families; internship opportunities built on Cuba's rich and diverse cultural world; and talks, visits and field-trips across the island provide students with in-depth learning opportunities throughout the semester.

AT-A-GLANCE

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

This year, students participated in conference panels, took new historical boat tours, and visited some of Cuba's most cutting-edge research centers

INTERNSHIPS & VOLUNTEERING

Students made local connections with their Cuban peers and program staff through serving as English Language Teaching Assistants for the semester

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The program offers a number of weekend excursions, including the week-long semester trip to Santiago de Cuba, the far eastern part of the island

FEATURE STORY

A student from Wesleyan University took his project from the classroom to Cuban television and to an international film festival in Berlin

LOOKING AHEAD

Priorities for the future focus on launching a CASA Cuba Instagram, planning for the program's 10th anniversary celebration, and introducing a variety of new classes.

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

CASA Cuba is a full semester program for students with six semesters or an equivalent level of Spanish. Students choose 4+ courses (typically 1-2 at the University of Havana and the remaining at the CASA Center). The in-class experience is enriched by many extracurricular activities throughout the semester.

Some of this year's highlights include:

- **CASA student panel at annual US-Cuba Conference** in Havana, titled “Cuba en la Política Exterior de Estados Unidos de América.”
- Several **students received honorable mention** from Casa de las Américas (CDLA) and CASA professors for their academic excellence
- An **oral history delivered by Professor Rafael Hernandez** in the Escambray Mountains on Cuba's Civil War (1960-65)
- **Historical boat trip** on Cuban-Spanish-American War
- Visit to Cuba's cutting edge Biotech Lab: **Centro de Inmunología Molecular (CIM)**

CASA Spring '24 students on a boat tour in Santiago de Cuba harbor where the decisive naval battle of the US first military overseas intervention took place that ended 400 years of Spanish colonialism.





80%

of student cohort was male in Spring '24; first time that males made up majority

28

students in total during 2023-2024 academic year

Advanced Spanish Grammar & Composition

MSc. Patricia Motola Pedroso

US-Cuba Relations: A Debate

Dr. Rafael M. Hernández Rodríguez

Health & Society in Cuba during COVID-19

Dr. Enrique Beldarraín Chaple

***Cuban Economy: Policies & Challenges for
International Participation & Sustainable
Development***

Dr. Jorge Mario Sánchez Egozcue

The Image of Cuba

Lic. Victor Fowler Calzada

NEW COURSES ADDED EACH SEMESTER

23-24 CASA COURSES



Spring 2024 CASA cohort with their Cuban students and Prof. Giselle Morales at the CASA Center in Havana upon receiving their English Diploma at the end of the semester.

INTERNSHIPS & VOLUNTEERING

Cuba has a different and more limited internship culture, yet, CASA offers several options to our students that have offered a deep connection to a variety of community partners over the years, and is the only study abroad program on the island to do so.

CASA Cuba Internship Placements

- **Casa de las Americas:** Students assist in the planning and execution of events (e.g. concerts, conferences) - related to visual arts, theatre, and music - and help with publications, art restoration, design, and/or exhibits.
- **Academic Journal Temas:** Editing, public relations, events
- **English as Second Language for Cuban students:** CASA students work as Teaching Fellows with an experienced Cuban Instructor at the CASA Center.
- **La Colmenita:** Children-focused educational and community-based theatre group
- **OnCuba, online bilingual journal** – Most widely read e-publication on Cuba. Students have participated in the editorial team and have published articles.



16

students taught English to Cuban peers during the 2023-2024 academic year

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

CASA Cuba offers a variety of different cultural activities throughout the semester for a more grounded and in-depth understanding of Cuban society. Visits to museums, community projects and institutions in Havana take place on weekends, while we offer three longer, thematic field trips, including one research-focused, led by students, throughout Cuba during the semester.

This year's activities and excursions included:

Agro-ecological farm Finca Marta

A conversation on food, agriculture and environment with its founder Dr. Fernando Funes and team. Visits ends with organic meal.

Cuba's sports university

A conversation with its rector, professors and students. 80% of Cuba's gold medalists were trained here.

Muñequa Negra

Afro-feminist community project to empower black women

Pepito Tey

Former slave-holding sugar factory with US ties. Conversation on historical memory with local historians and today's community leaders

Santiago de Cuba

Afro-Cuban rumba dance and procession with local population

*Rumba (Afro Cuban Dance and Music) Procession in Santiago de Cuba. Spring 2024.
Photo taken by Kenny Daici, photojournalism student from Brown University.*



Student wins prestigious international film award

The most outstanding experience this year was that of student Thibeaux Hirsch (Wesleyan University). Thibeaux showed great interest in the study of Cuban music and audiovisual production.

Part of Thibeaux' inspiration and impetus for the project was from the CASA course *Imagen Cuba* taught by Prof. Victor Fowler, which examines different representations of national identity in various artistic manifestations. In this course, students have the opportunity to meet creators of popular Cuban music and renowned researchers.

The structure of the class allows students to take their final exam in a more creative format as they are asked to demonstrate their understanding of the course content through an oral exam, the teaching of a class in front of their classmates, or the presentation of a creative project (e.g. short film, visual arts exhibition, musical composition and execution, performance work, set of articles, narratives or poems, etc.).



“THE WORK OF CASA STUDENT THIBEAUX HIRSCH IS THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF HOW TO STUDY AND PRESENT THE LIVING, DIVERSE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF A COUNTRY. IT ALSO SHOWS THE ENORMOUS POTENTIAL THAT CASA REPRESENTS.” - PROFESSOR VICTOR FOWLER

Thibeaux's short film, *El bongocero mentiroso*, talks about the humble people of the town of Güines, about 50 miles east of Havana where several of the best Cuban rumba performers were born. This documentary has appeared on Cuban television and also won a prize at the Berlin Independent Film Festival, a renowned international event. It has also been exhibited in several cities across the U.S.





LOOKING AHEAD

For the 2024-2025 academic year, CASA Cuba continues its course for responsible, sustainable, and institutionalized growth in an at times volatile and complicated environment. Cuba, with its colonial, imperial, communist, and revolutionary history; highly diverse migration patterns and ethnic influences; and its proximity to the United States – a country with social, medical, and educational excellence – make it a unique and fascinating location to study abroad. Yet, as a socialist society and economy in transformation, and with a complex relationship with the U.S., the challenges to operate as a private, U.S. educational entity in Cuba are real.

Nevertheless, as a program, we have built a solid foundation of diverse and rich local partnerships, and are currently the only U.S. academic institution with a physical presence in Cuba. Our presence and interactions are perceived by many as a small element of a post-socialist educational environment, and as such, we have many opportunities and responsibilities.

For the upcoming academic year, among other important elements of change at CASA Cuba, we aim to:

- **Launch an Instagram Account** to make the diversity of program activities and student experiences more visible – for students, advisors, faculty, families, and institutional partners.
- **Prepare for the tenth anniversary of our program in Cuba in 2025-26.** To celebrate many accomplishments, thank our local partners, connect international alumni and colleagues, and together discuss and map the future of our unique academic program in a country with many opportunities and some challenges.
- **Continue to innovate and diversify our academic offer.** We also plan to include new course offers with practical and local learning components. Some examples of themes to be included in a future academic offering are: a relaunched CASA Seminar, courses on Society, Law and Political Change in Cuba; Food and Agriculture; Migration; Religion; Bio-Tech in Cuba; Race and Medicine; and Environment and Climate Change.

CASA.EDUCATION/HAVANA

RAINER@LAHABANA.CASA.EDUCATION