



CASA CUBA ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



BROWN



Consortium for
Advanced Studies Abroad

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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

AT-A-GLANCE

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

This year, students participated in international conferences and dialogues, learned about disaster response in Guantanamo, and visited the United Nations Program Headquarters to discuss renewable energy

INTERNSHIPS & VOLUNTEERING

Students worked as editors for the academic journal *Temas* and made connections with Cuban university students by volunteering as English Language Teaching Assistants

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The program took weekend excursions as well as a week-long trip to Santiago de Cuba, in the far-eastern part of Cuba, each semester

FEATURE STORY

One student turned her experience living through Cuba's energy crisis into a conference paper and publication on the potential for US-Cuban collaboration in sustainable energy

LOOKING AHEAD

Priorities for the future include introducing new CASA courses, expanding internship opportunities, and organizing monthly international hybrid events

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, site visits, expert talks and research options throughout the semester.

Some of this year's highlights include:

- Program Visit to **Guantanamo** to learn about country's recent hurricane response and the impact of the US military base in the province
- Student and Program Director Participation at **International Academic US-Cuba Conference** with Presentations on US-Cuban Potential for Collaboration in Energy
- Visit to **United Nation Program** Headquarters in Havana to learn about Disaster Response and Renewable Energy
- CASA's US-Cuba class **student papers invited to be published** at prestigious academic journal *Temas*
- CASA coordinated hybrid **international academic dialogue** on development issues between Yale and University of Havana students and faculty
- Talks, Documentary and Guided Tour in Havana's **China Town** with Visiting Faculty Adrian Hearn (U Melbourne) and Evelyn Hu-DeHart (Brown)



Image from CASA/Yale/University of Havana hybrid academic dialogues



Visiting Prof. Adrian Hearn (U Melbourne) with CDLA President Abel Prieto, Afro-America Program Director Zuleica Romay and Program Director Dr. Rainer Schultz in front of Casa de las Américas's Tree of Life after a talk and performance on Afro-Cuban musical, religious and medical traditions (October 2024)

24

total students during 2024-2025 academic year

6

unique classes offered at the CASA Center

Advanced Spanish Grammar & Composition

Prof. Tania Sevillano

US-Cuba Relations: A Debate

Prof. Rafael M. Hernández Rodríguez

Health & Society in Cuba

Prof. Enrique Beldarraín Chaple

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

Prof. Jorge Mario Sánchez Egozcue

The Image of Cuba

Prof. Victor Fowler Calzada

Identity, Culture and Nation in Cuba: History and Challenges

Prof. Yoel Cordoví

NEW COURSES ADDED EACH SEMESTER

24-25 CASA COURSES



Prof. Giselle Morales with Spring 2025 CASA & Cuban students outside the CASA Center

INTERNSHIPS & VOLUNTEERING

CASA Cuba offers currently three types of internships, designed with our local institutional partners. They aim to increase academic and cultural knowledge in a practical way and have a concrete and useful output both for the hosting institution and our students.

CASA Cuba Internship Placements

- **Casa de las Américas:** Students can assist in the planning and execution of events (e.g. concerts, conferences, exhibitions); communication and social media; preservation of historical memory. They can also work with one of the various programs within the institution: Afro-American culture, Latinos in the US, Indigenous cultures, arts, literature, music, library.
- **Academic Journal *Temas*:** Students work either as editors and promoters of the journal or at their monthly public roundtable discussions on relevant issues of Cuba's contemporary society
- **English as Second Language:** Students learn how to teach English as a Foreign Language to Cuban university students under the guidance of a senior Language Instructor



Spring 2025 students conversing with Cuban university students

18

students taught English
to 39 Cuban peers
during the 2024-2025
academic year

3

students worked as
editors for the
Academic Journal
Temas

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

CASA Cuba offers a wide variety of site visits and field trips throughout the semester aiming at a deeper, practical and on-site understanding of some of the most important local issues of Cuban society. These include a weekly visit to a museum, community project or institution, two program field trips and a student-led research trip.

This year's activities and excursions included:

Cuban Cooking Class

At the CASA center with former chef Yoandra Pérez. Included searching for products in local shops and *agro-mercados* and ended with lunch!

Salsa Dancing Class

Weekly Salsa classes with University of Arts Professor David Frank

Horseback Riding and Tobacco Culture

During a trip to Viñales, UNESCO World Heritage Site

Final Semester Gala Dinner

At CASA Center's patio with cultural performances by students, including jazz, Salsa dancing, and Cuban story telling (75 people)

"Tumba Francesa"

Afro-Caribbean Dance Performance in Guantanamo

Horseback Riding in Viñales, Spring 2025



From Blackout to Solar Energy: Converting Challenges into Learning Opportunities

During the fall 2024 semester, Cuba faced not only two devastating hurricanes, but also three multiple-day, nationwide blackouts as a result of insufficient energy supplies, investment and sanctions. We decided to convert this challenge into a learning opportunity for students. On a global scale, almost one billion people are still without regular electricity access; most developing countries face these challenges and cope with it differently.

In Cuba, through conversations with energy specialists, journalists that cover disaster response, visits to UN programs on energy, class debates, and conversations with affected families, CASA aimed to empower students to learn about the roots and solutions to these problems in the Cuban context.

CASA Cuba, as a program committed to sustainability but also as a local institution affected by the blackouts, deliberated on possible solutions and took the strategic decision to work with our partners, Casa de las Américas, to invest in a solar energy system that will benefit the Galería Haydee Santamaria, where our CASA Center in Havana is located.

THE INSTALLATION OF A SOLAR SYSTEM AT THE HAYDEE SANTAMARIA GALLERY (...) NOT ONLY GUARANTEES THE STABILITY OF ACADEMIC EXCHANGE PROGRAMS WITH OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS, BUT ALSO HELPS CASA DE LAS AMÉRICAS REMAIN CONNECTED TO INTELLECTUALS AND FRIENDS IN THE AMERICAS, IN ADDITION TO CONTRIBUTING TO OUR GOAL OF PROMOTING LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CULTURE.”

-YOLANDA ALOMÁ, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, CASA DE LAS AMERICAS



CASA students visiting UN Programs Headquarters in Havana to learn about Disaster Response and Sustainable Energy Projects in Cuba with UN Program Director Ricardo Nuñez and CASA Program Director Dr. Rainer Schultz



In addition, there are at least three academic outcomes from these learning opportunities. Brown student Eva Kappas decided to conduct research for her final paper in our US-Cuba class on the potential of US-Cuban collaboration in the sustainable energy sector. Her paper was selected to be presented at an international annual conference on US-Cuban relations that took place in Havana and virtually in December 2024. The sustainable energy paper will also be part of a series of student essays that have been selected to be published in Cuba's prestigious academic journal, *Temas*, as a special volume. This publication, conceived as part of our CASA Cuba Ten Year-Anniversary Events, will curate the best papers of CASA student research in Cuba as an example of the unique value that US academic exchange and collaboration in Cuba bears. It will be framed and introduced by Program Director Rainer Schultz and the journal's founding editor Rafael Hernández.

“CASA GAVE ME THE ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPING MY PERSPECTIVE ON US-WORLD RELATIONS IN THE CITY WHICH HAS EXPERIENCED THE EXTREMES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. (...) THROUGH CASA, I WAS EVEN ABLE TO PURSUE MY INTEREST IN ENERGY POLICY IN RESPONSE TO THE BLACKOUTS AND PRESENT A SOLUTION TO CUBA’S ENERGY CRISIS AT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. WE HAD AN EXCITING SEMESTER - BLACKOUTS, A HURRICANE AND A LOT OF DANCING - AND THE CASA TEAM WAS PHENOMENAL AT PROVIDING SUPPORT AND TURNING EVERY SURPRISE INTO A BONDING EXPERIENCE (...)”

-EVA KAPPAS, BROWN FALL 2025



Eva Kappas, Brown University (Fall 2024) presenting research on the potential of US-Cuban collaboration in sustainable Energy at International Conference in Havana, Cuba.

Finally, building on the success of the first virtual academic conversations between Yale and the University of Havana, and facilitated by CASA, we aim to have a second round of academic exchange that will also include conversations on energy and sustainable development. Given the current circumstances of increased travel restrictions, these hybrid events with students and faculty from CASA member schools, the University of Havana and the CASA Center in Cuba are a strategic investment in the continuity of academic exchange and dialogue. They also create opportunities for collaboration and serve as an invitation for future in-person visits and activities.

LOOKING AHEAD



Cuba is living through a profound period of transformation and reorientation. This is a challenging yet also enormously interesting period with many opportunities. US policy and regulations towards Cuba continue to allow for academic exchange and educational opportunities despite an unusual and complex legal environment. CASA Cuba will be celebrating its Tenth Anniversary in 2025-26. We started our programming in Havana in 2015, the same year the US Embassy reopened and when both countries normalized their diplomatic relations after more than 60 years of interruption. Despite challenging circumstances, we are in a better position now than ever before and see many opportunities for our students, staff and faculty with CASA in Cuba. We welcome a new Assistant Director, Dr. Emily Snyder, with ample experience in the country starting in the summer of 2025. Our new solar energy system and an improved internet service will also allow us to have more hybrid and international events and visibility. New courses, institutional partnerships, and internship opportunities will continue to reflect evolving student interests and pressing social issues. CASA Cuba will be a welcome and unique hub for academic exchange and learning opportunities for our global partners in Havana.

For the upcoming academic year, our goals include:

- **Develop new, interdisciplinary CASA Courses:** Among the proposed themes from emerging and distinguished professors are: Environment, natural disasters and climate change; Gender, maternity and care in Cuba; Food Production, Sovereignty and Culture in Cuba; Intersectionality of Race, Gender and Class in Cuba; Education and oral history of the revolution; Science and Bio-Tech in Cuba
- **Expand internship opportunities** in environment and ecology, cinema and social media, sports and education, culture and the arts
- **Organize monthly Cuba-International hybrid events** for book presentations and innovative research projects on Cuba outside and inside the island. This unique format will be of great value for CASA students – past, present, and future – the local academic community in Havana, and students and faculty at CASA schools globally