



Global Services

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Dear Incoming International Student Class,

Princeton Theological Seminary provides a residential community of worship and learning where a sense of calling is tested and defined, and where Scripture and the Christian tradition are appropriated critically. We are blessed to be a covenant community where faith and intellect mature and life-long friendships begin, and where habits of discipleship are so nourished that members of the community may learn to proclaim with conviction, courage, wisdom, and love the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord.

We look forward to welcoming you on campus and to be nourished by your faith and ministry experiences. As you prepare to travel to the United States and particularly Princeton Theological Seminary, we are providing the following Travel Guide. Please take the time to review thoroughly as this document will detail pertinent information for your preparations.

Secondly, we are also providing a Travel Form! Please complete this document and send it to Ms. Martha Redondo at Martha.redondo@ptsem.edu by August 1, 2024.

If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact us at martha.redondo@ptsem.edu May the peace of Christ be upon you and your families during this time of preparation and transition.

In Christ,

Martha Redondo, MS, PDSO

Welcome and Christian greetings,

We are more than delighted to receive you at Princeton Theological Seminary, a community I have come to appreciate for its intersection of faith and scholarship.

As you prepare to come, be assured that it is only in gain and never in vain that God brought you this far from your homeland. The same God who has led you this far has also prepared others to receive and journey with you – people who are committed to community building, faith and scholarship, and engaging you in critical and robust conversation on matters of Christianity and the public sphere. At Princeton Seminary you will encounter the G.E.N.E [Growth, Exposure, Networking and Experience] of your ministry and career endeavors.

You are strongly encouraged to read in its entirety the enclosed document, *Preparation for Travel: A Guide for Incoming International Students*, that provides guidance and answers to frequently asked questions and also serves as a guide to your orientation and adjustment to the PTS community.

Princeton Theological Seminary orientation begins on Monday, August 26th, 2024 with important activities planned throughout the days. Nonetheless, international students travel days to our campus is August 19th. This early arrival to our campus will allow you to rest, visit the Global Services office to register for SEVIS and ensure your legal documents are up-to-date, open a U.S. bank account, assist you with on-campus employment, get familiarized with the campus, purchase essential foods and personal items, as well as a trip to the immunizations center for those who have not completed the process ([see Section VI. Immunizations](#)).

Understanding that this is an academic endeavor for you, there will be sessions on academic writing during orientation in support of, but not as a substitute to, the information on academic writing ([see Section VII](#)). Strategies for Learning at Princeton Seminary.

Once again, I wish you all the blessings as you finalize your preparations to join the PTS community for this journey of faith and scholarship. The entire Student Orientation Program team looks forward to meeting you.

Respectfully,

Martha Redondo

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Preparations for Travel

2024 Guide for Incoming International Students



Princeton Theological Seminary

Office of Global Services



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The following document is intended to provide you with helpful information as you prepare for your journey to the United States and to Princeton, New Jersey, in particular.

I. PACKING FOR NEW JERSEY

A. Weather

The autumn and spring seasons are generally moderate, with temperatures ranging from the 50s Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius) to the 70s (20s Celsius). Updated weather information for Princeton, NJ, zip code 08540, can be found at <http://www.weather.com/>.

The winter season (late November through March) is marked by sudden and extreme weather changes; several days of cold weather may be followed by days of moderate temperatures. The range in winter is between 20 degrees Fahrenheit (-7 degrees Celsius) and 45 degrees Fahrenheit (7 degrees Celsius), and occasionally the temperature drops to zero (-18 degrees Celsius). Days with snow or rain alternate with periods of clear and bright weather.

During summer (June through September), the weather is often hot and humid and requires lightweight clothing. Temperatures range from 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degrees Celsius) to the 90s (above 32 degrees Celsius).

B. What to Bring

I recommend you bring a backpack with a change of clothing and toiletry items in case of unexpected delays, missed flight connections, or lost luggage. Traveling overseas to study in a new country can be an exciting and rewarding experience that will stay with you forever. However, it can also be intimidating, frustrating, and sometimes inconvenient. The following packing suggestions may make your time in the U.S. more comfortable:

- **Pack lightly:** You will be responsible for carrying your own luggage, and often arrivals at New Jersey (or other U.S. airports) can be overwhelming. The last thing you want to worry about is a large amount of luggage! Remember that anything you forget can be purchased when you arrive in Princeton.
- **Clothing:** Refer to the section above that discusses the weather conditions in New Jersey_ <http://www.weather.com/>. Bring a variety of clothing options to accommodate all four seasons. Fall weather can vary in temperature, and light-weight jackets are typically worn. The winter months call for warm overcoats, scarves, and **winter boots**. Since all buildings are heated, clothes of medium weight that you can layer provide the maximum comfort. If you are from a country that does not experience chilly weather, you may want to wait to purchase a winter coat when you arrive. Since summers can be hot and humid, you may wish to pack shorts, t-shirts, and sandals. The Office of Global Services also sponsors a clothing hub for international students where you may acquire needed clothing items free of charge.

Footwear should be comfortable for walking. Sneakers are most common, as are boots during the fall and winter seasons. Summers call for sneakers or sandals. At Princeton Seminary, the typical student style of dress is casual: jeans, sneakers, and t-shirts are common. You may wish to pack a few semi-formal/formal items for special occasions. Also, depending on your major, a suit may be a good thing to have handy, if you have one.

- **Household items:** The Seminary will provide you with the following basics: bed sheets, pillows, blankets (1 per bed), bath towels (1 per person). If staying at the apartments, essential kitchen utensils will be provided. Additionally, the apartments will have basic dorm furniture. It is best to purchase most of your household items (cooking and eating supplies, small electrical appliances, bed sheets & towels) upon your arrival in the U.S. These items can add unnecessary weight when you travel, and most can be found for moderate prices. Also, electrical items from your home country may not be compatible with the U.S. electrical supply outlets and/or usage may not be permitted in the Seminary residence halls.

II. ARRIVAL AT A U.S. PORT OF ENTRY

A. What to bring with you!

Carry your **ORIGINAL** documents in person or in a carry-on bag. **DO NOT** place your passport, I-20/DS-2019 form, and Covid Vaccination card in your luggage. You will have to present them to the immigration inspector upon your arrival, and you will not have access to your luggage until *after* you go through the immigration inspection.

You Must carry handy with you the following documents:

- Valid, unexpired, passport (for at least nine months into the future) with a valid, unexpired entry visa
- Form I-20/DS-2019 visa certificate, signed by the school official and by you
- Covid-19 Vaccination card
- PTS Admissions letter, scholarship awarded and financial support documentation
- The address of your dorm or apartment at the PTS campus
- PTS Contact information
- Laptop and cell phone with WhatsApp downloaded
- U.S. dollars currency

The documents listed above are the most crucial ones that you could be required to present at the port of entry. In addition, we strongly suggest carrying with you the following:

- Medications you use regularly (many drugs in the U.S. require a prescription from a doctor, so if you have a chronic health problem that requires medication, it is recommended to bring enough to last until you can get a new prescription)
- Extra prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses

B. Immigration Inspection

Upon arrival, you will first go to immigration inspection. The immigration inspector will need to see the appropriate visa page in your passport and the appropriate supporting documents.

- **F-1/J-1:** Present your passport with an F-1/J-1 entry visa with Princeton Theological Seminary noted on it (if it is your initial entry in F-1/J-1 status), form I-20/DS-2019 that has been signed by both a Princeton Theological Seminary Primary Designated School Official (PDSO)/Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) and you. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspecting officer, upon your initial entry into the United States, will provide you with an admission stamp that is annotated with the **date** of admission, **class** of admission (F-1/J-1) and **admitted until date** (D/S, Duration of Status).

You should have funding documents available if requested. The CBP inspecting officer will no longer issue you a paper form *I-94 Arrival and Departure Record* with your “admission number” on it because it will be automatically updated (Refer to Fact Sheet, I-94 Automation link www.cbp.gov/I94). To retrieve your automated admission number, you must refer to <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>, fill in the blanks with the information required and submit it.

To see a demonstration about how to proceed, you may select the tab entitled **I-94 FAQ** (I-94 Frequently Asked Questions) on the **top left of the same page** of the number retrieval and then click **Demonstration** on the **top right corner**. If all is in order, you **should not** be “*admitted until a specific date,*” but rather for D/S. Your form I-20/DS-2019 may also get stamped in red ink by the CBP officer.

- **Canadian Citizens:** Although exempt from the visa requirement, Canadian students must present a form I-20/DS-2019 to be admitted in F-1/J-1 status and must obtain an **I-94 card** as described above. It is essential that you be issued an appropriate **I-94 card**. Otherwise, you will be considered a tourist, and you **will not** be able to enroll in classes. You also **will not** be able to change to student status while in the United States.
- **Dependents of F-1/J-1 students:** The same admission process applies to your spouse and/or children if they are coming with you. Dependents of F-1 students should enter as “F-2 for D/S”.
 - In the language of immigration regulations, the individual in F-1/J-1 status is the “principal alien”. Your dependents – spouse or unmarried, minor (under age 21) children – come to the United States in a derivative status, F-2/J-2. This means their primary purpose for being in the United States is to accompany you. Their F-2/J-2 status is completely dependent on your valid F-1/J-1 status.
 - Each F-2/J-2 dependent will receive his or her own SEVIS-generated I-20/DS-2019 form, with a unique SEVIS ID number. However, it is the F-1/J-1 principal who signs the I-20/DS-2019.

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Federal regulations **do not** allow individuals in F-2 status to be employed in the United States. However, effective on May 16, 2015, F-2 dependents may enroll in part-time study which may lead to a degree; but if they want to participate in “full-time” study, dependents **are required** to change their visa status to an “F-1” student visa.
- **More information:** For additional tips and information, please review the Official United States Study in the States website at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/guides/studyguidetothestates>.

C. Document Processing – Update of SEVIS Record

In addition to electronically processing the *I-94 Arrival and Departure Record*, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will access the SEVIS student record that corresponds to your unique SEVIS ID number and update the record with information on your entry. Princeton Theological Seminary is notified electronically of your arrival through your SEVIS record.

D. Be prepared!

It is to your advantage to know what to expect and to be mindful of what occurs at the port of entry. Immigration inspectors see many people in a day, and mistakes can happen. Some inspectors may be less familiar with student documents than others. Having your documents processed properly at the time you arrive is extremely important.

E. Airport Arrival Pick Up

As you select your flight to the United States, please plan to arrive in Princeton on (8/21). Housing at the Seminary is not available prior to that date.

You will receive a Transportation Arrangement Form to complete and return to Martha.redondo@ptsem.edu to inform us of your travel arrangements to campus. The closest international airport is Newark/Liberty (EWR). It is referred to by travel agents as one of the New York airports, but it is in New Jersey and much closer to Princeton than John F. Kennedy Airport (JFK).

- **Arriving on campus on your own (or with family or friend):** If you plan to have a friend or family member bring you to campus from the airport, please make every effort to arrive on campus between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. and proceed to the Office of Global Services, Templeton Hall, Suite 201 (second floor) to pick up your keys and welcome bag. Your luggage may remain in the vehicle until you are escorted to your accommodations. For directions and a map of the campus, visit <https://www.ptsem.edu/about/location>.

III. ARRIVAL AT PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY CAMPUS

A. SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) Registration Requirement

During the week following your arrival, you must report to the Office of Global Services with all your visa documents.

B. Background:

All prospective students coming to study in F-1/J-1 status have been issued the relevant documentation through a database referred to as **SEVIS**, an acronym for the **S**tudent and **E**xchange **V**isitor **I**nformation **S**ystem. This was designed by the government as both a data collection and a tracking system that creates an interface between institutions of higher education, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), consulates and embassies abroad, and ports of entry. Schools are required to make regular electronic updates in SEVIS throughout the academic year on the records of their enrolled students in F-1/J-1 status—and their dependents. Information to be updated includes enrollment status, changes in address, changes in the level of study, employment recommendations, and school transfers.

When you arrive at a US port of entry, the immigration inspector will update your SEVIS record with information about your arrival. The school that issued your I-20/DS-2019 document will receive electronic notification of your arrival. Your status in SEVIS is “initial,” but must be changed to “active” within 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) of the program start date for your SEVIS record to remain valid.

IV. PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION RESOURCES

Once you arrive at Princeton Theological Seminary, you will be remarkably busy! Settling into your housing, learning your way around the campus, participating in orientation sessions, and meeting new people all take time and energy. It will be a challenge to keep up with all the information you will be receiving during orientation, and then classes begin!

Before you arrive may be the best time to read and prepare yourself for the move to Princeton and the academic system in the United States. Here is some information we hope you find useful.

The Department of State supports a network of Educational Advising/ Information Centers worldwide. In addition to advising prospective international students on higher education in the United States, they can provide you with pre-departure materials and may conduct pre-departure orientation programs for students from your country or region who are going to the United States to study. There is also information on what it is like to live in the United States. Some programs offer participants the chance to meet fellow students who have recently spent time in the United States. Contact your nearest center well before your departure for their program schedule and to reserve a place. Some centers may charge a fee for these programs. For more information, refer to: <http://www.educationusa.info/>.

Social Customs and Cultural Differences article is interesting to read before you get here, and useful to continue to refer to as you adjust to living in the U.S. Please refer to: <http://www.edupass.org/culture/>

V. STUDENT HEALTH CARE AND INSURANCE

For this reason, Princeton Theological Seminary requires all international students and all dependents to subscribe to the Seminary's Student Health Insurance. Health care in the United States is very good yet very costly. There is no national medical care system or insurance program. You must pay for medical services. Hospital costs in the New York area can be \$2,000 a day, and that does not include physicians' fees, which are also high. One cannot afford to be without medical insurance, which is why the Seminary requires that you purchase PST Student Health Insurance.

VI. IMMUNIZATIONS

Verification is required from Princeton Health Care System Occupational Health, our contractor, that you have completed the health history (documenting that you are properly immunized as required by the State of New Jersey) and have sent it to the Princeton Health Care System as indicated on the form.

NOTE: Students cannot register for classes until their immunizations are completed.

If your immunizations are not updated in your home country or before arriving on campus, you must pay for them according to Passport Health's fee schedule during orientation. See below for the required immunizations and costs:

| <i>Vaccinations:</i> | <i>Required Doses:</i> | <i>Fee:(in US dollars)</i> |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>MMR (Measles, Mumps, & Rubella)</i> | <i>2 doses</i> | <i>To be determined</i> |
| <i>Meningococcal</i> | <i>1 dose</i> | <i>To be determined</i> |
| <i>*Hepatitis B</i> | <i>3 doses</i> | <i>To be determined</i> |
| <i>Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis</i> | <i>1 dose</i> | <i>To be determined</i> |
| <i>Tuberculin Test (PPD)</i> | <i>1 dose</i> | <i>To be determined</i> |

**There will be a vaccine administration fee of \$35.00 per person, per visit.*

VII. STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING AT PRINCETON SEMINARY

Background: To succeed in the U.S. academic system, you need to know how it is organized and how it works. Below are some suggestions¹ to keep in mind as you begin your studies. You will learn more of the informal rules for academic success as your courses progress and you can talk with advanced students in your field. The more you discuss such topics with experienced students, the sooner you will be able to develop an understanding of how each academic field functions. Remember you may need a period of adjustment before you can demonstrate the best of your ability.

A. Expect to find different values in the U.S. educational system

From your successful experience in other academic systems, you have developed certain assumptions about the purposes and methods of education, and about the way your field of interest should be studied. For example, you may assume that it is important to memorize lots of information, or that the way to study your field is to concentrate on a very limited aspect in great depth. Here, you may find that memorizing material is considered less important than synthesizing ideas from a variety of sources, or that a field of study might be approached by treating the works of many scholars. It is important to recognize that differences of this kind exist between the systems of the United States and other countries and to understand that you may have to adjust your research methodology. This is an important part of your cross-cultural educational experience.

¹ *Disclaimer:* This is a description of the academic system intended to provide you with an overview of the teaching/learning environment here at Princeton Theological Seminary and it is not to be interpreted as an official contractual agreement. Upon your arrival at Princeton Theological Seminary, you will receive a Student Handbook that contains the official rules and regulations of the institution.

B. Know what is expected by the professors

You will find that each professor employs varying methodologies to teaching and grading students at Princeton Seminary. You must determine what each professor expects of his or her students. Professors will provide a class syllabus outlining lectures and class assignments.

C. Talk with your professors

Professors expect students to ask questions in class or immediately after it. They also expect students to meet with them when there are problems. At the top of the syllabus information on office hours will be posted accordingly. If you are struggling or need clarification and do not see the professor about the situation, they may assume you are not serious about the class. Most professors will evaluate the attitude of a student as negative or, at best, indifferent if the student never raises questions. If at any time you feel unsure of what is expected of you in class or are troubled by some aspect of the work, ask for guidance from the professor and fellow students.

D. Select your courses wisely

When arranging your course schedule, consult your academic adviser, registrar, and experienced students familiar with courses and professors.

E. Keep up with readings and assignment

Begin studying at the start of the semester to avoid undue stress. This website contains more information concerning study skills: <http://www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/helplist.htm>

F. The central value of academic honesty

The most serious offense in the academic world, particularly in institutions of higher education in the United States, is to represent another person's work as your own. This is called plagiarism. When you are writing an academic paper of any kind (including, for example, an essay exam), you must be sure to acknowledge, in the paper itself, any ideas you have taken from other people or written sources. Furthermore, if you wish to copy something word for word from a source, you must put quotation marks around it in addition to giving written credit to the author. If you are ever in doubt about when and how to properly acknowledge a source, be sure to ask your professor, academic adviser, or other students. Books on proper writing styles are available at the Office of Global Services. You will receive more information on this item during the Orientation Program.

Talking during examinations (especially in a foreign language), copying from another's paper, and having someone else do your work is unacceptable. Please be aware that something as simple as asking to borrow a pencil or using another's reference material during an examination can be misunderstood. Guidelines regarding the consequences to these actions can be found in the Student Handbook.

G. Organization of the academic system

Methods of the academic system

- 1. Continuous Assessment:** In many courses, you will be assessed or “graded” on every assignment given to you including quizzes, term papers, exams, and class participation. Sometimes these can be a major part of the overall assessment or grade given at the end of the course. Some professors may deduct marks from your overall average if you do not attend classes.
- 2. Examinations:** There are many examinations at the master's and doctoral level. Every class has a “final” at the end of the term and most also have a “midterm” (either a test or paper during the middle of the academic term to assess your knowledge of the material up to that point). Additional tests or “quizzes” may be given with some frequency, or even without notice. At the graduate level, examinations are less frequent and term papers (see below) are more common. All examinations are designed to ensure students are doing the work assigned and to assess their understanding of a subject. There are two general types of exams:

Objective examinations test one's knowledge of particular facts. Objective examinations generally consist of five kinds of questions:

- a) Multiple choice:** from a series of possible answers, you select the most appropriate one (or more);
- b) Matching:** two columns of words, phrases, or statements are given, and you indicate the related pairs;
- c) True or false:** a list of statements is given; you indicate which are valid and which are not;
- d) Identification:** you give the source and a brief explanation of the significance of certain names, terms, or phrases;
- e) Blanks:** you fill in the gaps in given phrases or statements so as to render them complete and correct.

Subjective examinations, sometimes called essay examinations, require the student to compose a full response to a question or statement. This kind of examination tests one's ability to organize and communicate his or her knowledge of a particular subject.

For strategies on test taking, see resource:

<http://www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/help/testskil.htm>

H. Lectures

The most common method of instruction here is the classroom lecture. Lectures usually are supplemented by classroom discussion (especially in small classes or precepts), by reading assignments in textbooks or library books, and by periodic written assignments. It is important that you contribute to discussion in the classroom. In some countries it is considered disrespectful for the student to question or challenge the professor, but in this country, it is viewed as a healthy sign of interest, attention, and independent thinking—

as long as it is within a context of mutual respect. In many classes part of your grade will be determined by your contribution to discussion.

When the class is too large to permit questions and discussion, or if for some reason you do not have the opportunity to raise questions, you may see your professor privately during his or her office hours or make an appointment for another convenient hour. Professors usually announce their office hours at the first meeting of the class.

I. Precepts

This is a small class devoted entirely to discussion. Students are often required to prepare presentations based on class reading and research.

J. Term papers

In many courses you will be required to write a comprehensive paper based on study or research you have done in the library or laboratory. Your professor will usually assign such a paper in the early part of the course. You are expected to work on it during the term and submit it near the end. The grade you receive on the paper will carry significant weight in determining your grade for the course.

During the Orientation Program, you will be provided with a general overview on techniques that explain the format you must use for footnotes and bibliographies. If you have questions about a particular term paper assignment, discuss them with your professor as early as possible.

The following is a useful website with information on writing papers:

<http://www.dushkin.com/online/study/dgen2.mhtml>

K. Research

Princeton Theological Seminary has a world-class theological library (<http://libweb.ptsem.edu/>) that has appropriate facilities and services to help you with your research. During orientation, you will be provided with guidelines in utilizing the appropriate resources at the library. The library has trained employees who are happy to answer your questions about its organization, the location of specific materials, bibliographies, and special services.

You also can utilize the resources of Princeton University's Firestone Library <http://library.princeton.edu/firestone>.