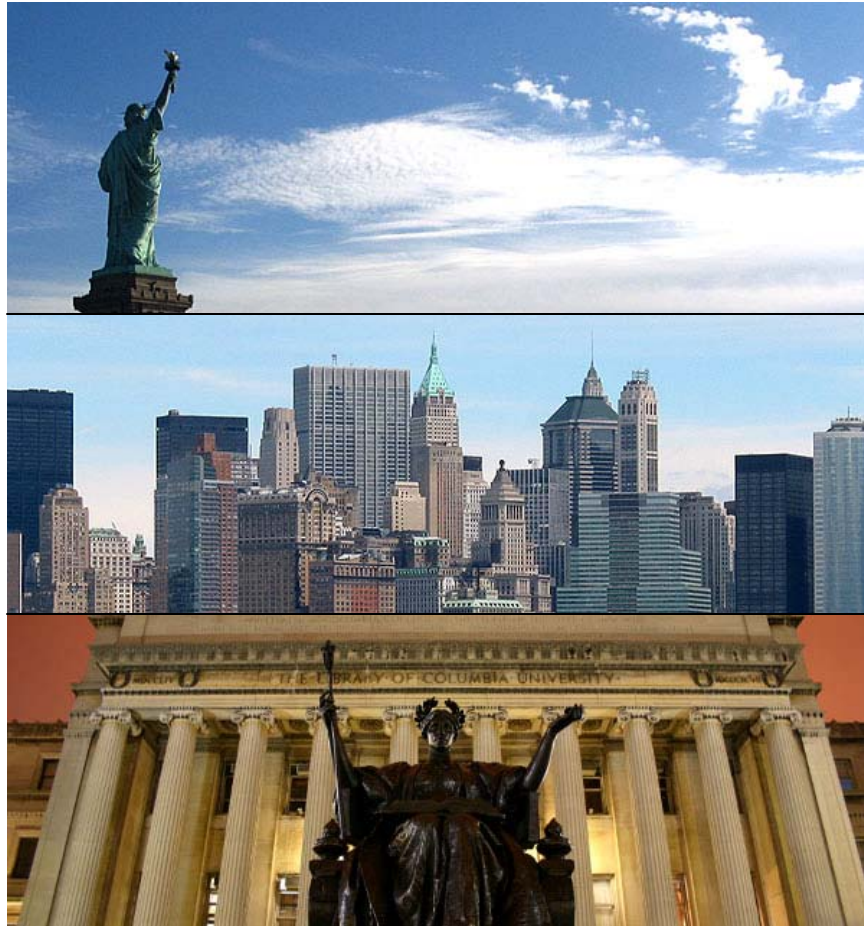


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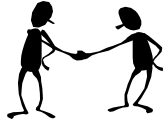
Your Guide to the US,
New York and Columbia



Brought to you by your Peer Advisers!

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WELCOME LETTER

Welcome Incoming Students,

First, as the Peer Advisers for 2009, we would like to congratulate you on becoming part of the dynamic student body of Columbia University in New York City. Being students ourselves from all the corners of the world, we know how it feels: the excitement and anxiety to learn in a great institution and to live in a bustling city.

Our goal is to make your transition as smooth as possible. Therefore, we have compiled this booklet to provide you with all the practical tips for your day-to-day activities both on and off campus. The information represents our personal but valuable experiences and hopefully it works as a guide for you as you start your life in New York.

This booklet is by no means to be a comprehensive publication with all of the tips you need to know. You will definitely learn more facts and tips about life in NYC and the US from your own experiences. But when you are in doubt, we hope it could be helpful to you. We also strongly encourage you to seek additional information from sources like your academic department, the International Students and Scholars Office, the senior fellow students from your country, and the broader Columbia community in general.

Remember, don't panic if you are uncertain or unsure of something, just ask your Peer Advisers!

We are here to help you and we expect you to take full advantage of it.

Good Luck!

Your Peer Advisers for 2009 and fellow Columbia students



CULTURE SHOCK

People usually experience many emotions while adapting to a foreign culture, as the US and New York City may be for you. Unfamiliar signs and symbols of social interactions in a foreign country may result in culture shock.

Symptoms

- Sadness, loneliness, melancholy
- Preoccupation with health
- Aches, pains, and allergies
- Insomnia, desire to sleep too much or too little
- Changes in temperament, depression, feeling vulnerable, feeling powerless
- Anger, irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others
- Identifying with the old culture or idealizing the old country
- Loss of identity
- Trying too hard to absorb everything in the new culture or country
- Unable to solve simple problems
- Lack of confidence
- Feelings of inadequacy or insecurity
- Developing stereotypes about the new culture
- Developing obsessions such as over-cleanliness
- Longing for family
- Feelings of being lost, overlooked, exploited or abused

Cultural adjustment is frequently described as a roller coaster: full of 'ups' where things are exciting and positive, alternating with 'downs' when you may feel frustrated, homesick, or depressed. Adjusting to a foreign culture is a challenge, but one worth the occasional discomfort and extra effort. Remember that you are not alone and that most international students go through this when they arrive. Here are some PA experiences of cultural adjustment.

First impressions

“I read quite extensively about New York before coming to the city. But I found out that living in the city of New York was quite different from learning from travel guidebooks. New York is a diverse city with people from all corners of the world. One therefore might not feel like a stranger in town. However, one could also end up feeling alone roaming the city streets amidst the big crowd. Life both off and on campus required more independence than I had thought.”

“As an incoming international student eight months ago, I was very excited and eager to meet new friends and teachers, study with new textbooks, and visit various places in and around New York City. I was lost in a razzle-dazzle of all things new.”

Some of the downs

“Somewhere in the middle of the semester, I started to feel impatient and irritated about how things were working out. At first, it was not so bad. I had the will and strength to tackle the problems one by one. But one day, all of a sudden, I became hopelessly homesick. I missed dearly my friends, relatives, the streets and rivers back in my home country. I couldn't sleep at night. I couldn't study. I skipped my classes. I wasn't having fun. I didn't know what to do.”

How to Fight Culture Shock

- Develop a hobby.
- Don't forget the good things you already have!
- Remember, there are always resources that you can use.
- Be patient, the act of immigrating is a process of adaptation to new situations. It will take time.
- Learn to be constructive. If you encounter an unfavorable environment, don't put yourself in that position again. Be easy on yourself.
- Don't try too hard.
- Learn to include a regular form of physical activity in your routine. This will help combat the sadness and loneliness in a constructive manner. Exercise, swim, take an aerobics class, etc.
- Relaxation and meditation are proven to be very positive for people who are passing through periods of stress.
- Maintain contact with your ethnic group. This will give you a feeling of belonging, and you will reduce your feelings of loneliness and alienation.

- Maintain contact with the new culture. Learn the language. Volunteer in community activities that allow you to practice the language that you are learning. This will be useful and help you feel less stressed about the language.
- Allow yourself to feel sad about the things that you have left behind: your family, your friends, etc.
- Recognize the sorrow of leaving your old country. Accept the new country. Focus your power on getting through the transition.
- Pay attention to relationships with your family and at work. They will serve as support for you in difficult times.
- Establish simple goals and evaluate your progress.
- Find ways to live with the things that don't satisfy you 100%. Maintain confidence in yourself. Follow your ambitions and continue your plans for the future.

Coping strategies

“I hang around with fellow students in my program. They shared their experiences, both off and on campus, with me. We help and learn from one another. I also found out that talking to my professors could help solve both off and on campus difficulties. Besides, I made some new friends through sports and other activities such as joining interesting activities organized by Columbia students and attending church service.”

With time, everyone learns to adapt and to become comfortable with their surroundings. It helps if you create a network of friends from your home country. But remember, one of the great learning opportunities at Columbia is the chance to cultivate friendships with other nationalities – and this can also help ease the process of adaptation.

Be sure to understand the symptoms of culture shock and be prepared. If you feel displaced or irritable, don't be afraid to ask for help from friends, Peer Advisers, or Counseling Services. The Office of Counseling and Psychological Services organizes workshops about adjusting to life at Columbia University as an international student, as well as coordinating social activities throughout the year that are good opportunities to meet other international students.



AMERICAN CULTURE AND SOCIAL LIFE

When you are introduced to someone, man or woman, it is proper to shake hands with them. An appropriate response to an introduction is “Pleased to meet you.” If you want to introduce yourself to someone, extend your hand for a handshake and say “Hello, I am...” Since you will meet people from around the world, do not be afraid to ask someone to repeat their name if you do not understand, rather than mispronouncing. People customarily are addressed by their first name.

New York is a very multicultural city. Be sensitive to others who may have a very different cultural background from yours. Do not assume that a person will agree with your perceptions or values. For example, you might find something funny whereas someone else might find it offensive – or vice versa. Do your best to respect cultural differences, and be aware of others’ feelings to prevent what might be offensive behavior or conversation.

Americans are usually very “friendly” and appear to be very open when you meet them; they readily welcome and are willing to help newcomers. It takes a long time, however, for “friendships” (close relationships between people) to develop. In the United States, people enjoy doing things together and exchanging ideas which can lead to friendship. However, “friends” may not become deeply involved in each others’ personal affairs or even spend a great deal of time together.

People may be chatty on occasion but that does not automatically mean close friendship. They might say things like “Oh, we should go there or do that,” but do not be surprised if that never happens. Also, “How are you?” is a standard greeting and “Fine!” a standard answer. Do not be surprised if someone asks “How are you?” and continues walking past. They are not necessarily asking for details.

If you ask for a phone number from a new friend, they may not give it to you. Do not feel offended, but respect the person's choice. Also, if they take your number that does not automatically mean that they will call you.

When you accept a dinner invitation, tell your host if you have any dietary restrictions. If you are invited to someone's home for an event such as a meal or a party, you should bring something along – for instance, something to drink, or chocolates. It is not generally acceptable to visit someone's home uninvited or without notice.

When you are invited to eat out with a group, you should be prepared to pay for your own meal, or more commonly to share the total cost of everyone's meals.

Try not to get too personal or confrontational when you do not know people well. Questions about income, age, and weight (especially for women) are some sensitive areas of discussion in the US. Generally, Americans are interested in discussions about politics, religion, local and international events, and hobbies.

In the Social Context

The drinking age of 21 is widely enforced, and alcohol cannot be consumed outdoors in public. Drinking customs vary in the States; some Americans do not drink at all, while at the other extreme, some may “binge” drink. Watch those around you: if you are at a dinner where no one is drinking, it might not be appropriate for you to drink. If your friends are meeting at a bar at night, you might expect some heavy drinking, though you should not feel pressured to do the same.

Tobacco use in the U.S. is considered a health problem and smoking is not as common as in some countries. Smoking is prohibited in all public places and businesses in New York City – this includes pubs, restaurants, cafes, clubs and lounges. Often, people will step outdoors ‘for a smoke’ after a meal or while socializing, and it is common to invite other smokers to join.

The most popular spectator sports in the U.S. are baseball, American football (called simply ‘football’) and basketball, which are all followed on both the college and professional levels. Baseball – sometimes known as the ‘national pastime,’ is the oldest of these, and the local rivalry between the Mets and Yankees is legendary. Soccer has a relatively small following, although many watch the World Cup.

Contrasting cultural values

- Europeans and Asians remark about America’s valuing “freedom” in its many manifestations.

- Americans encourage experimentation and often view failure as just one step towards success.
- Americans encourage building your own peer networks, as compared to hierarchical systems which build on family and professional relations.
- Although bonding with people of like background is a default, reaching out to those of different backgrounds is encouraged.
- America has no formal class or caste system, but there is a belief that with enough luck and/or effort, informal boundaries can be crossed. Relative to Asian societies, Americans like to speak out, express opinions, shake hands, socialize and network with complete strangers, and hug.

Remember: “It’s not good or bad, it’s just different!”



IN THE CLASSROOM

Classroom Etiquette

Professors will normally address students by their first names, and quite often expect themselves to be addressed in the same way. If you don’t feel comfortable calling your professors by their first names or aren’t sure what to call them, always feel free to call them “Professor ...”

It is the responsibility of the student to learn background information, as professors assume you will already know the background or will study it independently.

There is a Teaching Assistant (TA) system to facilitate classes. Teaching assistants are normally graduate students who grade homework and exams, hold review sessions, and have office hours for class-related questions. Unless a question is directly related to what a professor said in class, it is always a good idea to ask the TA first. While TAs are usually very helpful, they are students too, with multiple demands on their time. They should not be bothered unduly with questions that can be answered by reviewing class material, or with office hour extensions, unless unavoidable.

Eating in class is allowed, but no professor likes it. If you need to carry something in to eat, try to minimize disturbances. If you need to step out of class or visit the restroom, just walk out without disrupting class.

Smoking in the classroom is not permitted.

Cell phones must be turned off during class. While asking questions in class is encouraged, continually disturbing the flow of class is not a good idea.

Definitions of cheating and plagiarism are much more stringent than in other parts of the world. Whenever you copy even a bit of text from a book or the web, you should always give credit. Even if you feel, for a while, that you are getting away with it, you may suddenly find yourself facing very harsh action for minor slips.

Students dress very casually for class. Religious symbols are by no means forbidden. Offering expensive gifts to professors is unacceptable, but greeting cards and thank-you notes are fine.

It is very important to be on time, especially in scholastic situations. If you make an appointment with a professor, it is important to arrive promptly. To arrive late is a sign of disrespect, and you should always call if you are running late or unable to keep your appointment.

Choosing an academic advisor

Some graduate programs require that a significant portion of your studies be done under the supervision or guidance of an advisor, who is generally a professor affiliated with your department. This is the case for most PhD programs. Your advisor can have many different roles, depending on which program you are in. Typical issues advisees deal with are the following:

- Assisting in selecting which classes students should take
- Helping students develop writing and presentation skills
- Guiding research in your thesis project

It is important to realize that professors are not required to be a student's advisor just because the student wishes so. It is a relationship established mutually after careful thought and consideration. Many factors need to be considered when choosing an adviser, such as:

- Your level of interest in the advisor's area of expertise
- The previous history of the advisor. Are his other students satisfied? Do they have successful careers afterwards?
- In case the advisor is responsible for obtaining grants that fund your study, it is important to research whether he has a good funding record

- It is also important to get along well with your advisor. Although finding a suitable advisor requires a lot of time and research, it will make your graduate career much more productive and smooth. A final tip is to ask senior students in your department who they consider to be good advisors.



HEALTH SERVICES

Health and Medical Tips

Columbia has an excellent health education website called Alice!, where students can post physical/ mental health questions to “Alice”, and she will reply! (That is, if your question hasn’t been asked before, or is useful for other students to know). Whether you have a health condition or are just plain curious to know what others are concerned about, check out www.alice.columbia.edu.

If you need to see a specialist, usually you will have to get a referral from your primary-care doctor. Primary-care physicians are based in the John Jay Hall, and an appointment can be easily made in advance over the phone 212-854-7426. For more information, visit their web www.health.columbia.edu

After Health Service Hours, there are still clinicians on call in case of emergency.

“Over the counter” (OTC) drugs are medicines that you can get without a prescription. “Prescription” drugs can only be purchased with a note from the doctor. Pharmacies located around Columbia include Duane Reade (111th and Broadway & 123rd and Amsterdam) and Rite Aid (110th and Broadway).

It is advised that if you want to see a dentist (separate from Health Services), you should schedule an appointment early. Sometimes, you may have to wait 2 months for your turn.

Social support resources

Counseling and Psychological Services provide workshops and sup-

port groups to help international students get adjusted to their new environments, manage and develop relationships, and cope with their life as a student. Visit www.health.columbia.edu/cps/news/cps-groups.html to see what support groups may interest you. In some countries, counseling services is seen as a negative thing, but in the US it can be seen positively, and it is somewhat common for individuals to speak to a counselor for guidance.

Insurance tips

Travel insurance is included in the Basic or Comprehensive Student Health Plan-- hence, there is no need to purchase separate travel insurance. Be sure to carry your Aetna insurance card with you when you travel. In case of emergencies you can call Assist America, the travel insurance provider, at 1-800-872-1414.

If you are a full-time student covered under a comparable insurance plan, you may waive the Student Health insurance plan administered by Chickering. Visit www.health.columbia.edu/ins/index.html to enroll or waive a plan.

For Medical Center students

There is a separate student health service system at Medical Center. Their website is <http://cumc.columbia.edu/student/health/>.

When you do not feel well, you should call their number (212) 305-3400 to make an appointment with the doctor at student health service. Their location is 60 Haven Avenue, Lobby Level. When you enter the building, turn to the right after you pass the Security Desk. The Student



HOUSING

Housing is one of the most important factors in making your stay in Columbia enjoyable and unforgettable. Your apartment or room is more than a place to eat, sleep, or study; it will be your haven during the mid-terms or finals week when all the libraries are jam-packed, your hang-out place with friends when you're on a tight budget, etc. Since most of us will study at Columbia for years, choosing the perfect apartment and roommates is quite important. We recommend you to apply for the UAH (University Apartment Housing) in your first year for safety and

pricing purposes. Generally, it is much safer and relatively cheaper. UAH is available to all full-time students in housing-eligible programs.

UAH provides different types of accommodation, including apartment, dormitory, studio and so on, furnished or unfurnished. Useful information such as rates of rental, locations and conditions of buildings are all listed on UAH's website (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ire/>). Usually, UAH renovates the buildings and the rooms from time to time, especially before new students move in, so most buildings are kept in good condition. Students who live in UAH housing can receive the reports and notices of house condition and rental rates adjustment.

In case you are not happy with the assigned apartment, you can choose to apply for a transfer. Transfer lottery process is used and applications are accepted during the first five business days of October and March, but there is no guarantee that your request will be approved. According to UAH's policy, approval will be based on (1) availability of units, (2) number of transfer applicants, and (3) individual eligibility considerations.

The second option is to live outside of the campus. Be aware that New York is an expensive city. In most areas of Manhattan, it will be hard to find a studio apartment for less than \$1,400-1,500 per month. Nevertheless, you can find a studio apartment outside of the Manhattan area for \$900-1000 per month. When searching for an apartment, you can either (1) look into advertisements (such as The Village Voice, New York Times, posters on the bus stop), (2) go to online searches (i.e. www.craigslist.com) or (3) hire a broker. Brokers can help you not only in finding an apartment that suits your needs but also can facilitate the paperwork for you. To contact brokers, you may call them first to arrange a meeting at their office. After filling a few forms, a broker will show you apartments that meet your requirements. Brokers charge a commission (broker fee), which usually amounts to 12%-15% of your one-year rent. Landlords usually collect a security deposit as the lease is finalized. The money (about 1 months' rent) is kept in an interest-bearing account and refunded after you move out. Deductions may be made for undue damage and outstanding rent, etc. You should also remember that some landlords require a lease co-signer or a guarantor (usually US residents). For more information, you can go to the off-campus housing office and register for off-campus housing hunting. You can obtain some useful apartment hunting tips from their website <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ire/ocha/>. If you are able to read Chinese,

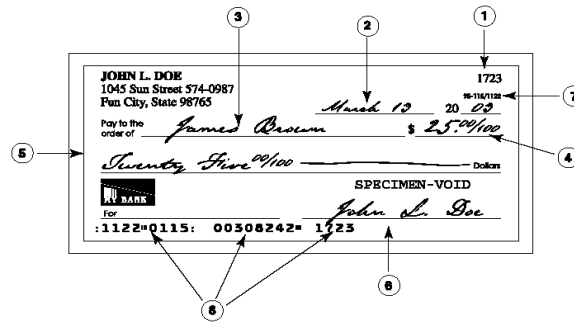
you may also go to CUCSSA bargain board <http://www.cucssa.org/bulletin.asp> to find some sublease information.

Shopping for household goods: In case your apartment is unfurnished, here are some tips about finding furniture and moving in. You can get most of the light furniture at "Bed, Bath, & Beyond" located at Broadway and 66th Street. They have anything from bed sheets to rugs and dishes. This is especially a good place if you live on campus since they can deliver the furniture cheaper than a cab would charge. For bigger furniture, IKEA is the best option available. A free water taxi to the IKEA in Brooklyn runs every 40 minutes during the hours of 10am to 10pm from Pier 11 in lower Manhattan. There is also a free shuttle bus from Port Authority to the IKEA in New Jersey on Saturdays and Sundays (call 1-800-BUS-IKEA)

When moving in, you can always ask your new friends to help, or otherwise you can hire professionals from www.emove.com. The cost will depend on the number of people you need, but it could be affordable if you do not have many things to move.



BANKING



How to Write a Check

- 1) Check number
 - 2) Date check is written. Write out month, day, year. i.e.
March 12, 2009
 - 3) Payee. The person or company you are paying.
 - 4) The amount in numbers i.e. 25.00
 - 5) The amount in words i.e. Twenty Five Dollars & 00/100.
- This is very important and checks may returned if it is written incorrectly

- 6) Signature
- 7) Bank numbers (You will probably never need to know this)
- 8) Bank routing number and account number. Useful for when you are paying bills online using your checking account.

ATM/Debit Card

You will receive a debit card soon after you open a bank account depending on what bank you use. You can use it to get cash from your account at any ATM machine or make purchases. There may be a fee if you use it at an ATM machine that does not belong to your bank. There are usually ATM machines in bank branches.

TIP

There are two Citi Bank ATMs and a Citi Bank office in Lerner

Credit Cards

Credit cards have many advantages over debit cards, such as free grace period on purchases, cash back rewards, free insurance and other protections. Even if you have a SSN, it can still be difficult to get a credit card at first because before issuing you the card, the issuing institution checks your credit history, and it takes a while to build a credit history. So do not get discouraged if you initially get refused.

You can talk to your bank about ways to improve your credit history, such as taking out a loan and returning it so that you can develop a record as a reliable borrower. You can also look for student credit cards online. From our experience, the easiest cards for foreign students to get are Chase platinum and American Express for students.

In the worst case, you still can try the secure credit card with your bank. There is an annual fee, but it is a good starting point to build a credit history.



US POSTAL SERVICE

“First-Class” mail is what we use for most postcards, letters, large envelopes (flats) and small packages. The price you pay depends on the destination, the weight and the shape of the item that you are sending. Usually sending a domestic letter costs \$0.44, and an international letter costs \$0.98 (\$0.75 to Canada and Mexico). For items that are heavier

than 13 ounces, you may have to use priority mail. Details are listed on the website of USPS. The closest USPS post office is located at 112th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue. Another one to the east of campus is on 125th Street near Morningside Avenue.

If you need to send packages or express mail, popular choices are FedEx Kinko's office (600 116th Street) and UPS (603 115th Street). Shipping rates are available on their websites.



PHONE SERVICE

A cell phone may not necessarily be indispensable, but it may be important for your social connection. Popular carriers in the city are T-mobile, Verizon, AT&T (formerly Cingular), and Sprint. Different carriers have different service plans and rates for users. Let us explain some words that you may encounter when you consider getting you a cell phone service plan:

- **Go phone:** You have to prepay with cash or prepaid cards. You can cancel any time you want, but the fee is relatively higher.
- **Family Plan:** A family plan offers maximum value for those who need multiple lines of cell phone service, which means several users (with different phone numbers) can share the expense and minutes quota.
- **Rollover:** Some carriers allow you to rollover your unused minutes from month to month. For example, you have 200 minutes quota per month, but you only used 100 this month. "Rollover" lets you combine the unused 100 minutes to the next month's quota.

You can either buy phone cards online to make international calls or use software like Skype to make call online. CUIT also provides international call services at reasonable price: <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/telecom/students/cellularld.html>.



BUYING BOOKS

As a student, you always have to suffer the pain of buying textbooks at the beginning of every semester. You may ask: new books, used books, paperback, hardcover - which one should I choose? Where can I find cheap textbooks? OK, let us talk about how to get all the textbooks on your list with limited budget.

What textbooks do I need?

Usually you will get to know what textbooks are needed on the first day of class, but sometimes you can find out earlier. The list of textbooks for some courses may be available in Courseworks or reserved through student service online (<https://ssol.columbia.edu/>). After registering for your courses, you may be able to know what books you need before the first class. It is very common that you will have more than one textbook for one course. Some of them are necessary while some of others are just supplementary. You can make a checklist of all the textbooks you need and start to get them.

One of the main causes to your pain is the everlasting updated edition of textbooks. You may be able to find the older editions in the library, and you do not want to pay the high price for the latest edition. Ask your professors about the differences between the newest and older editions and how necessary it is to use the latest one. Sometimes you just need to pay a reasonable price for an older edition textbook with the main difference being a less fancy cover. Another concern for textbook is paperback vs. hardcover. Generally speaking, a paperback copy has the same size and content as the hardcover, except for the material that the cover is made of. Paperback copies often have a lower price. You can decide which one to buy based on your need and budget .

Where can I get my textbooks?

Generally, you can get books from libraries, local bookstores and online book dealers. You may prefer to check out textbooks from the libraries if you have a tight budget or for those textbooks which are supplementary to the course. To save time, you may want to search with CLIO (Columbia Library Information Online) to get the record of the books. You can also use CLIO to see whether the book is checked out or not. Books that are “reserved” for a class can only be checked out for a short

time. In the case that you cannot find the book you need, there are inter-library loan options so that you can borrow books from another university's library. Do not forget about the electronic resources provided by the libraries.

Some courses may have textbooks ordered from the local bookstores by the professors. You just need to go to those bookstores (Columbia bookstore, Labyrinth bookstore, Teachers College bookstore etc) and tell them the name and number of the course to find the books you need. Many of these bookstores also buy back and sell used books. It is very convenient and fast, but you may not be able to get much discount. Another option is to buy your books online. You can easily compare prices and enjoy great discounts, but it usually costs more money and time for delivery. You can use search engines to compare prices of different dealers before you decide (addall.com, bigwords.com, allbookstores.com, bookfinder.com, campusi.com, etc). There are also good textbook deals from these websites: abebooks.com, alibris.com, amazon.com, half.com.



ENTERTAINMENT

Shopping

Most prices shown in any shop are without tax, so remember that the purchase price will be the shown one plus 8.375%!! The good news is, you don't need to pay tax for shoes and clothing under \$110 and groceries in New York City!

In the US, it is almost always possible to return or exchange anything you have bought within a certain amount of time from the purchase. Return policies are listed on the receipts and receipts are usually required so don't lose them! Even if you lose your receipts, sometimes you can get a store credit.

Buying via the internet using your credit card, debit card, or Paypal account is secure and sometimes tax-free and with free shipping, although it is a good idea to double check for shipping prices before you submit your order. It is common to use coupons and MIR, which stands for "mail-in rebates" to get discounts. You will probably get your rebate check after several months, but its worth the wait. For the locations of

different stores, you can check <http://www.ny.com/shopping/>

As a student, you can also get discounts in many stores by obtaining a card from www.studentadvantage.com by paying a small annual fee. Additionally, check at stores in the vicinity of the campus for discounts

The department store Macy's (located at 34th St. and Broadway) also offers a 11%-off discount for foreigners on most purchases, if you show a foreign passport or driver license. To take advantage of this, go to the Visitor's Center at Macy's. Macy's is a good source for various items, including clothing, cookware, housing accessories, etc. In addition, a nationally recognized shopping day is "Black Friday," the Friday after Thanksgiving in late November.

Groceries

If you are living in an apartment and would like to cook, you may be interested in several grocery stores conveniently located near campus. The closest store is Morton Williams (at 116th and Broadway, on the west side), but it may be a little more expensive than others. For groceries that are a bit more fresh at reasonable prices, we recommend walking a little bit to Westside Market (at 110th and Broadway), Fairway Market (12th Ave at 130th St.), or C-Town (125th St., east of Broadway), providing a wide range of fruit and vegetables (organic and conventional), pantry and canned items, as well as prepared foods. The Columbia shuttle also has a stop near Fairway, so you can transport your newly purchased groceries back to campus.

Restaurants & Tipping

TIPS: Restaurants: for normal service 15-20% of the pre-tax amount.

Bars: \$1 or \$2 for every drink; **Taxis & Hairdressers:** 10-20%

When you share a bill, remember to count in tax and tips, add 25% to the price of the meal you ordered for your part of the bill. You can check the menus of all restaurants at www.menupages.com. You can make restaurants reservations and look for offers on www.opentable.com. During summer and winter, there is an event called "Restaurant Week". You can go to famous restaurants for heavily discounted prices (check menus and prices at www.nycvisit.com).

Bars & Entertainment

It is illegal to serve alcohol to individuals under 21, and most of the clubs and bars will not let you in if you are under age. ALWAYS remember to carry an official ID (most places will not take your Colum-

bia card as a valid ID form), or you may have to stay out, regardless of how old you look. All indoor places, including restaurants, are smoke free. Consuming alcohol outside in undesignated spaces is illegal and you can be fined by the NYPD.

Music

There are several jazz clubs with cover charges ranging from \$0 to \$60, check www.ny.com/clubs/jazz. Free Club concerts may have a minimum drink charge! There are loads of free concerts and events during the summer, search for the “Freebie” calendar at www.newyorkmetro.com. For Broadway shows visit: www.livebroadway.com. You can also get discount tickets for concerts at Lincoln Center, which includes the City Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Ballet, the American Ballet Theater, the New York Philharmonic, and Lincoln Center Theater among others. Check the offerings at http://www.lincolncenter.org/load_screen.asp?screen=purchase_studentdiscounts.

Sports

- Basketball: Madison Square Garden is the home of the New York Knicks. Go to <http://www.nba.com/knicks/> to get all the information and enjoy the best basketball games!
- Baseball: That’s one of the most popular games in US. Cheer for the New York Yankees or Mets, they won’t disappoint you!
- Football: You don’t want to miss the SUPER BOWL, which is the final of the NFL and also the most watched television program in the US. <http://www.superbowl.com/>
- Soccer: NYC has its soccer team New York Red Bulls. The playfield is the Giant Stadium in New Jersey. You can check them at <http://redbull.newyork.mlssnet.com>.
- Tennis: Take the #7 Flushing subway from either Times Square or Grand Central to the Shea Stadium / Willets Point Station to enjoy the US OPEN!

Want to join the game yourselves? Come to the Dodge Fitness Center located on the left side of the Havemayer building. Though it is underground, there is enough space for basketball, indoor soccer, volleyball and personal exercise. The nearest outdoor playfield is around 105th Street, in Riverside Park. The other good choice is Central Park. For some formal games like baseball and soccer, you may need to reserve the field online. More information can be found at <http://www.nycgovparks.org>

Museums and Other Offerings

With your Columbia ID you have and free admission to many of the city's great museums. Check the current list at <http://www.cuarts.com/freemuseums/>. You can also take advantage of Columbia's many artistic offerings and discount for other venues. Check <http://www.cuarts.com/> for more info. Discounted movie tickets can also be purchased at www.cuarts.com.

A good source of information for NYC restaurants & entertainment scene are Time Out NY, New York Magazine, the Village Voice and the Sunday Times. In the web: www.newyorkmetro.com, www.newyorkcitysearch.com and www.newyorkled.com. Check out more information on NYC's entertainment opportunities at CU's website at

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eguides/nyc.html>. To find your way around go to www.hopstop.com You can enter your starting address and destination for subway and/or bus and walking directions.



SAFETY

- Act confident and be aware of who is around you.
- Never display large amounts of cash or jewels out in the open.
- Carry some cash at all times to give to a robber in case you're confronted.
- Be aware of your wallet or purse in commotion.
- Place your handbags under your arm or in front of you.
- In case you need assistance yell "Fire" not "Help". People will come look if they think there's a fire.
- Never leave something valuable showing in your car. Place your belongings in the trunk if your car is in a safe place (but do take into account that trunks can become very hot if you are parked in the open!!)
- Never open your car window to strangers, especially at night or in secluded spots.
- Always walk in a populated path where there are a number of open stores, not just at night!
- Walk in the middle of the sidewalk, not next to the building or the street.

- Stay away from the park at night.
- If you work late, keep in mind CU Escort Service will accompany you to your door anytime from 8:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., seven nights a week. Call 212-854-7233 to arrange a pickup.
- Avoid empty subway cars.
- If someone is harassing you on the street, quickly walk to a populated area or into a populated store, or even find a police officer.
- Watch out for people offering you taxi rides at any transportation center such as the Port Authority, Grand Central, or airports. Though many are honest, some are illegally evading a taxi dispatcher or just trying to lure you to a more secluded spot for mugging.
- Try not to misplace or lose your keys. After normal working hours, you may be charged a lockout fee ranging between \$30 and \$50. Save up for something better.
- Keep alert for various types of deceptive emails and mails trying to steal your confidential information such as credit card number, social security number or account password.
- Prepare your daily schedule with safety in mind! Always keep emergency contacts.
Morningside Campus: 212-854-5555 (Available 24 hours)
Medical Center: 212-305-7979, 212-305-8100
New York Police Department (NYPD): 911

And, please remember, “Your life is worth more than the cash in your pocket.” More information about public safety can be found at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/publicsafety> or in FACETS.



TRANSPORTATION

AROUND COLUMBIA CAMPUSES

Intercampus Shuttle Bus

The intercampus shuttle goes between Morningside Heights, Harlem Hospital, and the Medical Center campuses. There is also a shuttle to the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. Shuttles are free of charge for Columbia employees and students. Pick-up and discharge locations are the following: in front of the Milstein Pavilion on Fort Washington

Avenue at the Medical Center campus, on Lenox Avenue and 136th Street at the Harlem Hospital Center, and the main gates on Broadway and 116th St on the Morningside campus. Travel time between points in Manhattan is about 15 minutes. All scheduled departure times can be found at <http://www.cumc.columbia.edu/about/guide/transportation.html>.

Morningside Heights Shuttle Bus (SAFE Ride)

A safe way to get around the Morningside Heights area at night. Available on-call throughout the academic school year (not including summer session) from 11pm to 2am and free of charge for anyone with a valid Columbia Card.

AROUND NEW YORK CITY

The best way is to use public transportation, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), subway or bus.

Subway and Bus

You need a MetroCard to ride the subway, but you can use either a MetroCard or coins to ride a bus. Always remember that no bills or pennies are allowed to pay for the bus ride. If you pay in coins, you can ask the driver for a transfer. With a MetroCard (which can be purchased at any subway station), you can use it with both bus and subway. Pay-Per-Ride: \$2.25 per ride. Unlimited Ride: \$8.25 for the 1-day Fun Pass, \$27 for the weekly pass, \$51.50 for a 14-day unlimited pass, and \$89 for the 30-day pass. With a MetroCard, you get an automatic free transfer within a 2-hour period between subway and bus, or between buses, but not between subways. Subway and bus maps are available at no cost in any subway station booth. More information about MTA at <http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us>.

Taxi

When giving the destination, New Yorkers usually say, “Broadway and 16th” or “119th between Amsterdam and Morningside”, rather than “412 West 116 Street”

The maximum legal number of passengers allowed in a yellow cab is 5 adults including the driver, and there are no limit how many stops are allowed. You pay the entire fare (fare + tax + 10-15% tip) at the end of your trip. If you encounter a problem, get the taxicab medallion number and contact Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) at 311 to file a complaint.

OUTSIDE NEW YORK CITY

Bus

NJ Transit and Greyhound buses leave from the Port Authority Bus Terminal on 42nd Street and 8th Avenue. NJ Transit buses service New Jersey destinations. Greyhound is a national bus company so you can go anywhere in the US by bus.

If you are going to Washington DC, Boston, or Philadelphia, a cheaper way is to take the bus from Chinatown around the Manhattan Bridge (Canal Street and Bowery Street). The price is normally \$20/per way/one way. More information about Chinatown buses at <http://www.ivymedia.com>.

Train

It is a more comfortable way but costs more. You can take a train from Penn Station (34th Street and 8th Avenue) or Grand Central Station (42nd Street and Park Avenue). Amtrak (national service) and the Long Island Railroad (servicing Long Island) leave from Penn Station. Metro-North trains (servicing Westchester county and Connecticut) depart from Grand Central Station or 125th St. and Park Avenue.

Airplane

There are three airports near New York City: JFK, Newark (international and domestic), and LaGuardia (domestic only). Below are some websites from where you can find cheap air tickets.

<http://www.priceline.com/>

<http://www.expedia.com/>

<http://www.kayak.com/>

Apart from bus, cab, and subway, you can also choose to take the Super Shuttle to/from the airport. Detailed information could be found at <http://www.supershuttle.com/default.aspx?content=NewYork>.

Driving

Few Columbia students (or New Yorkers in general) own cars for the following reasons: it's hard to find parking lots in Manhattan, car insurance is expensive, and public transportation system is very convenient in New York City. Though it is not necessary to buy a car, it is still good for you to learn to drive and have a driver license. You may want to rent a car for vacation, and driver license is a common use official ID in US. More information about driver license could be found at <http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/>.



INTERNET RESOURCES

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Ask Us: Columbia Student Services Info

"Ask Us" is the online question and answer tool for the Division of Student Services at Columbia University. Currently, Ask Us provides answers to students, parents and other members of the University community covering the topics: Billing and Payments, Tuition and Fees, Registration, Transcripts and Grades, ID Card, and Personal Information

Housing and Dining

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/student-services/docs/ask-us/index.html>

Columbia Interactive Campus Map: Locate a building on the campus

http://www.columbia.edu/about_columbia/map/

Columbia Arts Initiative

Information on the arts in New York including list of museums with free admission (Passport to NY) and shows under \$30. You can also buy movie tickets at a reduced price.

<http://www.cuarts.com/>

Columbia's web page for exploring NY

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eguides/nyc.html>

Columbia's Health Services: Confirm insurance selection, upgrade or request a waiver, check requirements for international students regarding immunizations, read about the services offered, and schedule a primary care appointment online

<http://www.health.columbia.edu/>

Learn about Columbia IT services

<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/welcome/index.html>

Obtain discounts when buying a computer

<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/sales/>

Daily events at Columbia

<http://calendar.columbia.edu/>

Information for students in F-1 and J-1 Status

Coming to Columbia: Essential Information for New International Students http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/incoming/Coming_to_Columbia_for_Students.pdf
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/visa/F-1/index.html>

GETTING AROUND THE CITY

Hopstop: Use this site to get directions from one place to another in NYC. Specify where you are going, which means of transportation you want to use, the hour and day you are traveling, and Hopstop will indicate the route and the approximate traveling time. You can even get a taxi quote! www.hopstop.com

Address locator: Find the cross streets of addresses on avenues (Where is 395 Third Avenue?) <http://www.manhattanaddress.com/>

Metropolitan Transit Authority: Info on subway, bus, Long Island Railroad, Metro-North Railroad; schedules, maps and fares, as well as service changes (very important to check, especially during the weekend. You can even get a weekly advisory in your mailbox)
<http://www.mta.info/>

EVENTS IN NEW YORK CITY

This Week in NY

<http://twi-ny.com/>

Theater Development Fund

Low-cost tickets to Broadway and off-Broadway for same day performances, and through annual membership <http://www.tdf.org/>

One-to-World

Programs for international students and scholars in the greater New York Metropolitan area <http://www.one-to-world.org>

NYC.gov

Information on a wide variety of issues, which are important while you live in New York

<http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.78f09d1f955d3ae6a62fa24601c789a0/>

Yelp

Website containing helpful reviews of restaurants, shops and businesses in the city, written by your fellow consumers. www.yelp.com

PEER ADVISERS 2009-2010

Avishek Adhikari

Sriharsha Aradhya

Ripla Arora

Hayri Balcioglu

Berk Birand

Jung-Ryun (Sophie) Byun

Rishiraj (Richie) Choudhary

Monica Deep

Richard Gill

Abdullahi Halakhe

Badri Hiriyur

Stanley Huang

Shabnam Huq

Angela Jia

Jie Jin

Tingzhu (Anita) Ke

Caroline Lai

Christine (Hyewon)
Lee

Yu-Shiang Lu

Regina Lutz

Oluwayemi Omotoso

Hesam Parsa

Subhankar Sadhukhan

Inoyathon Sadikova

Rabiha Sami

Sumit Sharma

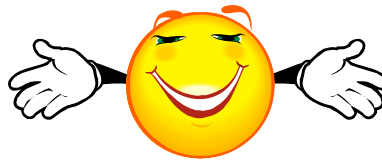
Mi Wang

Na Wei

Jean-Ezra Yeung

Shuobo Zhang

Xiaoguang (Alex) Zhu



WELCOME!

Check out the Columbia International Cyber Community at
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/columbia-intl/>

For more information and resources for getting settled in New York,
see Coming to Columbia on-line at
www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/incoming/

We look forward to seeing you around campus!