Arriving in the U.S.: Immigration Inspection

COVID-Related Entry Requirements
Please refer to Current Travel Guidance [2] for COVID-related entry requirements.

Upon arrival, you will go through immigration inspection, where your electronic I-94 entry record will be created. Be sure to have your passport, immigration document, and the rest of the recommended items below with you. Do not pack them in your checked luggage.

Documents to Have On-Hand

With all of the COVID-19 related changes to both U.S. immigrations and the operation of U.S. universities, we want you to have all the documents that you may need in coming or returning to the U.S. When you arrive at the U.S. port of entry, the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will certainly want to see the first three documents but may ask to see other documents on this list. The officer may also ask you to answer additional questions about your study plans. Documents #6-7 on this list relate to the current situation. Please review them.

Important Note:
Carry these documents with you - don't put them in your checked luggage

1. Valid Passport*: must be valid at least 6 months into the future at the time of admission.
2. Valid U.S. Visa ** Except for Canadian citizens, all international travelers also need to have a valid visa in their passport issued by a U.S. embassy or consulate.
3. Your Immigration Document: a DS-2019 for J-1 status, an I-797 approval notice for H-1B holders, etc.
4. Receipt from paying the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) fee [3]: if you are an F or J visa holder.
5. Copy of your hiring letter and proof of funds: while you may not be asked for it, it is advisable for new scholars to carry these documents as well. Proof of funds can include the same documents you submitted to obtain your DS-2019, such as bank statements.

* All international scholars and family members planning to depart from the U.S. and return after a temporary absence must have a valid passport in order to exit the U.S. The passport must also be valid for a minimum of six months into the future at the time of re-entry to the U.S. Some countries have an agreement with the U.S. that automatically extends passport validity for 6 months [4], for U.S. entry purposes only.

** U.S. visas cannot be obtained or renewed inside the U.S.
What to Expect at the U.S. Port of Entry

Your visa and other immigration documents are evidence of your eligibility to apply for admission in a particular visa status at a U.S. Port of Entry.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and is the government agency that controls admission to the United States. The CBP officer makes the final decision on your admission to the U.S. in a particular status and determines how long you may stay based on your documents.

1. Meet the CBP Officer

The officer will review your documents, inspect your bag, and ask you a few questions about the purpose of your travel to the U.S.

If all is in order, the officer will admit you to the U.S. and will stamp your passport with:

- date and place of arrival
- immigration status
- expiration of your stay in status

If the officer has additional questions, please see Secondary Inspection below for more information.

2. Confirm that your visa stamp is accurate

The CBP officer will admit you to the U.S. and stamp your passport with:

- date and place of arrival
- immigration status
- expiration of your stay in status

Before you leave the immigration check point, confirm that your visa information is correct. Make sure you have the small ink entry stamp with your visa classification and expiration date (“D/S” if you are F-1 or J-1) handwritten. The expiration date should match the end of the program (on the I-20 or DS-2019) plus a grace period.

Important Note:

If you do not have a stamp, or see the wrong visa classification written, request that the CBP officer give you a correct stamp. You may need to go to the Differed Inspection section of the airport.

3. Review your 1-94 (after arrival)

As soon as you have access to a computer please look-up your I-94 record [5] to make sure it is accurate. Print or save a copy on your device.
Secondary Inspection

Most Yale students and scholars will clear U.S. immigration after your documents are reviewed by a CBP officer. However, a few may be referred to another officer to verify your student status or for additional questioning. This is referred to as "secondary inspection [6]". Although a referral to secondary inspection can be intimidating and make you feel anxious, there is usually little cause for alarm. Be aware that it can take an hour or two to complete this inspection process.

If the CBP officer has questions that can be answered by OISS, ask the officer if they would like to call OISS for confirmation. During office hours, you can call your adviser directly [7] or the general office number, (203) 432-2305. After hours call the Yale Police Department at (203) 432-4400 who will immediately call the OISS director or associate director.

Get to New Haven

Find out how to get from the airport to your new home! [8]