**IDIS 399 Global Seminar in Interdisciplinary Studies**

**Winter Term 2020**

**Biodiversity, Ecotourism and Culture**

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**Course Objectives**: This course is designed for students of all disciplines to get an understanding of the practice of Ecotourism and its relationship to Biodiversity using Costa Rica as a case study. The emphasis will be on the activities used to developing the economy while conserving biodiversity. Students will experience methods used in Costa Rica by visiting national parks, research, agricultural and cultural facilities. A clear understanding of what constitutes ecotourism, vs other types of tourism, will be explored. Students will develop an understanding of how complex conservation can be and will develop or sharpen their skills of scientific observation through guided activities and time on their own to observe. They will maintain a Journal, answering directed prompts as well as recording their own impressions of the day’s activities. The course will include large measures of science, language, culture, art, history, and a general appreciation for Costa Rica and her people.

**Learning objectives:**

* To understand the concepts of biodiversity and ecotourism
* To observe the link between biodiversity and ecotourism
* To experience various activities that are part a foreign country’s tourism based economy
* To determine what activities are ecotourism or another type of tourism
* To keep a journal documenting all experiences during a study abroad program
* To understand the difficulties of developing an economy while protecting biodiversity
* To write a paper demonstrating understanding of the objectives for the class
* To apply the students area of study to the culture experienced in a foreign country

**Textbook:** *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?* ***Second Edition***; Martha Honey. Assigned chapters and any additional reading will be posted on MyClasses. You **must** get the **Second** Edition!

**Prerequisites:** There are currently no prerequisites for this course other than good standing at Salisbury University. It is hoped that all students will have an enthusiastic attitude and desire to learn about the Biodiversity, Ecotourism and Culture of another country.

**My Classes @ SU:** Everyone registered for this class is automatically registered for our campus classroom management system, MyClasses Canvas. This is where assignments, reading materials, etc. will be posted. You must have access to MyClasses @ SU for this course.

**Assignments:**

**Text Questions:**

Four chapters of the text will be read before the in country part of the course. Questions will be assigned for each of these chapters and must be answered in writing – typed and submitted.

**Journal:** All students will be required to maintain a Journal. You must provide the journal yourself. Examples will be shown at the orientation meetings before the trip. The goal is to create a semi-permanent record of your activities and observations while on the trip. Guide questions will be given at the end of each day. Everything you do and think should be recorded; every single piece of information related to what you are doing should be noted. Sketches, general notes, weather conditions, observations of any and all available data/information should be recorded. Neatness is not a priority. The main priorities are accuracy and completeness.

Your Journal will consist of your daily account, description, explanation, clarification, comments and interpretations of the day’s events. Journal entries are most often made at the end of the day when you are winding down and relaxing in the evening (but not always, it depends on your preference). Each day’s Journal entry should be at least one page but usually are several pages of text. The length of each day’s entry is not important. What is important is that that you and others should be able to “relive” every day of your trip while reading your Journal at some future date.

There are many sources of appropriate notebooks for this purpose. Visit the bookstore and on-line sources to find a notebook that you believe will suit your needs. The Journal is due when we land back in the U.S. They will be returned to you the first week of the spring semester.

**Individual Projects:**

This project is tailored to individual students based on their majors. Some examples of possible projects are listed. This work will consist of a paper that is due BEFORE we leave for the country and will consist of a written assignment and then a presentation while in country.

**Major:               Assignment**Biology              research a plant or animal endemic to Costa Rica   
English              read and critique a work of fiction by a Costa Rican author  
History              research the history of the country, perhaps choosing a specific time period and reporting major developments of that time  
Education          research the education system   
Political Science research the changes in the government structure over time or a particular period of change  
Nursing             research medical care system or drug development program  
Business           choose a major area of the economy and research its development - coffee, pineapples, bananas, ecotourism,   
Athletics            research soccer!  
Spanish            research language requirements in school and practice speaking while in country

## Paper: Upon return students will write a paper using what they have learned in country. The due date will be posted closer to the course start. A tentative draft of the paper directions is at the end of this syllabus.

**Grading:** Your grade for the course will be based on the following 500 points:

**40%** Journal (200 pts.) **10%** Participation, text questions; attitude (50 points)

**30%** Project and presentation (150 pts.) **20%**Paper (100 pts.)

**Course Agenda:**

There will be several class meetings on campus before we leave the country. 11 days in Costa Rica where you will have different activities each day as well as several class meetings. Upon return you will have several days to complete your paper. The tentative dates for 2020 are January 6 -22.

***Tentative*** itinerary:

**Day 1: Travel to Costa Rica:**

Overnight in San Jose; possible trip to Poas Volcano.

**Day 2-3 Tortuguero:**

Day 2: travel and Caribbean Conservation Visitors Center and town.

Day 3: Two Canal Tours - early AM and mid afternoon

**Day 4-5 Sarapiqui:**

Day 4: travel and Tirimbina Chocolate tour.

Day 5: La Selva Biological Station; afternoon whitewater rafting; night tour back at Tirimbina.

**Day 6:**

Head to Monteverde via la Fortuna – lunch and town tour stop. Night hike in Monteverde.

**Day 7-8 Monteverde**

Day 7: Zip lining in Monteverde, visit to Santa Elena reserve, ; Monteverde Butterfly Garden.

Day 8: Monteverde Biological Reserve – early AM Visit and return in afternoon for a second hike; tour the town of Santa Elena.

**Day 9-10 Guanacaste**

Day 9: traveling and Las Baulas National marine Park night Turtle nesting tour.

Day 10: morning boat tour at Palo Verde National park, afternoon snorkeling.

**Day 11:** Return to U.S.

***Tentative paper assignment:***

**The Economics of Biodiversity: An Exercise in Environmental Decision Making**

**Background**

Biodiversity refers to all the different species of life on earth, where they live and how they interact. Estimates of the total number of species on the planet vary widely from ten to 100 million. Just think of all the different life forms you have seen outside, at the zoo or even on television. You have studied about the many reasons why biodiversity is important.

Today scientists believe biodiversity is decreasing at the fastest rate in 65 million years. It is estimated that as many as twenty percent of the world’s species will go extinct in the next 25 years. Most of these extinctions are not caused by natural phenomenon but by human activity. Since 1600 the known causes of animal extinction can be grouped as follows: habitat destruction (36 %), over-hunting (23%) and the introduction of exotic (non-native) species (39 %).

When we refer to the world’s nations it is generally acceptable to refer to them as either developed or developing. Developed nations include the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia and most recently Brazil. The developing nations are located at or below the equator and are in South America, Central America, Africa and the Indo-Pacific regions of the world.

Most tropical ecosystems are found in developing nations. As it is estimated that tropical forests contain 74% or more of the world’s species these nations are critical in maintaining the world’s biodiversity.

Every nation needs to maintain independence from other countries, develop its economy and balance the use and conservation of resources. Biodiversity conservation must be balanced with economic and material needs.

**The Decision**

You are the leader of a small developing nation. Fifty percent of your country is covered in tropical forest. Your people are generally poor farmers who live in rural areas on the edges of forest. Your advisors have given you the following information:

*State of the Economy*

* National debt: 1 billion quetzals (the national currency)
* Annual agricultural income: 15 million quetzals
* Possible annual income from expanding agriculture by cutting down more forest: up to 30 million quetzals for three years and then less each year after as the soil loses nutrients
* Current income from tourism: 2 million quetzals
* Possible income from increased tourism: 5 million quetzals
* Possible income from sustainable use of tropical forest (harvesting products like nuts and fruits, tourism) 5 million quetzals

*Public Opinion*

Most of your people understand that biodiversity conservation is important but they have pressing needs for jobs and resources on which to live. Conservation would be more important to them if it could be shown to bring jobs and an increased standard of living. The majority of the population thinks you are a good leader but are worried you will sell land to foreign nations to raise needed capital. They do not want their land sold to foreigners.

*Debt for Land Offer*

Your advisors have informed you that an international conservation organization has worked out a deal with The World Bank. This group will pay 20 million quetzals to the World Bank to cover 25% of your debt. In exchange you must permanently protect 25% of your nation’s tropical forest as a nature preserve making it unavailable for future development.

**The question you must answer is: what is the best strategy to maintain your country’s biodiversity and still develop your economy? Justify your plan!**

You can work on this project alone or with a classmate. You can help each other brainstorm ideas but then you must each refine your own individual plan. Each student must turn in their own paper – not a copy of someone else’s work.

The completed paper must demonstrate an understanding of the concept and importance of biodiversity, the complexities of environmental decisions and justifications for your proposal. This means you must include **details** in your plan – you must explain each step not just make a list. There is no set length for the paper but in order to do a good job it should be ***at least*** three pages in the same format as these directions (just open Word and start typing!). If you double space it should be 5 - 6 pages minimum.

**Map**: you must include a map of your country showing forest, developments, towns, proposed project areas, protected areas etc.

**Scoring Tool:**

By answering the question **“what is the best strategy to maintain your country’s biodiversity and still develop your economy”** students will show an understanding of the concept and importance of biodiversity and demonstrate mastery of the complexities of environmental decision making. The paper is worth 100/500 points of the course grade (20%).

Attached is a rubric to give you an idea of what a really good paper should include. Have fun, use your imagination but also be realistic. Try and consciously incorporate the ideas from your text and your experiences in Costa Rica. Do not just design a program that only used things we did in our class but use them as guidelines for the types of activities you could have.

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|  | **Expert** | **Proficient** | **Apprentice** | Novice |
| Integration of Knowledge 25 points | The paper demonstrates that the author fully understands and has applied concepts learned in the course. Concepts are integrated into the writer’s own insights. The writer provides concluding remarks that show analysis and synthesis of ideas. | The paper demonstrates that the author, for the most part, understands and has applied concepts learned in the course. Some of the conclusions, however, are not supported in the body of the paper. | The paper demonstrates that the author, to a certain extent, understands and has applied concepts learned in the course. | The paper does not demonstrate that the author has fully understood and applied concepts learned in the course. |
| Topic Focus 25 points | The topic is focused narrowly enough for the scope of this assignment. A thesis statement provides direction for the paper, either by statement of a position or hypothesis. | The topic is focused but lacks direction. The paper is about a specific topic but the writer has not established a position. | The topic is too broad for the scope of this assignment. | The topic is not clearly defined. |
| Depth of Discussion 25 Points | In-depth discussion & elaboration in all sections of the paper. | In-depth discussion & elaboration in most sections of the paper. | The writer has omitted pertinent content or content runs-on excessively. Quotations from others outweigh the writer’s own ideas excessively. | Cursory discussion in all the sections of the paper or brief discussion in only a few sections. |
| Cohesiveness 25 points | Ties together information from all sources. Paper flows from one issue to the next without the need for headings. Author's writing demonstrates an understanding of the relationship among material obtained from all sources. | For the most part, ties together information from all sources. Paper flows with only some disjointedness. Author's writing demonstrates an understanding of the relationship among material obtained from all sources. | Sometimes ties together information from all sources. Paper does not flow - disjointedness is apparent. Author's writing does not demonstrate an understanding of the relationship among material obtained from all sources. | Does not tie together information. Paper does not flow and appears to be created from disparate issues. Headings are necessary to link concepts. Writing does not demonstrate understanding any relationships |