


Earth Education International
Directed Study in Sustainable Global Stewardship
Universidad de San José credit: EDG 021; Métodos y Técnicas de Investigación 
Dr. Miguel Karian, Spring 2016

DRAFT

Instructor Contact

Email: mkarian-at-earthedintl.org *Office Phone:* 2447-1084

NOTE: Please limit academic phone calls to work hours (8a-5p Mon-Fri), unless urgent.

Availability: Tuesdays 4:30-5:30pm or by appointment one working day in advance.

Course Description

A personalized, in-depth, learning opportunity in Sustainable Global Stewardship within the Costa Rican context. Includes individual consultations and community service learning work, or other independent study. Possible themes include agriculture, land use, sustainable business, environmental conservation, sustainable energy, community development, ecotourism, regional studies, social services, or other topics as approved. Instructor approval required.

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Complete in-depth background research on a topic of interest
2. Design, and implement an individual/group project in the Central American/Costa Rican Context
3. Synthesize research data and disparate field study or practicum experiences related to sustainability in Central America
4. Successfully complete a volunteer work experience with a local organization (Service Learning Practicum), or ethnographic data gathering techniques in the field (Thematic Study Project)

Course Materials

Given that this is an independent project, no textbook is required. Rather, background research and field experiences, or a community service practicum, in Central America will serve as vehicles for independent and group hands-on learning. Other recommended resources will also be provided as appropriate, depending upon the specific project to be implemented.

Course Requirements

This course will be made up of two different sections as follows:

Section 1. Field Component

Either individually, or in small groups, student will select one of two types of in-country work:

A. Service Learning Practicum (SLP) (preferred option)

Community Service Learning practicums will consist of volunteering with a local organization involved in environmental, social, or economic sustainability for a minimum of 30 hours (4 full days, or 8 half-days). The site will normally be in the San Ramón area for easy access and to facilitate working during mid-week free time. This practicum will consist of the following:

1. **Site Selection & Work Contract Completion.** Form groups of at least two people (preferred for safety reasons). If work is accomplished with other group members, postings may be done as a group as well, provided that all contribute to the effort. Once this is done, select the site in consultation with the professor. Possible sites include, but are not limited to, the following: Working on a farm, orphanage or recycling center; assisting with social work programs; teaching English or environmental education; helping with biological research projects or field station work, or other special projects as approved (see http://earthedintl.blogspot.com/search/label/*Volunteer%20Work for past examples). It is highly recommended to talk to those involved and visit the site before deciding where to work. Once the site has been identified, be clear in identifying the details of your work assignment and then complete the upper portion of a 'Contrato de Trabajo Voluntario Estudiantil' form with the person who will be your supervisor. Please be realistic in planning: Take into consideration time & weather constraints, possible language barriers, and limited support from the site. Make two copies of the form: One for your supervisor (to be used for evaluation), and one for your reference. Turn in the original to the professor. **DUE DATE: Tuesday, 24 February, 2015.** LATE POLICY: 5% reduction in the work evaluation (below) per day late.

2. **Work Assignment.** As assigned, satisfactorily complete the work task(s) with the selected organization or project. Also take at least six representative pictures at the site of your group working to turn in/post on the EEI MediaBlog. Please note that evaluation in this category will be based upon feedback from your immediate supervisor regarding your attendance and quality of work performed. VALUE: 200 points (67%) total. **DUE DATE: Tuesday, 31 March, 2015.** LATE POLICY: Work must take place on assigned dates. Any variations from the dates/times agreed to on the work contract form **MUST BE APPROVED**

BY THE PROFESSOR (i.e., the professor must know when you are working for both safety reasons and to be able to schedule a visit during those times).

B. Thematic Study Project (TSP) (alternate option, by special approval)

As an alternative to the SLP, students may be allowed to complete a thematic study project. This option will be similar to, and build upon, the ‘Thematic MediaBlog Postings’ required for the Applied Sustainability course. However, they will differ from those in that they will thematically tie-together at least two different field sites with a third (research paper style) in-depth posting on your chosen theme. Data collection in-country will consist of traditional sources (texts, journals, internet sources), but will also include ethnographic research (e.g., interviews, observations, informal conversations) and/or written and digital materials produced by the organization or associated individuals. As approved, current opinions and statements in the media may also be used. If in doubt, please consult the professor. See the Applied Sustainability course syllabus for possible themes/topics, and visit http://earthedintl.blogspot.com/search/label/*Indiv%2FGrp%20Projects for past examples. **NOTE:** ALL specific details, due dates, and late policies stated under Section 4 of Course Requirements of the Applied Sustainability syllabus (Thematic MediaBlog Postings) apply to this all three of these postings for this option equally.

Section 2. *Dissemination of Results*

Project results will be disseminated online via the EEI MediaBlog as follows:

A. Service Learning Practicum (SLP)

Students selecting the *SLP option* will post a single regular ‘case study’ style posting of their community service as outlined in the Applied Sustainability course syllabus. Please refer to that document for details. **VALUE:** 100 points (33%). **DUE DATE: Tuesday, 7 April, 2015.** **LATE POLICY:** 10% deduction per day late.

A. Thematic Study Project (TSP)

Participants selecting the *TSP option* will be required to post three regular ‘case study’ type postings as outlined in the Applied Sustainability course syllabus to the EEI MediaBlog (please refer to that document for details). Additionally, one thematic photo journal posting (in-depth written paper equivalent) will be required that builds upon, and may make use of information contained in, the background research completed in Section one of this course. The thematic posting should be at least 1,200 words (about two pages equivalent) in length, and include a minimum of two visuals (pictures, diagrams, or charts). It should also mention, and electronically link to, both ‘case study’ type postings. For a stellar example of such a past assignment, see: http://earthedintl.blogspot.com/2011_04_01_archive.html. **VALUE:** 100 points (33%) each, 300 points total. **DUE DATE: Tuesday, 7 April, 2015.** **LATE POLICY:** 10% deduction per day late.

Student Evaluation

The final letter grade for the course will be based on a maximum possible of 300 points according to the following standard grading scale:

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 95-100% = 285-300 pts. = 4.0 (A) | 73-76% = 219-230 pts. = 2.0 (C) |
| 90-94% = 270-284 pts. = 3.7 (A-) | 70-72% = 210-218 pts. = 1.7 (C-) |
| 87-89% = 261-269 pts. = 3.3 (B+) | 67-69% = 201-209 pts. = 1.3 (D+) |
| 83-86% = 249-260 pts. = 3.0 (B) | 63-66% = 189-200 pts. = 1.0 (D) |
| 80-82% = 240-248 pts. = 2.7 (B-) | 60-62% = 180-188 pts. = 0.7 (D-) |
| 77-79% = 231-239 pts. = 2.3 (C+) | 0-59% = < 180 pts. = 0.0 (F) |

Course Policies

Field Study Format. This course is designed to offer the student unique learning by doing opportunities through hands-on experiences. The course format will thus include significant field study as well as volunteer work at various sites. However, please remember that this is an academic experience equivalent to classroom time: Always adhere to all course and program policies, work safely in all activities, and have an emergency plan in mind at all times.

Field Study & Service-Learning Items. Please remember that various field study items are required for safety reasons. Although specific items will vary from site to site, the following general items are required for ALL overnight trips: a) A good *flashlight* with extra batteries; b) Basic *medical supplies* (anti-diarrhea and upset stomach medication, antiseptic, Band-Aids, antibacterial ointment, sting/itch reliever, motion sickness medication if applicable); c) *Enclosed shoes*; d) *Travel bag(s)/backpack*; e) *Water bottle* (at least 1 liter size); f) *Rain gear*; g) Required *personal medications*; h) Any type of *hat* (sun protection); i) *Sunscreen* and sunburn medication; j) *Notebook* for journal keeping; k) Portable Spanish-English *dictionary* or *guidebook* (not necessary for advanced Spanish speakers). For more details on service-learning/field study guidelines, see <http://www.earthedintl.org/Policies.htm#Academic>.

Attendance. With the exception of illness, participants are expected to attend all program functions, activities, field trips, service-learning activities, guest presentations, etc. There are a variety of reasons for this including receiving academic credit for associated activities, facilitating program dynamics, assisting with personal adjustment issues, and contributing your effort toward group assignments. Students will be held responsible for knowing the class schedule and making alternative arrangements ahead of time for any missed assignments. For further detail regarding participation, see ‘course requirements’ above.

Absences. In accordance with general program policies, course absences will subject grades to being lowered. Unexcused absences from *class meetings* will subject the final course grade to a reduction of 1% (for 1 days missed), 2% (for 2 days missed), and 5% per day thereafter (for three or more days). Also note that excessive tardiness to class may be counted as missed class. Missed *field study/volunteer work days* will result in a 5% reduction in the final grade (1 day missed), and a 10% reduction per day thereafter (this is also considered class time). This means that if you are late and miss a departure for a field trip, you not only miss the trip, but also the equivalent amount of class time. For SPECIAL circumstances (beyond your control) where you are unable to attend, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DIRECTLY CONTACT THE INSTRUCTOR PRIOR TO CLASS TIME, regardless of the reason for the absence. Otherwise, all policies previously outlined will be in force and there will be NO make-ups.

Appropriate Behavior. The following guidelines for appropriate behavior will apply to this course, and the program:

- Cell phones** may NOT be used during scheduled class time, whether we are in a formal classroom or in the field.
- Laptops, tablets, or similar devices** are to be used ONLY for taking notes, not for connecting to the internet for any other purpose. If this policy is disrespected, WiFi service at the university may be discontinued for all.
- Email** is the official means of communication throughout the program. As such, all students will be responsible for checking email at least once daily. Thus, please be sure we have the best email address for you during your time in Costa Rica, as not receiving/reviewing emails is no excuse for not knowing appropriate information. Accordingly, all communications with professors related to academics shall be via email (or phone, if during regular working hours). Texting is not an appropriate means for questions about course assignments.
- Homework questions** that are within 24 hours prior to the due date are subject to a non-response. Though students often choose to complete assignments the night before it is due, questions that may arise at that point do not constitute an urgent situation for the professor. In particular, texting or calling at the last minute--particularly outside of working hours--is not appropriate, nor a substitute for advanced planning.
- All other policies** identified on the program web site, and presented at the beginning of the program, also apply to this course: <http://www.earthedintl.org/Policies.htm>.

Tentative Course Schedule

| SECTION | DATE | ASSIGNMENT DUE |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Field Component | TBA | In-person meetings with instructor |
| | Tuesday 24 Feb, 2015 | TSP theme or SLP site selection & work contract due (5:30pm) |
| | TBA | In-person meetings with instructor |
| | Tuesday 31 March, 2015 | TSP field site visits or SLP work assignments completed (5:30pm) |
| 2. Dissemination of Results | Tuesday 7 April, 2015 | All MediaBlog postings due (5:30pm) |