

Earth Education International
Costa Rican Culture Immersion: Ethnic Studies 480
Mayra Herra, Spring 2011

Course Description

Exploration of Costa Rican society and culture: Foundations, behaviors, and patterns. Includes thematic explorations, guided cultural immersion, contrast of regional & home-culture variations, and practical ethnographic field work. No prerequisite. 3 credits.

Course Objectives

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

1. Identify and analyze Costa Rican cultural foundations, behaviors, and patterns.
2. Contrast Costa Rican culture with regional & home-culture variations.
3. Accurately interpret socio-cultural situations in Costa Rica/Central America
4. Demonstrate the acquisition of above-mentioned cultural knowledge.
5. Acquire practical cultural knowledge through ethnographic fieldwork.

Course Requirements

1. ***Cultural Interpretation Presentations.*** Students will be required to prepare and present individual interpretations of topics discussed in class. These short oral presentations will be scheduled weekly throughout the semester. Presentations should be between 5 and 10 minutes in length.
2. ***Debates.*** In small groups, students will prepare and participate in classroom debates on appropriate socio-cultural topics. These debates will consist of composing a topical outline as a group, which will then be used as reference during the debate. Debate will last from 10 to 15 minutes.
3. ***In-Class Activities.*** In order to get the most out of the topics addressed in class, various activities will be used: analyses and role-playing of specific socio-cultural situations, scavenging, site visits, questionnaires etc.
4. ***Final Research Project.*** An in-depth research project will serve as a final evaluation of each student's performance in the course. This project will consist of two parts: A written report, and an oral presentation. The written paper should be from 8 to 10 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, size 12 Times New Roman font), and include an introduction, development of the theme, a conclusion, and a bibliography of a minimum of five references (only three may be taken from the web). Oral presentation should be approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length, and include materials from the written paper as well as a description of the procedures employed in data collection. A power point presentation or any sort of creative ways for presenting the project is a plus.
5. ***Class Participation.*** All students will be required to attend and actively participate in all course meetings. Required reading must be prepared prior to class. Students may miss only one class. If student misses more than one class during the session, her/his grade will be lowered by five points each time he/she is absent. Five absences is equivalent to a D. Participation will be used as one criterion of student evaluation for the course.

Course Evaluation

Student evaluation for the semester will be based on the following breakdown of each requirement for the course:

- 15% - Cultural interpretation presentations
- 10% - Debates
- 10% - Class participation
- 15% - In-Class Activities
- 15% - In-Class Activities: Site visit reports
- 20% - Final research project written report
- 15% - Final research project presentation

Students' final grade for the semester will be based upon the following standardized scale:

97-100% = A+	77-79.9% = C+
93-96.9% = A	73-76.9% = C
90-92.9% = A-	70-72.9% = C-
87-89.9% = B+	65-69.9% = D+
83-86.9% = B	60-64.9% = D
80-82.9% = B-	<60% = F

Course Outline

I. Cultural Foundations

- a) Definitions: Culture, diversity, stereotypes, cultural subject
- b) Social variables and behaviors
- c) Culture shock
- d) Cross-cultural communication

II. National Identity of Costa Rica

- a) Discovery and conquest
- b) Independence and national formation
- c) Modern Costa Rica in context

III. Historical Foundations of Environmental Impact

- a) Agricultural expansion & land-use
- b) Cash crops: The rise of coffee, bananas, etc.

IV. Cultural Explorations

- a) Time and space
- b) Greetings and communications
- c) Work, entertainment, and foods
- d) Stereotypes and myths
- e) Sex roles, "machismo", and the women's movement
- f) Family relations and humor

V. Achieving Cultural Understanding

- a) Interpreting specific cultural situations
- b) Compare & contrast of home and host-culture
- c) Applied Integration of Costa Rican cultural patterns

Course Field Trips

Sat, February 19th: San José

Sat. March 12th: Coffee plantation and coffee mill

Required Readings (Course Texts)

-Molina, Iván & Palmer, Steven. The History of Costa Rica. San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 2000.

Other Materials Included in Course Packet

McEntee, Eileen. Intercultural Communication. San Francisco: McGraw-Hill. 2001

El paso del cometa. Estado, política social y culturas populares en Costa Rica (1800-1990). San Jose, Costa Rica Plumsock Mesoamericana y Editorial Porvenir. 1994

Samovar, L & Porter, R. Communication between cultures. Belmont, Cal.:Wadsworth Publishing Company. 1991

Additional Resources

Black, Knippers Jan. Latin America: Its Problems and its Promise. Boulder and London. 1984.

Galeano, Eduardo. Las venas abiertas de América Latina. México: Siglo XXI. 1993.

Hopkins, Jack. Latin America: Perspectives of a Region. New York-London: Holmes and Meier. 1987.

Mendoza, Plinio Apuleyo y otros. El manual del perfecto idiota latinoamericano. 4. ed. Barcelona: Plaza y Janes. 1997.

McEntee, Eileen. Intercultural Communication. San Francisco: McGraw-Hill. 2001

Rojas Mix, Miguel. América Imaginaria. Barcelona: Lumen. 1992.

Rojas Mix, Miguel. Los cien nombres de América (Eso que descubrió Colón). San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica. 1997.