

Earth Education International
Costa Rican Culture Immersion: Ethnic Studies 480/680
Mayra Herra, Spring 2012
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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 Materials

I. Required Readings (Course Texts)

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

II. Other Materials Included in Course Packet

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

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

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

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

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, and should be between 5 and 10 minutes in length. Value: 15% of final grade.
2. **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, debates (of 10-15 minutes), etc. Value: 15% of final grade.
3. **Site Visit Reports.** The course includes three site visits: "La feria del agricultor" in San Ramon, a one-day site visit to San Jose, and a visit to a coffee plantation and coffee "beneficio". Some visits, or parts of visits will be self-conducted. Students must conduct their observation and develop topics from a questionnaire that must be handed in after the visit. Topics regarding societal customs and cultural sites will be discussed during the tour, as well as in class. Value: 15% of final grade.
4. **Final Research Project.** Students must develop an in-depth research project that 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 with a minimum of five references (only three may be taken from the web). Oral presentations 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 PowerPoint presentation or any sort of creative way for presenting the project is a plus. *NOTE: Graduate students must develop a more in-depth research project on a topic related to the course. Student will choose the topic out of five choices offered by the instructor. The paper will be 15 pages long (typed, double-spaced, size 12 Times New Roman font), and a bibliography of a minimum 8 sources, four of which may be taken from the web. A power point presentation to the class must be included. Written Report Value: 30% of final grade. Presentation Value: 15% of final grade.*
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. Value: 10% of final grade.

Course Evaluation

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

93-100% = 372-400 pts. = A	77-79.9% = 308-319 pts. = C+
90-92.9% = 360-371 pts. = A-	73-76.9% = 292-307 pts. = C
87-89.9% = 336-359 pts. = B+	70-72.9% = 280-291 pts. = C-
83-86.9% = 332-335 pts. = B	65-69.9% = 260-279 pts. = D+
80-82.9% = 320-331 pts. = B-	60-64.9% = 240-259 pts. = D
	<60% = <240 pts. = F

Course Policies

Absences. In accordance with general program policies, course absences will subject grades to being lowered. Unexcused absences from *class meetings* may 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* 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).

Participation. 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.

Program Policies. Please be advised that all other policies identified on the program web site, and presented at the beginning of the program apply for the duration. See: <http://www.earthedintl.org/Policies.htm> for details.

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 Rican 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 25th: San José

Sat. March 24th: Coffee plantation and coffee mill

Additional Resources

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

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.