CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS
Course name: Ecotourism: The Costa Rican case
Course code: GEB 3500
Total contact hours: 60 hours

DESCRIPTION
This course will provide the students with an introduction to Costa Rican ecotourism. It will offer the chance to analyse this dynamic process from different socio-economic perspectives. It will discuss the economic importance of ecotourism for the Costa Rican national economy, the stimulation of grassroots, community ecotourism projects, and the role of ecotourism in securing environmental protection. The advances and limitations of ecotourism will be explored. Students will be encouraged to develop their own conclusions about how ecotourism can help to secure economic, environmental and participatory alternatives in order to advance the Costa Rican sustainable development process.

OBJECTIVES
1) To explore the issue of ecotourism within the Costa Rican context.
2) To understand the history and development of the Costa Rica ecotourism process.
3) To develop a critical understanding of the Costa Rican ecotourism process from varying perspectives.
4) To observe and experience Costa Rica’s ecotourism process at first hand.
5) To undertake a research project in relation to an area of the course (depending on the students interests).

CONTENTS
Course Structure = three parts:
PART TWO: Costa Rica’s policy framework and institutional commitment to ecotourism. The development of ecotourism in the regional and national setting.
PART THREE: Costa Rica’s ecotourism sector. Projects and case studies explored.
Session content:

**PART ONE:**
Building the case for ecotourism: Definitions, history, and the context of ecotourism.

Session 1:
Introduction and main issues
- Introduction of course / explain syllabus / evaluation system.
- Introduction to main issues.
- Students invited to talk about interests and ideas about ecotourism.

Session 2:
Defining Ecotourism
- Definitions of tourism
- Definitions of nature tourism.
- Ecotourism defined

Session 3:
The Costa Rican setting
- Introduction to the Costa Rican environment and society.
- Political, ecological, demographic, geographic and social features considered.

Session 4:
History and development of Ecotourism in Costa Rica: Socio-economic development context.
- Main features of Costa Rica’s recent socio-economic development model.
- Critique of socio-economic development model.
- Building the case for sustainability.
- Students hand in research project question / presentation of research project ideas.

Session 5:
Environmental impacts of development
- Major environmental impacts of development explored.
- Deforestation, contamination, soil erosion.
- Environmental impacts of Costa Rica’s main industries (cattle, coffee and banana industries).

Session 6
Social impacts of development
- Social impacts of Costa Rica’s socio-economic trends.
- Costa Rica’s social indicators explored, poverty, health, employment.
- Impacts of Costa Rica’s tourist industry. (Social and environmental considerations)
Session 7:
Student Seminar 1
- Students research an area / issue from the first part of the course.
- Students present research issue and lead discussion.

PART TWO:
Costa Rica’s policy framework and institutional commitment to ecotourism.
The development of ecotourism in the regional and national setting.

Session 8:
Costa Rica’s conservation process.
- History and development of Costa Rica’s conservation process.
- Critique of conservation process.

Session 9:
A history of Costa Rica’s sustainable development process.
- Development of Costa Rica’s sustainable development process.
- Development of ecotourism.
- National legal and policy framework.

Session 10:
The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.
- Regional and national efforts to secure a policy framework for ecotourism.
- Case study of MBC
- Participatory approach.

Session 11:
Ecotourism and economics
- Economic considerations and models considered.

Session 12:
Student Seminar 2
- Students research an area / issue from the second part of the course.
- Students present research and lead discussion.

Session 13:
Exam
PART THREE:
Costa Rica’s Ecotourism sector. Projects and case studies explored.

Session 14:
Ecotourism - Case study:
- Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve
- CASEM

WEEKEND Field Trip: Monteverde.
- Chance for students to understand local dynamics of ecotourism projects.
- Chance to interview people involved in Costa Rica’s ecotourism sector.

Session 15
Field trip follow up session
- Space to discuss main issues and share experiences from field trip.

Session 16
Ecotourism - Case studies:
- Sarapiquí
- Guanacaste and the Four Seasons Hotel. (mainstream tourism verses ecotourism)

Session 17:
Ecotourism /gender issues - Case studies:
- Quepos / ASOMUFAQC
- Sustainable tourism.

Session 18
Research session

WEEKEND - Field Trip: Quepos / ASOMUFACQ
- Chance for students to understand local dynamics of ecotourism projects.
- Chance to interview people involved in Costa Rica’s ecotourism sector.

Session 19
Field trip follow up session
- Space to discuss main issues and share experiences from field trip.

Session 20:
Conclusions and Recommendations
- Conclusions / recent developments / future approaches recommended and considered.

Session 21 and Session 22:
Research reports:
- Students present their research project findings.
METHODOLOGY
We will attempt to follow the pedagogical methodology in the PAULO FREIRE sensu, mainly by means of the dialogue. This means any subject will be presented using handout materials, and eventually questions will be asked prompting and motivating participation. Also, some videos will be used in an interactive way. It will be necessary to read some papers or chapters of books. It is expected that students will participate actively through questions, answers or comments during the classes.

Students will learn by:
1. Active participation doing research in an interesting subject.
2. Observation and analytical discussion of videos.
3. Creating comparative tables between traditional and non-traditional agriculture or among lodging, fisheries and mining regarding items such as: origin, history, economy, labor force, chemistry uses, level and examples of actual case studies.
4. Participating in field trips like those to the Caribbean and Pacific slopes of the country. On site practicing exercises will allow students open their minds for a better and deeper understanding of Latin American problems regarding environment and society.

There is a mainframe timetable with subjects for 60-68 hrs, as a 4 credits elective course. This timetable is given during first week of classes, after obtaining student's expectations.

In the lab part two city-trips and two week-end field trips usually will be done, and each one will have its own developed syllabus and program according certain pre-determined aims in class.

EVALUATION SYSTEM
Participation: 10%
Class readings: 10%
Student Seminar: 15%
Exam: 15%
Research report: 30%
Research presentation: 20%

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Chapman and Hall. IIED, San Jose.


Miller, Chang, Johnson, (2001). Defining Common Ground. Published by the WRI.


