South America:
Nature, Society and Sustainability
Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program in Cuenca, Ecuador

GRG 323K / LAS 330 Topic 3
Unique Numbers 36540 and 39695
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Teaching Assistant: TBA
Syllabus tentative (1/8/16) and subject to change

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines issues of cultural landscapes, human-environment relations, and sustainable development in South America, taking full advantage of its location in Ecuador. Ecuador is one of the most bio diverse nations in the world, with rain forests, high mountains, mangrove estuaries, and a tropical coastline. It is also ethnically diverse, with over 40 indigenous nations, a large Afro-Ecuadorian population, and mestizos, as well as European, Middle Eastern, and Asian immigrants. The country’s three largest cities (Guayaquil, Quito, and Cuenca) display a range of issues involving housing, employment, water and food provision, poverty and gentrification, and preservation of historical districts. The nation is rich in agricultural and aquaculural products, including flowers, bananas, shrimp, cacao, as well as more traditional
subsistence crops such as manioc, potatoes, quinoa, and corn. There is a large system of national parks and preserves spanning landscapes from high grasslands (paramos) to tropical forests; the interaction between the goals of conservation, indigenous territoriality, and the (growing) mineral and hydrocarbon extractive industries spurs ongoing debate. The 2008 Ecuadorian constitution enshrined the protection of mother earth (pacha mama) and cultural diversity while pursuing the culturally appropriate good life (buen vivir, sumaq kawsay). This course will examine ongoing issues in sustainable development in these local contexts, which provide an excellent sample of similar issues in the rest of Latin America.

Field trips and site visits will include coastal, highland, and Amazonian destinations illustrative of Ecuador’s natural and cultural diversity. Students will examine selected issues through readings, discussions, site visits and field trips. There will be an extended amount of time in and near Cuenca, Ecuador’s third-largest city (population 300,000). Cuenca was a Cañari indigenous settlement before it became first an Inca, and then a Spanish colonial city. Indigenous and colonial monuments explain its listing on the UNESCO world heritage list, while its highland setting (8200 feet above sea level) provides for a diverse hinterland with small farms, national parks, and villages noted for artisanal crafts. It has also become an important destination for tourism and residential migration.

This course may be used towards the Geography major (Cultural Track) and Latin American Studies major (core requirement and/or concentration), and as part of the Latin American minor in International Relations and Global Studies (IRG). This course may also be used for the environmental track in IRG, and towards the study abroad requirement in IRG. The course carries a Global Cultures flag.

Global Cultures Flag

This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

Host Institution

Our course is hosted by CEDEI (Centers for Interamerican Studies) in Cuenca, which will provide for home stays in Cuenca, lodging and meal arrangements elsewhere, transportation, facilities, and security. CEDEI was founded in 1992 as a nonprofit institution of higher learning. It offers English classes to 600 local Ecuadorian children and adults; a non-traditional trilingual elementary school focused on social and environmental consciousness; and support for a variety of international programs including this University of Texas program. The main facility at Gran Colombia 11-02 and General Torres, in central Cuenca, is the location of our classroom and computer lab during our stay in that city.

Course Format
Most classes will involve site visits (in Cuenca) or longer field trips. Lectures by the course instructor will be combined with group discussions (including peer group discussions) of questions related to the readings and site visits. Where appropriate, students will meet with groups of small entrepreneurs, farmers, students, and community leaders in local settings to discuss their needs and concerns. Students are expected to attend all course activities, read all materials, submit all assignments on time, and be prepared to participate. Students will consult their email and the Canvas website frequently for course updates, including updates in the schedule.

Canvas Website

The Canvas website will contain all course readings and other materials and assignments. It is also where students will submit required assignments, including the field notebook at the end of the course.

Prerequisite: Upper Division standing; this requirement may be waived for study abroad students. The course is open to students in all majors, but students must be admitted to the corresponding Ecuador study abroad program. Although the course will be taught in English, students should have had previous training in the Spanish language (advanced beginner or intermediate level Spanish). In particular, during your home stay in Cuenca, you should strive to speak Spanish in front of your family.

Summary of Grading:

Grading will be based on 3 written assignments (15%), a cumulative class logbook (50%), and class participation (35%).

The Class Logbook is the record of the class, consisting of responses to questions pertaining to your lecture notes, field trips, and your readings. The logbook must be kept up to date. You will normally maintain the logbook as a file on Canvas. Students' written assignments and logbook entries may be used in classroom discussions, including peer groups proctored by students. They will be graded on the basis of overall quality, originality, creativity, and evidence of independent personal investigation. Points will be lost on the basis of factual errors, and failure to complete assignments on time.

Grading will be on the plus minus system, as follows. Scores and totals will not be rounded up or down.

93-100 A
90-92.99 A-
87-89.99 B+
83-86.99 B
80-82.99 B-
77-79.99 C+
Course Readings

Student handouts. After your arrival in Ecuador, you will receive emergency contact information, program calendars, information on health and safety, information on host families, maps and other information on Cuenca, and basic historical and geographical information on Ecuador.

In addition, background readings will be provided on Canvas for the various lectures, site visits and field trips.

Field Trips

You will be given questions to answer in your logbook for the various field trips; take notes.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

If you use words or ideas that are not your own you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.

PROGRAM CALENDAR AND ITINERARY - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Reading Assignments will be provided on Canvas as the course proceeds

Week One

June 1 Arrival in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and orientation.
June 2 Guayaquil City Field Trip; orientations 2 and 3. Lecture 1. Begin entries in logbook.
June 3 Lecture 2. Orientations 4 and 5. Manglares Churute community-led mangrove swamp site visit. Guayaquil-Cuenca bus trip; meet host families for home stays.
June 4 Free day with families. Log Book Check.

Week Two

June 5 Gualaceo and Chordeleg Field Trip; Indigenous communities, markets and food. Assignment 1 Due.
June 6 Lecture 3; Cuenca City Field Trip (urban overview). Cooking classes begin.
June 7  Pumapungo Archaeological Museum and ruins site visit
June 8  Lecture 4
June 9  Catedral Antigua site visit.
June 10 Log Book Check, dance classes
June 11 Free day with families.

Week Three

June 12 Ingapirca Ruins field trip; remittance landscapes and impacts of migration.
June 13 San Joaquín Valley field trip (organic farms). Assignment 2 Due.
June 14 Lectures 5 and 6 (guest lecture on water sustainability)
June 15 ETAPA Water Treatment Plant site visit. Lecture 7 (Traditional Medicine)
June 16 Homero Ortega hat factory site visit.
June 17 Lecture 8, dance classes.
June 18 Cajas National Park field trip, Andean and Paramo ecology, water supply issues.
Assignment 3 due.

Week Four

June 19  Free day with families.
June 20  Lecture 9.
June 21  Free day. Final dinner with families
June 22 Cuenca-Patate bus trip; Tungurahua Volcano Observatory
June 23 Patate - Cotacocha Lodge
June 24 Amazon conservation and community development issues.
June 25 Cotacocha– Quito bus via Papallacta

Week Five

June 26  Quito urban field trip, historical preservation, Guayasamin museum. Log book check.
June 27 Quito – Vicundo, organic agriculture and indigenous communities
June 28 Vicundo - Otavalo, agriculture
June 29 Otavalo, Peguche, community development and irrigation issues, Farewell dinner.
June 30 Log Books Due. Otavalo-Quito.
July 1 Airport transfers, Quito -US