INTRODUCTION

The nature of human activities has challenged the limits of our ecological systems and their ability to sustain current patterns of consumption. Protecting and improving our future well-being requires wiser uses of natural assets and changes to the way we make and implement decisions. This course analyzes sustainability transitions and innovation across key facets of Costa Rica’s development strategies. Focus is placed on multi-dimensional interactions between: a) technical innovation in sustainable agriculture, tourism, renewable energy and water systems; b) social networks across industry, government and civil society; c) legal, normative and cognitive rules that guide the activities of actors, such as regulations, standards, belief systems and behavioral norms; and, communities within which development (economic, social, environmental) occurs.

Costa Rica is a country roughly the size of West Virginia with .03% of the planet’s surface and is famous for its unique biodiversity and natural resources. Serving as a land bridge between North and South America, it boasts a range of ecological conditions, from steamy, humid coasts to hot, dry lowlands and cool, mountain forests. Costa Rica is the oldest and most stable democracy in Latin America; flourishing without a military since 1948. It has a progressive social investment policy with one of the most advanced environmental protection systems in the world, protecting 27% of its land in national parks, wildlife refuges and over 100 private reserves. Costa Rica has an aggressive target to be carbon neutral by 2021.

Students will experience development in action across major sectors important to Costa Rica’s sustainable development strategy. Through field visits and hands-on exposure to various approaches to agricultural production, tourism, energy generation and urbanization, students learn the synergies and tension between economic, social and environmental impacts—positive and negative. The goal is developing a critical understanding of the principles of sustainability for business and society; and how organizations and communities can maximize benefits associated with the demand for sustainable development.
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

This course considers the global trend of sustainable development and its implications for business, community and governance by illuminating key development strategies and activities in Costa Rica.

Pre-Departure Objectives:
- Development of critical understanding of the principles of sustainability indicators for business and society, and, how organizations can maximize benefits associated with the demand for sustainable development.
- An introduction to Costa Rica’s development history within its regional context.
- Individual exploration of key economic and resource sectors (i.e. coffee, pineapple, forest resources, renewable energy, ecotourism, water delivery/treatment, construction, etc.), and associated environmental and social impacts (i.e. water consumption/quality, soil quality, carbon emissions/sequestration, environmental/social justice, urbanization, etc.).

In-Country Objectives:
- Learn through experiencing synergies and tension between economic/social development and environmental/social impacts (positive and negative).
- Explore development across major sectors important to Costa Rica’s development strategy:
  - Sustainable Land-based Development
    - Sustainable/fair-trade/shade-grown Coffee
    - Biodiversity-Carbon-Forestry Interactions
    - Scale of development
  - Tourism & Urbanization
    - Access versus preservation
    - Sustainability in Operations
    - Certification
    - Access to water/energy
    - Impacts on local communities
    - Impacts on ecosystems
  - Renewable Energy/Water Infrastructure
    - The role and limitations of existing hydro power and the social/environmental impacts of new hydro projects
    - Emerging alternatives including Wind, solar and geothermal

The concept of sustainable development unifies all of these topics. We will focus heavily on three central questions of, “What is to be developed?” “What is to be sustained?” and “For how long will it be sustained?” These questions cannot be explored on only environmental, social or economic bases, but rather are balanced against each other toward long-term welfare of Costa Ricans.
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Discussion/Journal</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Group Pre-Departure Presentation &amp; Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Final Paper (due within 4 weeks of return)</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
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A standard A-F system applies toward grading, unless taken as pass/fail. See University-wide policy [http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/gradingpolicy.html](http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/gradingpolicy.html) for additional information.

**Participation/Discussion/Journal:** Students are expected to participate in all pre-departure and in-country activities associated with the study abroad seminar in Costa Rica. These activities include: at least one full instruction day prior to departure; completion of the IDI assessment online, in-country lectures, field trips, and evening discussions/activities; and daily journaling. Journals will be collected and assessed on the final day in Costa Rica and returned to students before our flight to Minnesota.

**Small Group Pre-Departure Presentation & Paper:** In groups of 2-3 students, students will research and prepare a 10-minute presentation and 3-5 page brief outlining a significant aspect of development in Costa Rica. It is anticipated that students will then bring this knowledge into discussions and site visits, and serve as topic resource to the other students.

Potential Topics include:

1. CAFTA and Trade, the CR Experience
2. Sustainable Coffee Production in CR
3. Certification for Sustainable Tourism in CR
4. Coastal Development in CR
5. Renewable Energy in CR
6. Payments for Environmental Services in CR
7. National Park System of Costa Rica

**Individual Final Paper:** Due by Monday, February 16, 2015.

All students must develop an original 7-10 page paper integrating their personal experience in-country, at least 2 readings assigned in the course, and independent secondary research by the student as further inquiry stimulated by unanswered questions surfaced in-country (5-10 citations wouldn’t be unreasonable; websites don’t count). The topic of the paper is at the discretion of the student, but must relate to at least one experience, field trip or lecture. The objective of this paper is to further your academic development on the topic of sustainable development, where theory is supported or refuted by primary data witnessed and collected in-country. Final papers will be assessed based on their ability to communicate original insights into the theory and practice of sustainable development. This is not an opinion piece or a travel log. Propositions and hypotheses are to be grounded in theory and tested by field observation. In order to provide sufficient depth of analysis, it is recommended that students focus on one aspect of the course (Sustainable Coffee Production, Limits to Nature-based Tourism, Community-based Tourism, Electricity Demand and Development, Social Equity in Water Access, etc.). Appropriate APA or Chicago style format required.
Readings:
There is no textbook for this class. However, several mandatory pre-departure readings are required to be completed in November and December as part of pre-departure instruction. Students may be asked to print and bring selected readings to Costa Rica. All readings are available on-line in the course Moodle Page.

Itinerary:

ITINERARY:
Nov-Dec: Pre-departure instruction
Jan 3: Arrive San Jose, travel to Turrialba
Jan 3-7: CATIE/Turrialba
Jan 7-9: Pacuare River/San Jose/Poas Volcano
Jan 9-12: La Fortuna/Arenal
Jan 12-14: Tilaran/Canas
Jan 14-16: Tamarindo/Playa Grande
Jan 17: Depart Liberia for MSP

DISABILITY CLAUSES

1. This syllabus can be made available in alternative formats upon request. To obtain a copy, please contact cmesser@umn.edu
2. Any student with a documented disability condition (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact me and Disability Services prior to the first class meeting in November. (http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cgep/accommodations.html)
3. Disability Services, 180 McNamara Alumni Center, (612) 626-1333 TTY/voice, assists in ensuring equal access for students with disabilities by documenting disabilities and providing or arranging reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, auxiliary aids and services, training, consultation, and technical assistance. Their website is located at http://ds.umn.edu.