

MUHLENBERG COLLEGE INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY IN COSTA RICA

Spring Course Combined with Two Weeks of Travel, Community-Based Learning, and Research or Creative Work in Costa Rica

SUS 350 (MILA) – Community Sustainability in Costa Rica

Professors: Dr. Rich Niesenbaum (Biology / Sustainability Studies)

& Dr. Chris Borick (Political Science / Sustainability Studies)

Program Description: Students explore the relationship between humans and their environments within the context of community sustainability in Costa Rica. During the spring semester, students develop projects and prepare for the two-week study/research/travel experience to Costa Rica at the end of May. This preparation includes study of the area's ecological diversity; political, cultural and social issues; research skills; and relevant Spanish vocabulary and conversation skills. In Costa Rica, students explore a variety of habitats, live in and interact with members of a small community, and conduct both community service and independent research projects. Research projects focus on the ecology, sociology, culture, sustainability, and public health of the region within



the context of science and policy. We travel to a variety of exotic tropical sites including a high altitude cloud forest, river ecosystem, and active volcano. One of the objectives of the program is to remove the blinders of specific discipline-based learning and of our own culture to show that if we are to develop sustainable solutions, we must consider the environment in relation to the people who live in it. *This course can satisfy the S (SC) or D (DE) requirements; and counts towards the Biology, Environmental Science, Political Science and Public Health Majors; and Sustainability Studies, Caribbean and Latin American Studies, and Public Health minors. It is an RJ Fellows course.*

Next offering: Spring semester of 2019 with a 13 day trip to Costa Rica with Professor Niesenbaum and Professor Borick in late May. We will accept up to 18 students. Applications are considered on a rolling basis as they come in up to October 16, 2018. You are encouraged to get your application in as early as possible. Seats are limited and students were turned away last year. Applications are attached to this. Once accepted into the program a non-refundable \$300.00 deposit will be required to register for the course. See attached application pages for additional payment and registration details

Conditions in Costa Rica: Students must be able to cope with challenging living and physical conditions including the presence of insects and other wildlife, heat (no air-conditioning), physical activity, close quarters, and other aspects of tropical field work and living.

Travel costs: Due to the unpredictability of airfares and other travel expenses we offer an estimate of expenses. We estimate that the cost of our program will not exceed \$2500. This includes airfare, housing, meals, ground transportation, park entrances and instruction. Accommodations are safe and clean, but very basic. There may be incidental expenses such as tips, gifts, snacks, laundry, beverages and other purchases, but these do not usually exceed \$200.00. Payments will be made as part of your tuition bill. Significant need-based financial aid is available. There are also opportunities to obtain sponsorship to cover expenses, please see Dr. Niesenbaum for more information

Program Highlights:

- Incredible travel experience
- Focus on science/policy research, documentary work, and community projects
- Opportunities to interact with people in small non-touristic community
- Hike jungles, climb volcanoes, see monkeys, and experience new cultures
- Small group interaction with faculty and local experts
- Visits to schools, medical clinics, and conservation sites

Community Engagement/Service-Learning:

As a community-based learning class, students are expected to engage with local communities during the academic year in Allentown and while in Costa Rica.

Examples of projects in Costa Rica are:

- Community painting and beautification
- Teaching English lessons in a local elementary/middle school
- Serving an environmental group dedicated to watershed restoration by collecting data, planting trees, and performing clean-up
- Updating an ecomuseum's displays and translating material into English
- Assisting a women's recycling cooperative
- Cleaning up local waterways

Still Interested? Do you have questions? Please contact Dr. Niesenbaum: niesenba@muhlenberg.edu or Dr. Borick: cborick@muhlenberg.edu



**MILA: Community Sustainability in Costa Rica
Muhlenberg College, Spring 2019**

You may hand write your responses on this page, or include this information on a separate computer-typed page. Please send your completed application to Dr. Richard Niesenbaum (Bio) niesenba@muhlenberg.edu by October 16, 2018.

Application Cover Sheet

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Current Mailing Address: _____

Home (parents') Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Phone: At Muhlenberg: _____ **At home:** _____

Age: _____ **Date of birth:** _____ **Expected Graduation Date:** _____

Program of Study (majors/minors/concentrations)

Previous international travel experience:

Continued==>

SHORT ANSWERS. Please respond to each of the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. Limit yourself to one substantial typed paragraph (or two shorter ones) per question.

- 1) Why do you want to participate in this program? What do you hope to study while in Costa Rica (You might want to discuss how this course relates to your current studies, and whether you would focus on science or policy)**
- 2) The experience in Costa Rica is challenging with conditions akin to rustic camping. Heat, hikes, insects, no hot water, limited access to internet, and daily 6 AM wake-ups are among the many challenges. Explain how you are equipped to deal with such hardships, and how you have dealt with hardship in the past.**
- 3) What experience (past or present) have you had working in or with a community, and how did it make an impact on your life? (This can be an experience you've had through travel, here in Allentown, or in your home town.)**
- 4) What will you do between now and our trip to show your commitment to Spanish? Those who benefit most from this program seem to be those who are able or at least willing to try to speak in Spanish as much as possible. What will you do to approach this level of proficiency?**
- 5) List the courses you have taken (or will be taking in the 2018-2019 academic year) that are related to any of the following: the environment, sustainability, biology, political science, Latin American culture, Spanish language, developing countries, other sciences, sociology, or anthropology. How will this course fit in with your overall plan of study**

Application due by October 16, 2019

Questions: niesenba@muhlenberg.edu

