

Sustaining Human Societies and the Natural Environment - Fiji (3 semester credits)

Bula and Welcome to the East Carolina Study Abroad Program in conjunction with American Universities International Programs (AUIP) in Fiji

Dates: June 7 – June 14, 2009

Instructors: Dr. Clifton Watts; Teaching Assistant: Ms. Jill Naar

Supporting lectures from:

Helen Sykes lives in Fiji working for Marine Ecology Fiji, Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network and Reef Check. Helen has been active in the tourism industry for over 15 years. She brings her experience in the marine ecology and marine tourism system design and training.

Professor Bill Aalbersberg received his PhD from Berkeley and now is Director of the Institute of Applied Sciences at the University of the South Pacific. His research interests now focus on locally managed marine protected areas and the interactions between human communities and the marine environment.

Dr. Craig Morley has a PhD from the University of Canterbury and now teaches in the Biology Division at the University of the South Pacific. His research interests primarily relate to the impact of invasive alien species (IAS) on island ecosystems and the effects IAS have on the evolutionary processes on species in isolation.

Professor Patrick Nunn teaches in the Geography Department at the University of the South Pacific. His PhD is from the University College London. His research interests include human – environment interactions and environmental change.

Professor Randy Thaman teaches Pacific Island Biogeography in the Geography Department at the University of the South Pacific. His research interests include Pacific ethnobiology and agroforestry.

Dr. Jess Ponting received his PhD from the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism at the University of Technology Sydney. He now lectures in tourism at the University of the South Pacific.

Course description

The Fiji program will examine human and cultural aspects of Fijian ecology and the conservation, preservation, and management of Fiji's unique system of marine, coastal, and mountain/rainforest natural resources. Students will use applications in cross-cultural analysis and techniques to explore the management and conservation of natural resources with a focus on issues related to human use of plant, forestry, wildlife, ecology, recreation and tourism, and/or coastal/water resources. The impact of humans on these resources will also be emphasized, including a long term historical perspective. Like the Australian program, The Fijian program will also focus on topics related to sustainable development (sustaining human societies and the natural environment) through educational travel, field trips, active participation, lecture presentations and seminars, and coursework exercises. The goal of this course is using the Fijian case to integrate the different perspectives of diverse natural, biological, and social science disciplines to improve understanding of relationships between human societies and the natural

environment. The impact of humans on natural resources and their sustainable use and conservation will be emphasized.

Course objectives

By the end of this program, students will:

- (1) Understand the geography, ecology, natural history, and social and political contexts of the Fijian islands;
- (2) Understand the impacts of humans on the natural environment;
- (3) Develop a working understanding of traditional Fijian knowledge of the natural environment, such as in plant use and maritime and subsistence practices;
- (4) Be able to address relationships between human societies and their natural environments from multiple disciplinary perspectives and to develop a complex, multi-faceted and holistic view of human – environment connections that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries. Appendices include the AUIP program handbook, an example itinerary, the course syllabus, and content for the field modules used in the course.

Prerequisites

There are no pre-requisites, but eligible students must be accepted by East Carolina University and AUIP, and be in good academic standing at their home institution.

Attendance and lateness policy

Punctual attendance at all scheduled, program–related activities is required, including group meetings, discussions, field excursions, as well as lectures and any other scheduled activities. Participation in field activities (such as hiking, snorkeling, swimming, kayaking, etc) is voluntary and at the discretion of the student; however, should you wish not to participate you must inform the instructor and an alternate activity will be assigned. An excused absence or decision not to participate in one or any of these field activities will not affect your grade for the course. During the field studies, no student is to leave the group without the consent of the faculty supervisor. Unless an absence is approved by one of the instructors or the program directors, students will lose 10% of their final grade for each day or part-day they fail to participate. Any unexcused absences or continued late arrival to program activities may, at the discretion of the Program Director, be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Academic honesty

You are expected to do your own work. Any student found plagiarizing a written assignment or falsifying a course requirement will either receive a failing grade for the course and may be referred for disciplinary action. According to the ECU Undergraduate Catalog (p. 45), “Academic integrity is expected of every ECU student. Academically violating the Honor Code consists of the following: cheating,

unauthorized aid or assistance or the giving or receiving of unfair advantage on any form of academic work; plagiarism, copying the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and adopting those as one's original work; falsification, statement of untruth, either spoken or written, regarding any circumstances relating to academic work; and attempting any act which if completed would constitute an academic integrity violation as defined above".

As part of our partnership with AUIP, all academic work must meet AUIP standards of academic honesty (as described in the AUIP Student Manual). Each student is responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

Conduct regulations

All students must be familiar with the general conduct regulations described in the AUIP Student Manual. Failure to obey these policies may result in dismissal from the program, at the discretion of the Program Director.

Special accommodations

Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course must contact Dr. Clifton Watts (wattsc@ecu.edu) or Dr. Paige Schneider (schneiderp@ecu.edu) and AUIP at least 4 weeks before the program begins. After that time, AUIP cannot guarantee that such needs can be accommodated. Some activities involve moderate exercise, such as hiking and snorkeling and participation is voluntary for all students.

Coursebook and required readings

A coursebook (containing required readings, field modules, and other information) will be available from Bel-Jean Copy Center (under "AUIP Cairns, Australia [program date]") at least four weeks prior to the beginning of the program. All students must bring a copy of the coursebook with them on the program. The coursebook will not be available elsewhere and students will be responsible for getting their own copy. Contact:

Bel-Jean Copy Center
163 East Broad Street
Athens, GA 30601
Tel: +706.548.3648

Pre-departure material

A series of pre-departure lectures and readings must be completed before the beginning of the program. Allow a minimum of ~6 hours to complete this material.

Course assignments

1. Pre-departure quiz (15%)

The quiz is found in the coursebook and should be handed in on the first day of the program. Part of the quiz requires the use of the internet and/or library resources and should be completed before you arrive in country. The quiz also covers the pre-departure material.

2. Photo Essay: Cultural Contexts of Everyday Natural Resource Use Visual Ethnography Assignment (15%)

Conduct a single themed visual ethnographic study exploring the cultural aspects of a single subsistence or natural resource item available and widely used in Fiji (past and/or present). Some suggestions: Coconut, gold, cattle, sugar cane, banana, yaqona, a species or type of fish, coral. (You probably want to check an appropriate theme with an instructor before you start if you select something else). Produce a set of 6 – 8 photographs covering a selection of the use of the resource in an everyday cultural context. Try to capture your natural resource in a variety of contexts and forms. Places to variously look include the museum, village homestay (e.g., home interiors), outdoor or street scenes, where people work or making a living, and in eating behavior or religious contexts, etc. Work toward capturing in your visual essay both how that resource is used and the meaning it is given in cultural terms (including if different groups consider and treat the resource differently, and any symbolic representations of or using the item). Write a 500-word overview that pulls the visual essay you have prepared for the viewer. Please note: Do not take pictures of people obviously without their permission; it is considered as culturally rude in Fiji as it is in the U.S.!

Prepare your assignment using Powerpoint (for photographs) and Word (for 500-word report) software and submit both as electronic email attachments (no more than 1MB in size for either file – compress pictures to reduce file size) titled <your lastname fiji photo essay> to your instructor within four weeks of the last day of the program in-country.

3. Field modules and site quizzes (70%)

The field modules and supporting readings and materials are in the Coursebook. The modules relate what we learn in the classroom with field activities. Site quizzes will comprise part of the total module grade. Please note that field experts are available as resources to help students complete the module questions on their own, not to provide answers. Each module question will be graded as follows:

A - Explains the core concept(s) very clearly and with evidence of real thought, technically correct response, gives the most relevant and best examples, very clear and well-written, only relevant material included and thoughtfully concise.

A minus - A very good answer, worthy of an A grade but may contain some minor content, grammatical, and/or editorial corrections.

B plus - A strong answer that clearly shows thorough understanding of the material but does not contain all the necessary content required.

B - Discernable evidence of grasp of concept, good and correct examples given, well-written, thoughtfully concise

B minus - A well-written answer that contains most (but not all) of the content required and may suffer from some grammatical and/or editorial mistakes and omissions.

C - Adequate but limited grasp of core concept(s), some examples although not necessarily the best or most relevant, legible. May lack conciseness or clarity in the response.

D - Little or no grasp of core concept(s), or incorrect or no examples given, or hard to read or poorly written.

F - Fails to address the question, or little or no grasp of core concept and incorrect or no examples given, or illegible.

Grade assessment

Final grades for all credits will be assessed together and as follows:

A 89.5 - 100 percent

B 79.5 - 89.4 percent

C 69.5 - 79.4 percent

D 59.5 - 69.4 percent

F below 59.4 percent

Course Topics

See the itinerary for a full list and schedule of field activities and lectures.