

University of Southern California

DEPARTMENT OF LATIN AMERICAN AND IBERIAN CULTURES

FALL 2023

Costa Rica Julymester 2023

July 17 – August 11

Updated 03/10/23

SPAN 499: THE *Eco*CULTURE OF COSTA RICA: SUSTAINABILITY AND ECOTOURISM



Program Director and Professor:

Ivette Gomez (igomez@usc.edu) / Office: THH 270

Alternative Program Director and Professor:

Martin Ocon-Gamarra (ocongama@usc.edu) / Office: THH 256R

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to explore the ecological culture of Costa Rica, by studying the Centroamerican country's history and various cultural and societal forms that promote conservation of natural resources and sustainable practices. Through this program, the students will be able to learn more about Costa Rica's history, culture, and they will be able to experience how Costa Ricans live their *ecoculture* in the rural area and wildlife sanctuaries of Monteverde, in the region of Puntarenas. Monteverde is an area full of eco-lodges, sustainable farms, and home to the

Monteverde Cloud Forest, which is one of Costa Rica's Biological Preserves. The program will allow students to go through the experience of *ecotourism*, but with a deeper understanding of the country's history of transformation towards a more green and sustainable culture. It will also explore how Costa Ricans have historically included their environmental and eco-justice concerns in literature and other forms of arts, such as visual projects, films, documentaries, and music. A Service Project will also be included in the experiential learning, where USC students will visit two local elementary schools in the Monteverde area, and they will be in charge of teaching an English *eco-class* to the children, while also engaging in the practice of their Spanish. Together with this Service Project, in this course students will critically reflect on and evaluate challenges and opportunities for protection of the environment associated with various kinds of sustainability efforts.

The proposal of this course/program is inspired by the fact that Costa Rica is a global green pioneer with a strong social conscience about the environmental challenges we are facing today. This Central American small nation is now preparing to cross the ultimate environmental frontier with a detailed plan to decarbonize its economy by 2050.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Once this course/program is completed students should be able to:

- Have a better understanding and appreciation for the history and eco-culture of Costa Rica.
- Have a better understanding and appreciation for environmentally responsible travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas that promotes biodiversity conservation and provides for socio-economic benefits to the local communities.
- Have a better understanding and appreciation for sustainable forms of living that respect and value the relationship between humans and natural resources. Ideally, the student

will imitate some of these forms of living when back at home.

- Critically reflect on challenges and opportunities for protection of the environment associated with various kinds of sustainability efforts.
- Have practiced and enriched their Spanish vocabulary in general, and in particular their eco-vocabulary*.

* This course will be offered in Spanish, although most/some of the reading material covered will be in English.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

The course/program will take place over a period of **four weeks** (July 19-24), the first week at USC, and the second through fourth weeks in Costa Rica (Week 2 in San José, and Weeks 3 and 4 in Monteverde).

During the course of the program, students will receive lectures by the instructor/director of the program that offer a better understanding about the history and culture of **Costa Rica**, and *in-situ*, they will visit San José and Monteverde, where they will receive presentations by locals, and visit natural places (national parks, volcanoes, biological reserves, cloud forests, waterfalls), as well a community places such as sustainable fincas, eco-lodges, schools, and they will stay in family homes.

Accommodations:

Week 2- Hotel in San Jose

Weeks 3 & 4 - Homestays in Monteverde*

Outside activities in **Monteverde, Costa Rica** are included but may be limited or canceled according to USC's contingency plan and/or CDC recommendations.

COURSE EVALUATION

Students will be assessed taking the following criteria in mind:

- Participation, Attendance and Contribution (PAC) 15%
- Presentation and/or Leading discussion of reading - 10%
- Responses to readings and activities in Costa Rica 15%
- Service Project (teaching of class or plan to collaborate with locals) - 25%
- Midterm - 10%
- Final Reflective Essay - 25%

The (PAC) category is essential to the success of the program. In a program that involves traveling and a learning experience in a place outside of campus, It is fundamental that students are disciplined, involved and committed to the activities that will be part of it. It is important to keep not only a good attendance, but also punctuality to the activities, as well as flexibility in the face of any possible change or challenge that might arrive. An overall cooperation to the success of the program is expected and will be assessed in the PAC category of the course.

REQUIRED READINGS*

Two novels:

[Mamita Yunai](#) (1941) by Carlos Luis Fallas- a novel that fictionalizes the protest in Costa Rica against the United Fruit Company (= Mamita Yunai) in 1931. A protest-novel against the unfair treatment of a foreign company to Costa Ricans and Panamians, especially of indigenous heritage.

[La loca de Gandoca / The Madwoman Of Gandoca](#) (1992) by Anacristina Rossi

Anacristina Rossi = Costarrican female writer, and a pioneer within the eco-feminism

All the other readings and visual materials will be electronically accessed, and can be found in the program.

*Other texts and articles will be electronic, and should be of easy access once in Costa Rica.

The students will also be analyzing visual arts as the one exhibited here: [Naturánima](#)

GRADING SYSTEM

A = 93-100 / A- = 90-92 / B+ = 87-90 / B = 83-86 / B- = 80-82 / C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76 / C- = 70-72 / P = 70+ / NP = 67-0

Accommodation: OSAS

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on disability is required to register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please, present your letter of accommodation to your instructor as early in the semester as possible, preferably during the first week of classes. Arrangements for accommodations for final exams require OSAS test proctoring form, signed by the student and the professor and submitted to OSAS by the student two weeks prior to the beginning of the final period. OSAS is located in 3601 Watt Way, Grace Ford Salvatori Hall 120, and is open 8:30am-5:00pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number for OSAS is (213) 740-0776. They can be reached via email at OSASFrontDesk@usc.edu

Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism -presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words- is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please, familiarize yourself with the Integrity and Accountability Code in <https://policy.usc.edu>

Support Systems:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 - 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours - 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX - (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test-taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 - 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 - 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu. Contact also in cases of non-emergency assistance or need of information.

Costa Rica Julymester, 2023 - Tentative Program

by Prof. Ivette Gomez

Week 1 (In Zoom)

Mon

July 17 Introduction to course / program

History and Culture of Costa Rica

Class discussion:

Costa Rica: the Green Country

Costa Rica: the 'living Eden' designing a template cleaner, carbon-free world (report from UN Environment Program)

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/costa-rica-living-eden-designing-template-cleaner-carbon-free-world>

How did Costa Rica become the greenest, happiest country in the world?

<https://www.euronews.com/green/2020/11/18/how-did-costa-rica-become-the-greenest-happiest-country-in-the-world>

Costa Rica: its regions and history

Pre-Columbian Period and Colonization: the Indigenous People of Costa Rica, and the Black Populations of Costa Rica (in the region of Limón)

<https://www.vacationscostarica.com/travel-guide/colonization-of-costa-rica/#:~:text=Costa%20Rican%20history%20dates%20back,golden%20gifts%20from%20the%20natives.>

Students Presentations:

Slade, William F. "The Federation of Central America." *The Journal of Race Development*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1917, pp. 79–150. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/29738226>.

- Olien, Michael D. "Black and Part-Black Populations in Colonial Costa Rica: Ethnohistorical Resources and Problems." *Ethnohistory*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1980, pp. 13–29. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/481625>.

Tue **Costa Rica: a Country Without an Army**

July 18 Civil War (1948) and Demilitarization (1949)

Class discussion:

The Banana Protest or Huelga Bananera in Costa Rica in 1934

Excerpts from novel [Mamita Yunai](#) (1941) by Carlos Luis Fallas

The Civil War of 1948: Causes and Effects

<https://elespiritudel48.org/costa-rica-the-revolution-of-1948-a-cause-and-effect-analysis/>

Abolition of the Army in Costa Rica

<https://en.unesco.org/memoryoftheworld/registry/209>

Students Presentations:

- Longley, Kyle. "Peaceful Costa Rica, the First Battleground: The United States and the Costa Rican Revolution of 1948." *The Americas*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1993, pp. 149–75. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1007137>.
- Høivik, Tord, and Solveig Aas. "Demilitarization in Costa Rica: A Farewell to Arms?" *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1981, pp. 333–51. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423537>.
- Fournier, Fernando. "Costa Rica: A Democratic Republic." *World Affairs*, vol. 119, no. 1, 1956, pp. 13–14. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20669179>.

Wed **Ecotourism and Its Challenges**

July 19 Is Ecotourism an Inexhaustible Source of Wealth? (PDF)

Class discussion:

Trouble in Paradise: Costa Rica's Ecotourism Problem

<https://stuyspec.com/opinions/trouble-in-paradise-costa-rica-s-ecotourism-problem>

Students Presentations:

- Horton, Lynn R. "Buying Up Nature: Economic and Social Impacts of Costa Rica's Ecotourism Boom." *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2009, pp. 93–107. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20684646>.
- Herrera-Rodríguez, Mauricio. "Sustainable Development in Costa Rica: A Geographic Critique." *Journal of Latin American Geography*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2013, pp. 193–219. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24394859>.

Thu **The Region of Monteverde or Monte Verde in CR**

July 20 <https://drinkteatravel.com/7-reasons-visit-monteverde-cloud-forest-costa-rica/>

Class commenting:

Monteverde, Costa Rica: A Forest in the Clouds

<https://www.twoweeksincostarica.com/monteverde-a-forest-in-the-clouds/>

The Mountain Where you Can Touch the Clouds:

<https://cloudforestmonteverde.com/>

Students Presentations:

- Martín, Lara Moragrega. "Tourist Expansion and Development of Rural Communities: The Case of Monteverde, Costa Rica." *Mountain Research and Development*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2004, pp. 202–05. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3674553>
- Vivanco, Luis A. "Spectacular Quetzals, Ecotourism, and Environmental Futures in Monte Verde, Costa Rica." *Ethnology*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2001, pp. 79–92. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3773924>

Fri

July 21 **Free Day - Prepare for trip to CR**

Sat **Trip to Costa Rica**

July 22 Flight from LAX (OPCIONAL!) at 12:55am / Arriving in San José by 8am

In the plane:

- Make sure to start reading **novel**

La loca de Gandoca / The Madwoman Of Gandoca (2006), by Costarrican female novelist Anacristina Rossi - an example of ecofeminist fiction.

Some opinions about *climate change* by Anacristina Rossi:

<https://www.cronica.com.mx/notas-frenar-cambio-climatico-un-asunto-de-los-adultos-dice-anacristina-rossi-1146122-2020.html>

Watch the episode in Netflix of [Down To Earth](#) with Zac Efron in Costa Rica

Sat **Arrival in Costa Rica**
July 22 Afternoon: arriving in San José from LAX
PM- Check-in hotel in San José

On-site Orientation

Welcome dinner with folklore music/dancing presentation

HW reading/research: Analysis of [Naturánima](#): an ecosystem in the visual arts

Exhibition by artists Ariane Garnier and Carma Casulá in the National Museum of Costa Rica in San José

Week 2 In San José, Costa Rica

Sun AM - City tour guide of **San José** (walking tour)

Jul 23 Visit to **Museo Nacional**

Visit to **Teatro Nacional**

*lunch and dinner out-of-pocket (despite being with the group)

Mon AM - Class at hotel / Topic: Eco-arts in Costa Rica

July 24 TicoTimes: How did San Jose become the Capital of Costa Rica?

<https://ticotimes.net/2022/01/25/how-did-san-jose-become-the-capital-of-costa-rica>

Class discussion of about visual arts exhibition in National Museum of Costa Rica in San José - analysis of *Naturánima* (HW reading/research)

Free afternoon

Tue

July 25

AM - Visit to **Volcán Poás** and **Cataratas Jardines de la Paz**

Lunch - part of the program

PM - Class at hotel

To learn more about Poás Volcano / Volcán Poás, an active volcano in central CR

read:

<https://www.visitcostarica.com/en/costa-rica/where-to-go/protected-areas/po%C3%A1s-volcano-national-park>

To Learn more about La Paz Waterfall Gardens* in Alajuela read:

<https://costarica.org/waterfalls/la-paz/>

Wed

July 26

AM- Visit to **Puerto Caldera y Reserva Nacional Curú**

PM - Class in-situ

To learn more about Curú, read this info:

<https://nicoyapeninsula.com/naturereserves/curu/>

Thu

July 27

AM - Visit to **Cartago**, first capital city of Costa Rica; sample of colonial architecture.

Guided visit to church - Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles.

PM - Class at hotel in San José

Free afternoon

Fri

July 28

AM - Moving to **La Fortuna (leaving San José)**

(going towards Parque Nacional Volcán Arenal).

Class in-situ (hotel at La Fortuna)

Free afternoon

Sat AM- Visit to Parque Nacional **Volcán Arenal**
July 29 Class in-situ
Free afternoon (suggestion: Hot Springs at río Tabacón)

Suggested reading:

Boza, Mario A. "Conservation in Action: Past, Present, and Future of the National Park System of Costa Rica." *Conservation Biology*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1993, pp. 239-47. *JSTOR*,

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2386421>

Week 3 In San Luís, Monteverde

Sun Arrival in **San Luís, Monteverde**
July 30 Welcome Lunch (Communitary Center)
Distribution of students in family houses

Mon AM - Class in Communitary Center
July 31 Visit to Finca Ecológica "Paraíso", San Luís
Bird tour

Tue AM - Class in Community Center
Aug 1 Coffee Tour
Free afternoon

Wed AM- Class in Community Center
Aug 2 Visit to Finca Tradicional Orgánica "Parcela Lobo"
Free afternoon

Thu AM- Class in Community Center
Aug 3 Trapiche "Don Simón"
Tour "Caña de Azúcar"

Free afternoon

Fri AM- Class in Community Center

Aug 4 Tour Natural Cosmetics

Free afternoon

Sat AM - Guided hiking the the Pacific Trail "Sendero Pacífico"

Aug 5 (moderate hike of 10-14 km) - activity will be optional

To learn more about this hike:

<http://sanluis.or.cr/sendero-pacifico/#:~:text=El%20Sendero%20Pac%C3%ADfico%20prev%C3%A9%20una,del%20suelo%20y%20las%20comunidades.>

https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g644053-d3784057-r350127186-Pasion_Costa_Rica-Santa_Elena_Monteverde_Province_of_Puntarenas.html

Week 4 Between Monteverde, Parque Manuel Antonio and Farewell CR

Sun **Free day**

Aug 6 Optional: afternoon on the river / visit to close town Santa Elena

*work on interviews / final projects

Mon AM- Class in Community Center

Aug 7 Service project - teaching of English class at local school (two groups)

Cooking class

*work on interviews / final projects

Tue **Farewell to Monteverde**

Aug 8 AM- Class in Community Center

Free afternoon / *keep working on final projects

Farewell dinner with cultural activity

Wed
Aug 9 Going to Parque Manuel Antonio
Check in at hotel (Manuel Antonio)
Explore the park
Conclusive class in-situ / Evals
*Submission of final projects

Thu
Aug 10 **Last day of the program**
Relax day at Parque Manuel Antonio
Conclusive class in-situ
*Submission of final projects (if not submitted before)

Fri
Aug 11 **Return to San José**
Arrival to San José' International Airport
Flight back to LAX