

**AMAZON RESEARCH:
ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE AND OPPORTUNITY ON THE LAST FRONTIER
IDH 3996
Spring 2008 SYLLABUS**

Instructors:

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GENERAL INFORMATION

This is an innovative and interdisciplinary Honors College course that culminates with a four-week field element in the Amazon rainforest of Peru. During this semester, additional focus is given to research design and techniques, as well as the ecological and cultural processes and considerations which help to define the natural and human components of the Amazon as students refine project proposals to be implemented during the Summer 2008 field component of the course. The required research proposal and project can relate to many fields of inquiry, whether directly related to the students major or not. Course faculty will provide guidance in helping each student to develop a project that is feasible, appropriate, and well designed. During July 2008, students and faculty spend 4 weeks in the upper Amazon of Peru, where students will have a hands-on opportunity to carry out their individual projects as well as to participate in group projects led by faculty. The objective is to have projects of the caliber that could be publishable in refereed journals.

REQUIRED TEXTS

A Neotropical Companion (2nd Edition). 1997. Kricher, J. Princeton Univ. Press.
Handouts and assigned films/videos.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Classes meet weekly in the Everglades Dormitory (exact location TBA) on Tuesday from 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM. Additionally, students are required to meet with one or more of the course professors outside of regularly scheduled class sessions at least twice to discuss and develop independent projects.

Class Dates:

7 Jan (Mon): FIU classes begin

8 Jan (Tue): Amazon #1: Semester overview, organization of fund-raising groups, T-shirt preparation, student responsibilities.
Short lecture: "Current environmental issues facing the Amazon".
Assigned reading – A Neotropical Companion - Ch. 14 (Deforestation and Conservation)

15 Jan (Tue): Amazon #2: Guest speaker #1.
Silly quiz #1 on assigned reading

22 Jan (Tue): Amazon #3: Guest speaker #2.
Project bibliography due. Fund-raising group reports.
DEADLINE for passport application for students who don't already have one.
Assigned reading – A Neotropical Companion – appendix (pp. 377-388: health)

29 Jan (Tue): Amazon #4: Health and safety in the Amazon – ppt presentation – Devon
Silly quiz #2 on assigned reading
Assigned reading - A Neotropical Companion – Ch. 7 – (Living off the Land)

5 Feb (Tue): Amazon #5: Sustainable development and cultural considerations – Jim.
Silly quiz #3 on assigned reading

12 Feb (Tue): Amazon #6: Student presentations: Groups 1 & 2
Formal project proposal due (4 pages)

13-14 Feb (Wed-Thu): GC table set up for selling Valentines items

19 Feb (Tue): Amazon #7: Student presentations: Groups 3 & 4

26 Feb (Tue): Amazon #8: GIS workshop – Green Library, 2nd floor

29 Feb-2 Mar (Fri-Sun): Benefit concert fund-raiser

4 Mar (Tue): Amazon #9: Poster workshop – how to prepare an effective powerpoint poster.
Final project proposals (incorporating comments made on the proposals turned in on 12 Feb)
IRB forms – (Institutional Review Board) – forms to be filled out for research (we will start this in class)

10-14 Mar (Mon-Fri): FIU midterm exams

11 Mar (Tue): Completed IRB forms due (NO CLASS) – work on SRAI posters

15-23 Mar: FIU Spring Break

24-28 Mar: Amazon #10: Sign up for 1-hr time block for SRAI poster review.

28 Mar (Fri): DEADLINE for medical clearance from family doctor/health clinic

1 Apr (Tue): Amazon #11: SRAI verbal review – oral poster presentations in class.

4 Apr (Fri): SRAI poster session – exact location/time TBA

8 Apr (Tue): Amazon #12: Public presentation on Amazon Program and projects – invite friends, family, etc. Question and answer period at end. Refreshments.

7-11 Apr: Office of International Studies – Mandatory pre-departure session of 1 to 1.5 hours. This session will cover issues related to medical care, culture, insurance, ethics and behavior (Exact date/location TBA).

11 Apr (Fri): DEADLINE for payment of balance of Amazon trip costs

15 Apr (Tue): Amazon #13: Open date.

17 Apr (Thu): FIU classes end.

21-26 Apr: FIU final exams

Independent projects and proposals – These are projects developed by 1 or 2 students for implementation during the field component (Summer 2008) in Peru. Projects do not need to be directly related to biology and the environment, but may also delve into sociology, anthropology, international relations, art, business, medicine, geography, education and many other fields. With appropriate justification, a maximum of 3 students may collaborate on an independent project. Each project must have a project proposal completed during the Spring 2008 semester. Proposals will include background information/literature survey, justification of the project, a rough schedule for completion of the field components of the project, a description of how data will be collected and any special materials that might be needed for data collection, and a description of how the results of the project will be analyzed and presented. Course instructors will work closely with students during the preparation of independent projects.

SRAI – 4 April 2007: Project proposals will be presented (in poster format) at the SRAI poster session. Posters can be printed out at no or minimal cost through the Honors College. Guidelines for SRAI posters can be found online at <http://honors.fiu.edu/srai/conf06/posters.htm>

RESOURCES FOR USE IN THE COURSE

Books:

Balick, Michael J. and Paul Cox (1997). Plants, People and Culture.

Balick, Michael J. et al. (1995). Medicinal Resources of the Tropical Forest.

Goulding, M. (1993) Flooded Forests of the Amazon. Scientific American, March 1993.

Hubert & Renno (2006). Historical Biogeography of South American freshwater fishes.

Isaac et al. (1999?). The experience of community-based management of middle Amazonian fisheries.

Silvius et al. (2004). Fisheries in the Amazon Varzea.

Articles/PDFs/Handouts/Other

As we develop group projects, lectures and discussions, we will compile a list of articles and handouts for students.

GRADING & COURSE EVALUATIONS

Grades are based on the following percentages (equivalent to numbers of points)

A = 94-100	A- = 90-93	B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86	B- = 80-82	C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76	C- = 70-72	D+ = 67-69
D = 63-66	D- = 60-62	F = 0-59

COURSE GRADING SHEET (Keep track of your own points!)

Item	Date	Possible points (not including bonuses)	Your points
Silly quiz #1 (or summary)	15 Jan	4	
Silly quiz #2 (or summary)	29 Jan	4	
Silly quiz #3 (or summary)	5 Feb	4	
Project bibliography	22 Jan	8	
Project proposal	12 Feb	20	
Project proposal (final revision)	4 Mar	10	
Student group presentations	12 or 19 Feb	5	
SRAI poster review session	24-28 Mar	5	
SRAI poster oral presentations	1 Apr	5	
SRAI poster session – final posters	4 Apr	10	
Citizenship – class participation		10	
Citizenship – participation in one or more of following: GIS course, Valentine’s fund-raising, or benefit concert planning and execution. Other activities may also qualify.		5 (if students participate in more than one of these, bonus points are awarded)	
Mentoring – meeting #1 w profs (before spring break)		5	
Mentoring – meeting #2 w profs (before or after spring break)		5	
TOTAL POINTS		100	

IMPORTANT: Please note that students will not be penalized if their course schedule does not permit them to be at every class – alternative ways of making points for things like “class participation” will be permitted. Likewise, note that participating in “citizenship” activities outside of formal class will be necessary if you wish to obtain an A in the course. You can make some valuable bonus points by participating in more than one of these activities, however.