

THE HONORS COLLEGE AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

AMAZON PROGRAM (PERU)

ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE AND OPPORTUNITY ON THE LAST FRONTIER

IDH 3006/4008 (3 credits)

Spring 2009 SYLLABUS

Instructors:

Dr. Jim Riach

riachj@fiu.edu

Honors College/Environmental Studies

Dr. Devon Graham

mionectes@aol.com

Honors College/Project Amazonas

Enrollment: Limited to a maximum of 18 students

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 the Summer B session. During the first part of spring semester, students are introduced to various aspects of the Amazon, ranging from its geological and ecological history, its colonization and exploitation by Native Americans, its exploration by European “discoverers”, its biodiversity, and the current challenges facing the Amazon environment and its people. As the semester continues, 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 develop project proposals to be implemented during the Summer B study-abroad component of the course in Peru.

During the trajectory of the course, we will explore the origins of the Amazon (geological, biological, human), the mythos of the Amazon (the Amazon romanticized, as well as portrayed by the media, Hollywood, and in books), the reality of the Amazon today (peoples, environmental challenges, economic opportunities) and the ethos of the Amazon (what is our responsibility to the Amazon, are there spiritual connections to the Amazon?)

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. From 28 June-25 July 2009 students and faculty spend 4 weeks in the upper Amazon of Peru, where students will have the opportunity to carry out their individual projects as well as to help with other students projects and to participate in faculty-led group projects.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- A Neotropical Companion (2nd Edition). 1997. Kricher, J. Princeton Univ. Press. ISBN 0-691-04433-3
- Candide. 1759. Voltaire. Dover Thrift Editions, Francois-Marie Arouet, translator.
- Handouts and assigned films/videos

COURSE SCHEDULE: Spring 2009

Classes meet every **Tuesday** (except as noted below) from **3:30-5:30 PM** – room to be assigned. This will allow for screening of films in addition to lectures and discussion of reading materials. When reading materials have been assigned, the subsequent class will begin with a short quiz.

- 6 January:** Introductions, objectives & mapping exercise. Origins and definitions of the Amazon: What are the geological and biological origins of the Amazon? What actually constitutes the Amazon? How is it defined?
Assignment: Media & Entertainment portrayal of the Amazon – bring 5 references that show popular portrayals of the Amazon (newspaper articles, films, books, etc. (no websites please). For one of the references, include a 200-250 word summary describing how that reference reinforces or shatters perceptions and stereotypes of the Amazon.
Assignment: Fill out provided information form for study abroad program – bring to following class.
Readings: An introductory reading on Amazon origins – TBD
Voltaire: Candide – chapters 1-15 (these are short!)
- 13 January:** What are popular perceptions of the Amazon today and in the past? How are these perceptions rooted in reality or myth? How are popular perceptions exploited for political, social, or even conservation gain or fame? Why read Candide?
Assignment: Make scan or photocopy of your passport photo page to bring to following class. If you do not have a valid passport, show evidence that you have applied for a passport.
Readings: Voltaire: Candide – chapter 16-end of book (short chapters)
Kricher: Ch 1: Tropical Climates and Ecosystems (pp.3-20)
- 20 January:** Geology, Hydrology and Climate of the Amazon The nuts and bolts of the Amazon, or why is it warm, wet and covered by forest?
Assignment:
Deadline: Non-refundable deposit of \$200 due
Readings: Author?: chapter from 1541
Kricher: A Neotropical Companion, 2nd Ed. Ch X: Living in the rainforest (how locals make a living) pp xx-xx.
- 27 January:** Western Discovery of the Amazon and its consequences (the clash between Europe and the First Inhabitants: Native Americans)
Assignment:
Readings: Kricher: A Neotropical Companion, 2nd Ed. Ch. II – Francisco de Orellana (pp. 39-89).
Mann: 1491. Chapter titled *Amazonia* – pp 315-349
- 3 February:** Human History of the Amazon (Western explorers and the colonial period)
Assignment: Select one chapter from Explorers of the Amazon (other than the one assigned below) and present a 2-3 minute synopsis of that chapter at the beginning of the subsequent class.
Reading: Smith: Explorers of the Amazon; Pp xx-xx: Julio Araña, King of the Putumayo (a story of the rubber boom era)

10 February: Amazon Research & Techniques. What does research or a service project entail? What are effective research/project techniques? How can one develop a reasonable and innovative research or project proposal that can be carried out in the time allotted? What are the characteristics of good research/projects?
Assignment: Develop a list of 5 research areas (related or unrelated) that you feel you might be interested in (you can change your mind later – don't worry that you'll be stuck doing one of the five project areas). Select one of those research areas, and find 10 resources (papers, books, websites (maximum of 6), news articles, etc.) pertinent to that topic. Be prepared to present your favorite project idea to the class (2-5 minutes maximum) on 25 February.
Readings: Handouts - TBA

17 February: Film Screening - *Fitzcarraldo* (Director: Werner Herzog)
Assignment: Continue assignment from previous class. For this class period, write a 1000 word reaction paper to the film *Fitzcarraldo*. How did the film challenge your image or preconceptions of the Amazon. What questions did it raise? Select a "theme" from the movie and develop your observations and arguments around that theme.
Readings: None

24 February: Independent project idea reports in class.
Assignment: Project bibliography due.
Readings: Handouts - TBA

3 March: Health and Safety in the Amazon
Assignment: Institutional Review Board forms due for all students
Readings: A Neotropical Companion – Ch. 7 – (Living off the Land)
Handouts - TBA

10 March: Sustainable development and cultural considerations.
Assignment:
Deadline: Financial Aid Applications due in Financial Aid Office at least 3 months prior to departure.
Readings: Handouts - TBA

14-20 March: FIU Spring Break – NO CLASSES

24 March: Biodiversity and Natural History of the Amazon
Assignment: Research one organization or project (NGO, government, commercial or other) that is seeking to make a positive difference in the Amazon, either through conservation, education, health, research or social activities and programs. Contact the organization or project leaders, and request additional materials (pdf files, on-line resources, etc. [no printed materials, please]. Develop a 250-500 word synopsis on your chosen organization/project. Try to assess how effective the organization/project is in terms of use of funding and resources, for instance, does a good portion of their budget go to salaries and fund-raising activities, or to actual programs in the Amazon?
Readings: Handouts – TBA
Assignments: DUE – OEA Student Application form – two copies.

- 31 March:** Current environmental issues facing the Amazon
Assignment: DUE – 50% of remaining study abroad payment due.
Readings: Kricher. A Neotropical Companion, 2nd Ed. - Ch. 14 (Deforestation and Conservation, pp. 334-368)
 Handouts - TBA
- 7 April:** The Future of the Amazon: What is in store for the Amazon? Is there political and popular will to find solutions to save this largest rainforest on earth, or will it be destroyed by agriculture, logging, mining and development? What are possible solutions and innovations that will permit Amazon countries to sustainably develop? What are the obligations of developed countries (if any)? What might be the global consequences of a fragmented or destroyed Amazon?
Assignment:
Readings: Handouts - TBA
- 6-10 April:** **Office of International Studies** – Mandatory pre-departure session of 60-90 minutes. This session will cover issues related to medical care, culture, insurance, ethics and behavior (Exact date/location TBA).
- 14 April:** Trip Preparation Overview and Course Wrap-up. Public presentation on Amazon Program and projects – invite friends, family, etc. Question and answer period at end. Refreshments
Assignment: DUE – any remaining study abroad fees and costs are due at this time.
- 17 April:** FIU Spring Semester classes end – Thursday
- 21-26 April:** FIU final exam week – no classes
- 29 April:** **Grades Due**
- 28 June:** **Departure for Peru** – Amazon Study Abroad Course
- 25 July:** **Return to Miami from Peru** – Amazon Study Abroad Course

MATERIAL TO BE COVERED

Amazon Background

1. What is the Amazon –physical boundaries, how it is defined, in what countries is it located.
2. Origins of the Amazon – overview events that led to the physical origins of the Amazon basin.
3. Climate of the Amazon –current climate patterns of the Amazon

Biodiversity and Ecology of the Amazon

1. How the Amazon “functions” ecologically
2. Origins of the Amazon flora, fauna, and biodiversity in general
3. What are the primary groups of organisms that dominate the Amazon
4. Models for explaining patterns of biodiversity

Humans and the Amazon

1. Overview of the history of human occupation of the Amazon.
2. Comparison of pre-historic and modern patterns of land use in the Amazon.
3. Influence of pre-European peoples on the Amazonian landscape.
4. Diversity of pre-European peoples – culture, language, resource use.
5. Influence of European colonization on the Amazon.
6. Exploration of the Amazon by the West – primary figures and their accomplishments and contributions.
7. Exploitation of the Amazon by the West – successes, failures, and ecological impacts.
8. Current issues in management and use of resources from the Amazon.
9. Myths and legends of the Amazon at the time of discovery through the modern era.

The Future of the Amazon

1. Current ecological/social/political pressures on the Amazon environment
2. Proposed solutions to “saving” or “sustainably using” the Amazon
3. Examples of successful/failed projects.
4. Deforestation and the future of Amazon biodiversity.

RESOURCES FOR USE IN THE COURSE

Films:

Anaconda
 Fitzcarraldo
 Pantaleón y las Visitadoras Nocturnas
 At play in the Fields of the Lord
 Aguirre, Wrath of God
 The Medicine Man
 Documentaries dealing with gold rush, dams, drugs, culture clashes, etc.

Books:

Plants, People and Culture. 1997. Balick, Michael J. and Paul Cox.
Medicinal Resources of the Tropical Forest. 1995. Balick, Michael J. et al.
Flooded Forests of the Amazon. 1993. Goulding, M. Scientific American, March 1993.
Explorers of the Amazon. 1990. Smith, Anthony. Univ. of Chicago Press.
Head Hunters of the Amazon: My Adventures in the Jungle, 1894-1901. 2003. Up de Graff, Fritz. The Narrative Press.
The Amazon: Past, Present and Future. 1992. Gheerbrant, Alain. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers.
A Neotropical Companion, 2nd Ed. 1997. Kricher, John. Princeton Univ. Press.
In Amazonia: A Natural History. 2002. Raffles, Hugh. Princeton Univ. Press.
Varzea: Diversity, Development, and Conservation of Amazonia’s Whitewater Floodplains. 1999. Ed. By Padoch, Christine, et al. The New York Botanical Garden Press.
The Amazon River Forest: A Natural History of Plants, Animals and People. 1999. Smith, Nigel J. H. Oxford Univ. Press.
Floods of Fortune: Ecology and Economy along the Amazon. 1996. Goulding, Michael, et. al. Columbia Univ. Press.
The Amazon: Limnology and Landscape Ecology. 1984. Edited by Sioli, H. Dr. W. Junk Publishers.
Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon: 1851-1852. 2000. Herndon, W L. Grove Press.

One River: Explorations and Discoveries in the Amazon Rain Forest. 1996. Davis, W. Simon and Schuster.

Through the Brazilian Wilderness. 2000. Roosevelt, T. Cooper Square Press.

Entangled Edens: Visions of the Amazon. 2002. Slater, C. Univ. of California Press.

The Enchanted Amazon Rain Forest: Stories from a Vanishing World. 1996. Smith, N. J. H. Univ. Press of Florida.

Identification Guides – for plants, birds, mammals, fish, insects, reptiles and amphibians, etc.

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.

GRADING & COURSE EVALUATIONS

Grading will be computed on the basis of 100 points as follows:

- 20 Participation – being at class and actively participating in class activities and discussion. This doesn't mean you need to be talking/responding all the time, but it does mean that you should show active interest, ask questions, express your opinions and viewpoints, and stay for the full duration of the class period.
- 20 Reading quizzes – these are given at the beginning of each class, NO MAKE-UPS. These quizzes will be relatively easy if you're keeping up with the material and readings. They will include general questions on the readings of the day. There will be 5 quizzes (4 points each) for a total of 20 points. Quizzes may include the occasional bonus point. The objective of these quizzes is to encourage you to read class material before coming to class – for meaningful participatory discussion in class, it is essential for everyone to have read the material.
- 20 Reaction papers
- 20 Miscellaneous assignments and presentations TBA
- 20 Urban field experience – Latin American cultural events, biological exhibits, etc - followed by reaction papers – some events may be pay events.

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