

Proposal
Study Abroad – Costa Rica
Karen Stocker

1) Program Overview

I propose a 5-week course for Summer Session A (tentatively planned as June 5 to July 8), in which students have approximately two weeks of hybrid class time in Fullerton (some asynchronous online and some synchronous, via zoom -- which students may opt to turn into face-to-face meetings), and three weeks in Costa Rica. The justification for the hybrid portion in Fullerton is so that students can start to get to know one another, and we can establish an appropriate classroom culture before departure. The target audience includes students from across campus seeking to fulfill GE requirements. I will teach Hum 350 Costa Rican Life and Culture, which meets GE Area C3 and Z, and Anth 306: Culture and Art, which meet GE Area C4 and Z.

I would prefer to partner with AIFS rather than CIEE, though I have worked with both organizations. See my comments on the 2018 contract for what to adjust.

2) Adaptation of Existing Courses

I developed HUM 350 for Study Abroad and have taught it four times on past Study Abroad experiences in Costa Rica, so it is now finely tuned to go well with our experiential learning activities. Costa Rica's global leadership in sustainability as an early adopter of zero emissions goals, its status as a pioneer ecotourism destination, and its diversification into various forms of tourism that now dominate its economy will be primary areas of focus of the course on Costa Rican Life and Culture. This course will examine the effects of various types of tourism on local cultures. These include ecotourism and greenwashing, agricultural tourism, heritage tourism, volunteer tourism (voluntourism), and adventure tourism. Additional topics I will cover include Costa Rican Indigenous history and culture, contemporary social movements in the capital city, and banana plantation labor. All of these topics relate to my teaching experience on campus as well as to my own research expertise in Costa Rica. Students will have the opportunity to meet some of the individuals (Chorotega Indigenous community members, tourism operators and community members affected by tourism, banana plantation laborers, and social movement leaders) who informed that research. Discussions of various types of sustainability (environmental, cultural, and economic) will happen throughout our trip, and the trip is designed to enact sustainable travel, thereby putting into practice what we study. The primary assignments prior to departure include participation in discussion boards about the assigned readings. Once in Costa Rica, assignments include cultural inventories, in which students make use of the anthropological insights they are learning about the study of culture to report on what they are learning by means of cultural immersion. Given that students will engage in a homestay portion of the trip while they are in San José, the capital city, they will have ample opportunity to experience how life is lived in Costa Rica. They will also gain cultural insights during our lengthy excursions to places where people have known me for a long time and know that I want my students to experience something more in-depth than a standard tourist visit.

The course that I will adapt for Study Abroad is Anthropology 306: Culture and Art. This course will work well on this trip, as I propose to engage in walking tours focusing on urban art and public art, and we will study contemporary social movements that make skillful use of the arts in the capital city. We will visit two artisans' cooperatives in the site of our first long excursion (Monteverde), and we will meet with Chorotega Indigenous ceramicists mixing traditional strategies with individual innovations, Chorotega storytellers who are experts in verbal artistry, a renowned sculptor, a painter's studio, and a muralists' cooperative during our second excursion (to Guanacaste). While the books I have selected for Anth 306 differ from those usually used in the classroom setting, I have selected these books as an adaptation to Study Abroad because they work well to join concepts of art and activism (what is increasingly known as "artivism"), in keeping with ways that young leaders in Costa Rica are combining them. This will allow for a greater opportunity for embodied learning. The book Tactical Urbanism speaks to the methods used by some of the young leaders in San José, whose endeavors we will visit. Excerpts from The Creative City and articles that critique it will also inform our understandings of public art in cities. Rather than having students purchase another book, I will draw from my most recent book to inform lectures and discussions. The corresponding chapters are noted in the syllabus.

The catalog description of Anth 306 is as follows:

Metaphysical and mystical systems underlying the "grammars" of the art, myths and rituals of various nonliterate and literate peoples and their development into creative experiences.

The focus on culture is readily adaptable to a study abroad course where cultural immersion is the goal. We will study cultural approaches to art, as outlined above, and discussions of myth and ritual will be important aspects of our visit to Chorotega Indigenous Territory, where Chorotega storytellers will welcome us and where ritual also abounds in everyday contexts. In the urban sphere, too, we will address ritual with regard to the Café Pendiente program in San José, in which young leaders adapted an existing ritualistic daily activity to meet food insecurity needs of vulnerable populations. Indeed, teaching Culture and Art in the context of Study Abroad is likely to be far more enriching than in its usual classroom context. While professors of cultural anthropology do our best in the classroom to teach about culture, there is no substitute for guided, experiential learning through cultural immersion; instead of learning about fieldwork in cultural anthropology, students can do cultural anthropology.

3) Opportunities for Development of Global Awareness, Social Justice, Community or Civic Engagement, Service Learning, or Undergraduate Research

While any study abroad experience is likely to deepen global awareness, my longstanding research connections in the destination country, and the fact that we will visit various of my field sites, will make this even more possible. Our visits to a sustainable coffee farm will entail discussions of the global economy as it pertains to this product and students' use of it; the storytellers who receive us in Chorotega Territory are also retired, former banana plantation laborers. In preparation for that visit, students will hear about their experiences, the effects of

banana production on local people, and our own role within the global economy as consumers. Discussions of sustainable tourism will constitute the foundation of the course on Costa Rican Life and Culture, given that tourism is one of the primary contributors to Costa Rica's economy (and, hence, life and culture). My research on this topic in Costa Rica will inform these discussions.

Social justice and community engagement are also primary themes of the trip. My most recent research endeavor involved six months of ethnographic research and interviews with young leaders of Costa Rican social movements and their efforts geared toward generating change, with an eye to social justice. Students will hear about these projects and meet some of their leaders.

It is a deliberate decision to steer clear of service learning in short-term travel because research on tourism (including voluntourism) shows that these short-term engagements offer a veneer of service learning, but in reality are too often superficial, and that travelers are likely to leave with an over-inflated sense of their contribution, while having little impact (at best) and sometimes a negative impact on local economies (at worst) (Garland 2018; Mostafanezhad 2013; see also Meghani 2011; I will be happy to supply these sources upon request). Volunteer tourism programs tend to exacerbate the power divide between travelers from industrialized nations and locals in developing countries and also feed white savior complexes. By turning poverty in study abroad destinations into touristic opportunities, these touristic endeavors lead local governments to avoid seeking longer-term and more effective solutions to poverty. They undermine potential employment of skilled workers if unskilled or less skilled tourists will not only work for free but pay to do so. Especially problematic are any programs that use orphanages as tourism opportunities, erroneously teaching locals that solutions come from outside; offering incentive to refrain from placing an emphasis on trying to find adoptive families for young children (the most compelling poster children for orphanage voluntourism), instead profiting from their orphan status; and having devastating effects on children with trauma rooted in abandonment who are then abandoned repeatedly by each wave of doting tourists. The well-intentioned tourists leave, oblivious to their role in this global enterprise – thus undermining CSUF's goal of study abroad – and mistakenly convinced of having made a positive impact. Offering a veneer of service-learning on short-term study abroad programs runs counter to the goal of having students gain accurate global awareness.

Instead, and in keeping with what the anthropological literature on tourism suggests, we will be hiring community-based tourism operators, staying in locally owned accommodations (homestays in the capital city and in Chorotega Indigenous Territory, and hotels elsewhere), and eating in locally owned restaurants. I have selected our destinations for excursions because these two offer examples of sustainable tourism. Playa Sámara is one of the few Pacific beaches where establishments are still largely locally owned (80% of the Pacific coast is foreign-owned), and Monteverde is a success story in local ownership and its accompanying benefits, which include fewer problems with drug abuse and prostitution, and more benefits (such as economic sustainability) for local residents. This is imperative in a country that suffers 80% "leakage," meaning that a substantial portion of income from tourism goes back to multinational

corporations that own most large hotels and tourism companies. Selecting locally owned businesses represents a better way to assure that tourist dollars remain in the community. Channeling money toward locally owned endeavors, rather than engaging in superficial volunteer activities, makes a deeper impact on communities in need, and empowers local communities to build their own culturally appropriate and sustainable solutions to local problems.

The focus on sustainable travel and discussions about reducing negative impact are also extremely important in the era of climate crisis. In order to justify air travel, we need to make sure that our programs attend to issues of environmental sustainability. In the program I propose, as in the past when I have worked with AIFS, I have insisted on having students take public transportation rather than private buses while on excursions within the capital city (especially given the ease and lower expense of using public transportation instead of adding another vehicle to congested streets, and where having instruction on how to do so makes them safer in their free time). I have insisted on using locally owned accommodations and restaurants. My past negotiations with third party providers resulted in changing from AIFS hiring a liaison from Europe who would fly to Costa Rica to travel with us, to insisting on hiring Costa Rican liaisons who both have greater expertise to offer and help to keep the economic benefits of tourism in Costa Rica.

4) Recruitment Strategies

I have been successful in recruiting students for four prior trips, and I intend to use those same proven strategies. Because I teach general education courses, I have access to students from a wide array of fields of study who have already learned about the value of cultural immersion. I have already encouraged all of my students to seek study abroad opportunities. A targeted message, via Titanium, to students from past classes who showed particular interest in cultural immersion or study abroad will be my starting point. I will also visit colleagues' courses to promote this program (and all others offered by H&SS in a given term, whether or not I am among the leaders). I have enjoyed meeting with Guardian Scholars in years past, and that has proven fruitful for recruiting students who turned out to be valuable assets to the cohort.

5) Past Study, Research, and Travel Abroad that Prepares Me to Lead a Study Abroad Program

I have engaged in immersive, ethnographic research in Costa Rica since my own study abroad experience there in 1992, followed by a Fulbright Fellowship there, MA research, doctoral research, and then regular research trips to Costa Rica ever since. These trips have ranged from a few weeks to two years in length. Archival research on tourism, generally, and my original ethnographic research on tourism in Costa Rica, specifically, have informed my publications and teaching, especially with regard to the course Anth 415: Anthropology of Tourism. I am not proposing to teach that course on Study Abroad because it does not fulfill GE requirements. However, I have adapted parts of it to the Hum 350 course and its assignments. My scholarly understandings of the positive and negative impacts of tourism have shaped the design of this trip, so as to maximize the positive effects of tourism on local communities while diminishing

the negative effects of it. My research on transitions to the tourism economy in Costa Rica informs which businesses out of many (coffee tours, rainforest excursions, urban tours, restaurants) to visit. I have personally vetted the community-run businesses that we will patronize, to know which take care of roads, contribute to local public schools, and hire locals in places where the tourism economy has elevated the cost of living for locals.

I have led Study Abroad for CSUF H&SS on four occasions, and a fifth time at CSUB. In addition to this direct Study Abroad experience, almost all of my publications stem from my research on Costa Rica. Millennial Movements: Positive Social Change in Urban Costa Rica, my fourth book about Costa Rican culture, is due out (currently in press, University of Toronto Press) in time for this trip. This, as well as my past books, will inform the course of study. My first book, related to the Chorotega Storytellers and their narrative art form, marked the beginning of my decades of immersive research experience in Chorotega Territory and will inform the Culture and Art course. On the basis of that long history of having earned and developed trust, the community has welcomed my students and offered them an experience that even very few Costa Ricans or tourists get to enjoy. My second book, about the educational system and discrimination in schools, further solidified my relationship with this rural, Indigenous community. This example of applied anthropology, scholarly activism, and advocacy will also inform students' development of a social justice framework and an understanding of how academic research can inform community and civic engagement. That research project offered the Department of Indigenous Education for the entire nation-state of Costa Rica the grounds it needed to urge a change of curriculum on a national level, toward a more inclusive curriculum. My third book, about tourism and culture change, informs the design of this trip as one rooted in sustainable tourism, not only in terms of the environment, but also with regard to cultural and economic sustainability. As noted above, I have personally vetted the tour operators and businesses we will work with to know that they work in ethically sound ways, in concert with their respective communities. My most recent book is about social movements led by young people in Costa Rica. We will meet some of these leaders, hear about their projects, and participate in some of them. In addition to these research projects, I have painted alongside Costa Rican street artists whose murals we will tour, I have decades-long connections to the producers whose coffee we will sample, my books feature the founders of two women's cooperatives that we will visit, young leaders working toward sustainability efforts will guide some of our urban walking tours, and the Chorotega Indigenous community will welcome us precisely because of my longstanding research-related and resulting personal connections. My decades of research in Costa Rica also informed my assorted chapters in edited volumes, peer-reviewed articles, my TED talk, which was invited by scholars from Costa Rica and delivered in fluent Costa Rican Spanish (please see my CV for details), as well as numerous interviews about my research, requested by Costa Rican journalists. I am uniquely suited to lead a Study Abroad trip to Costa Rica.

6) Experience Working with Students Outside the Classroom/Mentoring

In addition to having led university-sponsored Study Abroad trips to Costa Rica on five past occasions (four while at CSUF and one at CSUB), my classroom-based teaching has also involved

innovative pedagogy that urged students to engage in community-based research learning strategies. On two occasions, for Anth 350 (Culture and Education), I partnered with Cog•nate Collective, Artists in Residence from Grand Central Art Center (GCAC). These partnerships resulted in the application of ethnographic methods to study how to assure that curricula reflect and value students' own backgrounds in culturally responsible ways. Each of these two collaborations resulted in anthropologically informed artistic interventions off campus (in Santa Ana and in Santa Fe Springs). They are represented in a recent book published by X Artists Books in 2019 and written up in Titan Magazine (<http://news.fullerton.edu/2016su/Where-Art-Anthropology.aspx>). A third time, when Cog•nate Collective was unavailable for collaboration, I worked with the descendant of Orange County Chicano muralist Emigdio Vasquez and his local murals to let the nexus among art, culture, and education come to life for students in Anth 350 and to encourage embodied learning, a key strategy of cultural anthropology.

7) Overview of How the Study Abroad Experience Would Contribute to My Scholarship, Pedagogy, and/or Professional Development

My participation in Study Abroad in Costa Rica contributes to my own scholarship in multiple ways. It facilitates my return to Costa Rica and to the communities where I have carried out research so as to maintain ties there, and to support community-led tourist endeavors in the places where communities have supported my research. This, in turn, foments subsequent immersive research experiences in which it is essential to maintain or deepen the trust I earned over the course of decades of research. This time, given that the publication date of my forthcoming book might occur just prior to the trip, my participation in Study Abroad in Costa Rica will allow me to close the loop by returning published work to research participants (or, if it is not that timely, at least update them on its progress in culturally appropriate ways, by doing so in person). This is very important in a discipline with imperialist roots and in which anthropologists have worked hard to change research practices and work on making decolonizing methodologies the norm.

Return trips to my field sites also informs my teaching, by allowing me to offer current updates to courses that discuss research methods and experiences (Anth 100: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology; Anth 300: Culture and Language; Anth 332: Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective; Anth 415: Anthropology of Tourism; and 513: Theory and Method in Cultural Anthropology). They also offer me the opportunity to close the loop, as noted above, and support Indigenous-run and other community-run tourism operations, which allows me to walk my talk and lends me credibility when I teach about decolonizing methodologies, which constitutes the backbone of Anth 513. Department funds are insufficient, and intramural funding is too little and unreliable to cover the costs of travel for fieldwork, although it is necessary for maintaining and active research agenda in keeping with the accepted methods of my discipline. Study Abroad covers my airfare; once there, after students leave, I can pay my own way to remain in the country and do research.

As for professional development, given that return visits support my research, this, too, informs my ability to participate actively in professional conferences. It is a norm for me to present current research at reputable conferences in Anthropology at least once a year.

For all of these reasons, I find Study Abroad to offer the most rewarding teaching opportunities for me, as well as the most lasting and in-depth learning opportunities for students.