



ALS5905: International Studies

Costa Rica- Tropical Ecosystems Study Abroad

Spring Break, 2026

3 credits

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 11am-1pm in 357 NZ Hall

Course Description

Factors in evolution of forest, range, and wildlife natural resources administration and policies in the United States; policy components; policy formation implementation, change processes; and economic criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of policies.

Course Prerequisites

- Junior standing or higher
- Familiarity with basic economic principles
- Experience with Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, basic writing and presentation skills

Course Learning Objectives

To actively experience the natural resource management, agricultural practices, and ecotourism programs in Costa Rica. Students will observe the rich cultural and natural resources Costa Rica offers and how the country plans and manages those resources to benefit its citizens and environment.

Learning Materials and Supplies

There are **no** textbooks required for this course! All learning materials will be provided on Canvas.

Instructor Interaction Plan

- Expect an instructor response to email and Canvas message within 24 hours, during weekdays, with extended time delays during the weekend.
- Expect instructor feedback for submitted assignments within ten days past the assignment deadline
- If you ever have questions or need clarification on instructor feedback, please message or attend office hours.
- We will post an announcement at least once a week to give updates and class feedback.
- We invite your feedback in both midterm and end-of-term GatorEvals and plan to continuously improve student experience within the course. Your opinion is highly valued.

Required Technology & How to Obtain the Technology

- Required on computer: speakers, a microphone, and camera
- Links to all downloadable resources are provided. These resources include software and online tools, apps, plug-ins such as PDF Reader, media players, collaboration tools, social media, interactive multimedia apps, etc. and are available on the Canvas course site.

Required Technology & Digital Information Literacy Skills

Technical skills may include:

- Using the learning management system
- Using email with attachments
- Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats
- Using apps in digital devices
- Using web conferencing tools, like Zoom

Digital information literacy skills may include:

- Using computer networks to locate and store files or data
- Using online search tools for specific academic purposes, including the ability to use search criteria, keywords, and filters

- Analyzing digital information for credibility, currency, and bias (e.g., disinformation, misinformation)
- Properly citing information sources
- Preparing a presentation of research findings

Communication Guidelines

- Read the **Course Syllabus** and all course documents in Canvas to gain an understanding of course expectations.
- Use **Canvas Inbox (messaging tool)** for questions that are specific to your grades or submissions.
- **Email & phone correspondence** are for (1) setting a meeting time for office hours, (2) DRC accommodations; (3) emergency situations; or (4) highly sensitive situations.
- A respectful tone is used by all community members in all forms of communication.
- Written communication, both formal and informal, uses the official language of instruction rather than popular online abbreviations and graphic elements such as those sometimes used in social media.
- Video interactions reflect a respectful tone in verbal communications and body language.
- Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidelines

ChatGPT and other Artificial Intelligence programs are increasing in use and popularity across disciplines. There have been several incidences of plagiarism and academic misconduct with these programs. Intellectual honesty is absolutely vital to an academic environment and for us as instructors to facilitate your learning to the best of my ability. We are also aware of the usefulness of these chatbots and programs both in the classroom and in future careers.

Therefore, we **support the responsible and ethical use of ChatGPT and other chatbots but have specific guidelines for their use:**

▪ AI Guidelines for This Course

<u>In-Text Citations</u>	(AI Name, Year)
<u>Full Text Citation</u>	OpenAI. (2025). <i>ChatGPT response to a question about ecosystem services in Florida</i> [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/ (Accessed July 27, 2025)

AI Best Practices

- **Be transparent.** Clearly indicate that content was AI-generated.
- **Do not treat AI as a primary source for factual claims.** Use it to support analysis, summarization, or drafting—then cite peer-reviewed literature as appropriate.

Technical Support

UF Computing Help Desk & Ticket Number: All technical issues require a UF Helpdesk Ticket Number. The UF Helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/> | 352-392-4357

Description of Course Format

Pre-Trip Participation

The pre-trip participation score will be dependent upon your communication with Dr. Klizentyte. You are expected to attend meetings before the trip, but if you are unable to attend, it is expected that you will work with the Dr. Klizentyte to make arrangements to learn what you missed. Also, you will be held accountable for all deadlines, whether or not you can attend a meeting.

Getting to Know Each Other Fact Sheet (Due: March 2)

You will all experience Costa Rica as a unit, and many of you are experiencing Costa Rica for the first time. To give you a chance to get to know each other, each of you will meet (can be through phone, zoom, or in-person) and prepare a paragraph of at least **two other students**, and propose at least two questions about Costa Rica that you come up with together.

Trip Journal! (Due: Every day of the trip)

All students will write a summary of what you learned each day of the trip. This can be both personal observations, as well as, information you will need to write your Course Paper (see below). You should take notes while visiting the locations, listening to guides, and observing situations throughout the trip. You will then use that information in your final paper. Although we will check your journal every night (or morning) to ensure you are writing, we will not be looking for you to write about specific information. This is your opportunity to record information you think is important.

Worksheets (Due: Depends on worksheet)

During the trip you will receive worksheets that you will need to complete using information you receive on the trip. Some of these questions will require you to provide factual information (in other words, there is a *correct* answer), and other questions require you to provide an *informed* opinion. Other questions will be a mix of both types. Responses will be graded based on the quality (not length) of the response. Although you can share information among each other, **YOU MUST answer the questions in your own words. Copying is not accepted and will result in a 0 for that worksheet.**

Ecosystem Services Field Exercise (Due: Friday, March 28)

Healthy ecosystems provide a multitude of services to society. Many of the services are not captured in traditional markets and get missed when managers make decisions about what to do with ecosystems. Tropical ecosystems provide a wide diversity of ecosystem services, and many of these are often hidden and ignored until lost forever (e.g., pollinators, potential medicinal plants, carbon sequestration, among others). As you explore Costa Rica, you will indirectly or directly experience a multitude of ecosystem services. Your task will be to identify and explain these. More information on completing this exercise will be provided.

Ecotourism Scavenger Hunt (Due: Friday, March 28)

Ecotourism is a major part of Costa Rica's economy, use of natural resources, and your current experience on this study abroad program; therefore, it's beneficial that you have a basic understanding of the concept. To gain this understanding, you will review two articles related to ecotourism and answer a series of questions related to ecotourism and the articles while on the trip. You will be able to answer the questions through written text, taking pictures, drawing diagrams, or any other creative way you find to answer the questions. The questions will come from the readings and will ask you to identify or describe elements from the trip that relates to those readings that you observed or learned about while traveling.

Course Paper (Topic Due March 2 and Final Paper Due April 14).

You will write a paper that answers a question about something you learned while on the trip. You will be free to choose any topic of interest to you, as long as it directly relates to tropical ecosystems or Costa Rica in some way. You should have a topic chosen by March 9, but you can adjust your topic during the trip if needed. If you want to change the topic, discuss your change with the instructors. Unlike the undergraduate students, you will be free to use literature when writing your paper. However, I must see some direct connection between information you learned on the trip and your final paper. The paper should be between 12 and 18 pages, double spaced.

Review the assignment sheet on the course paper for details.

Grading Policy

Your final course grade will consist of a weighted average of multiple assignments, lecture quizzes, reading discussions, and final presentations, as follows:

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Get-to-Know Fact Sheet	5%
Pre-trip Participation	10%
Trip Journal	10%
Trip Worksheets	10%
Ecosystem Services Field Exercise	10%
Ecotourism Scavenger Hunt	10%
Participation	20%
Course Paper	25%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

Course grades will be assigned using the following scale:

Final Percent	Grade
96.7 – 100	A+
93.4 – 96.6	A
90.0 – 93.3	A-
86.7 – 89.9	B+
83.4 – 86.6	B
80.0 – 83.3	B-
76.7 – 79.9	C+
73.4 – 76.6	C
70.0 – 73.3	C-
66.7 – 69.9	D+
63.4 – 66.6	D
60.0 – 63.3	D-
Less than 60%	E (Fail)

Attendance & Make-up Work

It is the responsibility of the student to access on-line lectures, readings, quizzes, and exams and to maintain satisfactory progress in the course. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

For late assignments, we will take off 5% for every 24 hours the assignment is late.

Computer or other hardware failures, except failure of the UF e-Learning system, will not excuse students for missing assignments. Any late submissions due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from the Helpdesk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request consideration.

For computer, software compatibility, or access problems call the HELP DESK phone number—352-392- HELP = 352- 392-4357 (option 2).

Academic Honesty

University of Florida students are bound by the Honor Pledge. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code." You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see [Student Conduct Code Process](#).

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student

Course Evaluation Process

Student assessment of instruction is an important part of efforts to improve teaching and learning. At the end of the semester, students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course using a standard set of university and college criteria. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at:

<https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via the [GatorEvals site](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [GatorEvals Public Data](#).

Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Services for Students with Disabilities

A statement related to accommodations for students with disabilities such as: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Campus Resources

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

Health and Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit <https://counseling.ufl.edu/> or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>
- *University Police Department*: Visit <https://police.ufl.edu/> or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; visit <https://ufhealth.org/locations/uf-health-shands-emergency-room-trauma-center>
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit <https://gatorwell.ufsa.ufl.edu/> or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 <https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/> or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Concern*: [Report Student Concerns or Conduct](#)

Student Complaints:

- Residential Course: <https://www.sfa.ufl.edu/written-student-complaints/>
- Online Course: <https://pfs.tnt.aa.ufl.edu/state-authorization-status/#student-complaint>

Additional Information

In my syllabi, I like to showcase my teaching philosophy, or the way I approach teaching. I will share it with you here:

“Teaching requires guiding students through their individual learning journeys, providing engaging learning opportunities and challenging students to think critically, even when it may be outside their norms. My classes present new knowledge to students and encourage them to critically assess this knowledge by using scientific inquiry and their academic identities in application assignments and discussions. I facilitate discussions regularly, as well as group assignments to promote group learning and help students acquire team-building skills. Also, I relate difficult economic concepts, like cost benefit analyses, to real time current events to ensure comprehension. I engage in these activities while creating a positive learning environment through respecting student thoughts, leading with empathy, and emphasizing equity and inclusion by incorporating multiple aspects in case studies and facilitating discussions on such topics. My goal is for students to respect and trust me as a teacher and facilitator of opportunities and skills that will launch them into their careers as professionals in natural resources.”

Privacy and Accessibility Policies

For information about the privacy policies of the tools used in this course, see the links below:

- Adobe
 - [Adobe Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Adobe Accessibility](#)
- Instructure (Canvas)
 - [Instructure Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Instructure Accessibility](#)
- Microsoft
 - [Microsoft Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Microsoft Accessibility](#)
- Perusall
 - [Perusal Accessibility](#)
 - [Perusal Privacy](#)
- PlayPosit
 - [PlayPosit Privacy Policy](#)
 - [PlayPosit Accessibility](#)
- VoiceThread
 - [VoiceThread Privacy Policy](#)
 - [VoiceThread Accessibility](#)
- Zoom
 - [Zoom Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Zoom Accessibility](#)