

Study Abroad – Ecuador: Cultural Emerson through Food

CSES 3954

First Summer Session - 2016

Instructors:

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Program details

- PRE-departure orientation. Students will be required to read several scientific papers on cultural aspects of food including a book by M. J. Weismantel, 1989 “Food, gender, and poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes.
- Travel Abroad: **May 25th -June 5th, 2016**
- Wrap-up: June 30th, 2016

Credits: 3 cr.

There are no formal coursework pre-requisites for this course but students must be in good academic standing. Students interested in taking this course must be enrolled in CSES 3444 and one of the three lab periods. An application form is required as admission to the program is competitive. **This course is A-F only; it cannot be taken pass/fail.**

Course Description:

The core of this unique experience is a two-week trip to Ecuador that explores food, culture, and agriculture across several geographical and ecological regions in Ecuador. “Tell me what you eat, and I’ll tell you who you are,” wrote renowned gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in 1825. The type of food we eat, and ultimately how we prepare it and share it reflects who we are and where we come from. Therefore, the social context for food is very important and significant. While in Ecuador, we will visit cultural and historical sites, universities, and most importantly we will learn about local food, cook with the locals and experience their “food culture”. Furthermore, we will explore the driving force behind what we eat across several cultural boundaries. The framework for this high-impact experience is a special study course offered during first summer session. Preparation for the trip occurs during spring semester.

Detailed Supporting Activities

1. Across the three geographical regions of Ecuador, the students will explore Ecuadorian cooking and identify the dominant food in each region. Why is this particular grain/dish dominant in the region? How is this dominant grain/dish prepared, and consumed. “For example, rice, because it is grown only on the coast where no Indians live, is a complex and ambivalent symbol of the white world with which Zumbaguans have a troubled

relationship. Potatoes, however, are indigenous, and they are either lauded or degraded as powerful symbols of ethnicity (Weismantel, 1989).

2. Is the dominant dish/grain play any role in the local religion (indigenous or otherwise)? That is, is the dish prepared on a regular basis or occasionally during holidays?
3. The students will go to the local open markets to purchase the necessary ingredients to prepare the local food (using the main grain crops discussed in World Crops). While in the market, the students will interact with the local people in the market to learn about the ingredients they purchased.
4. Upon return from the market, each student write a one page paper on the market experience.
5. The students will travel with Ecuadorian students from University of San Francisco, Quito. The VT students will have opportunity to work/cook side by side with the Ecuadorian students.
6. Students will document the cultural practices surrounding food preparation, and consumption. Also, document the similarities and differences between the cultures of food in Ecuador vs US.
 - a. When and where is food eaten? Family eat together?
 - b. Who makes, buys, cook, and eat the food (gender role)
7. What about music? Dancing? Do the locals singing/play musical instruments after a regular meal or a feast? How is music related to food?

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Examine food from different cultural perspective.
- Explore to what extent culture describe different cultures and different agricultural practices.
- Understand cultural boundaries, understand how activities and customs surrounding food and eating are connected with the community.
- To create deeper and more diverse understanding of food beyond just the stuff we eat”
- To compare and contrast ingredients (grains, spices..) used across several cultural boundaries (Example: Coastal region vs the Andes).
- To learn about how grains, vegetables, and cooking ingredients are sold in open market.

Grading

Punctual attendance at all scheduled, program-related activities is required, including group meetings, discussions, visits and other scheduled activities. During the 15-day trip abroad, no student is to leave the group without express consent of an instructor. Students are expected to be respectful and attentive, and will refrain from excessive talking while on

tours of farms and ecosystems. Any unexcused absences or *continued late arrival* to program activities may be grounds for dismissal from the program. Course grades are assigned based on the scale below. Point distributions are considered in determining any curve.

Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%
A	94-100	B-	81-82	D+	68-69
A-	91-93	C+	79-80	D	62-67
B+	89-90	C	72-78	D-	60-61
B	83-88	C-	70-71	F	<60

Grades in the course will be assigned based on total points earned from the following sources:

Pre-departure sessions:	100
Trip participation (cooking with a group)	100
5 one page reflection papers on food and culture	200
Final report (video, ppt presentation.	300
Total points	700

University Statements

If you need accommodations because of a disability; if you have emergency medical information to share with us; or if you need special arrangements during our trip, please get in touch with one of the instructors as soon as possible.

Civil discourse is expected at all times in this class, as embodied in the Principles of Community that are posted in classrooms on campus and that are available on the web (<http://www.inclusive.vt.edu/resources/forums/docs/2014-signed-poc.pdf>).

The Virginia Tech Honor Code is the university policy that defines the expected standards of conduct in academic affairs. The VT Honor System is the university student organization charged with disseminating information about the Honor Code to the university community and enforcing the Honor Code. As a student, it is your responsibility to be aware of and abide by the Honor Code. Please visit their website at www.honorsystem.vt.edu for more information. The honor code is in effect for all courses you take. In this class, this applies to all assignments.

CSES 3954 Code of Conduct

Study abroad programs are great opportunities to experience aspects of agriculture and life sciences that cannot be learned from a book, and have a lot of fun in the process. Such programs allow you to develop leadership skills; learn more about your chosen career (or explore possible career paths); meet new people; see new places; and know that you've done

a good job meeting new challenges. Further, study abroad programs are designed to be outstanding educational experiences which are why these programs have the full support of our departments, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Virginia Tech.

At the same time, it is vital that everyone remember that when we leave Virginia Tech as a group we will be ambassadors for the university, the college, and your departments. The impressions we make on people we meet will be lasting ones. The expectation is that your conduct will be appropriate for any situation: be friendly to the people you meet; be attentive when speakers are presenting information; be responsive when the opportunity to participate presents itself; and be respectful of our hosts, including hotel staff. Virginia Tech has a pretty good reputation, for a lot of reasons; let's continue to put our best foot forward so we leave everyone with an excellent overall impression of Virginia Tech.

As always, all Virginia Tech policies are in effect, including zero tolerance for alcohol and drug abuse.