UNIVERSITY of ST. THOMAS
MINNESOTA

J-term 2012

Introduction to Field Research in Costa Rica

January 4 - 28, 2012

This 4-credit course is an introduction to tropical ecology and field-based research in biology. Students work in teams to pose questions and hypotheses, design experiments to test those hypotheses, collect and analyze data, and present their results both orally and in writing in scientific format. The course provides unique opportunities for studying organisms in their natural habitat and for learning about the flora and fauna of a tropical environment. Emphasis is on the application of the scientific method to ecological research and the communication of findings to others as the end-product of science.

Prerequisites
Biology 201

Fulfills
Biology major/minor credit; Biology 211

Cost
The program fees are $4850-$5050, plus a $200 Off-Campus Study Fee. The programs fees are based on a minimum of 14 students and are subject to change. Lab fees are included in the program fees.

Housing and Meals
Students will spend the first two nights in a hotel in the Costa Rican capitol of San Jose. All other accommodations will be at clean-but-basic guest houses at the field stations. We cannot guarantee that special dietary needs can always be accommodated. Students with such needs are encouraged to contact the faculty directors with any questions prior to applying for the course.

Program Structure
Students spend the first few days of class reviewing statistical methods and learning about the ecology of the three field sites to be visited. The next three weeks are spent visiting three field sites – each representative of unique natural environments where students carry out separate projects. Students also meet with local experts and guides to learn more about the ecology and conservation issues endemic to that area. A week after our return to campus, students present their research to the Biology Department and submit a research paper based on their research.

Students enrolled in this course should prepare themselves for rigorous hiking while carrying their own gear and acclimating from a Minnesota winter to a tropical climate. Accommodations should be requested and discussed well in advance of departure with the Enhancement Program at the University of St. Thomas.

Required Texts
Tropical Nature by Adrian Forsyth and Ken Miyata
Various articles from the primary literature

Evaluation

Field projects	60%
Final paper	15%
Natural History Presentations	15%
Leading a paper discussion	5%
Statistics assignment	5%

Course Schedule

J-term Pre-Departure Orientation	11/18/2011
First day of class on UST campus	1/3/2012
Departure for Costa Rica	1/4/2012
Arrival in Costa Rica	1/4/2012
Field stations	1/5 – 1/27/2012
Return to MSP	1/28/2012

Program Directors

Professor Adam Kay is a behavioral ecologist with twelve years of experience working in terrestrial habitats. He will be teaching this course for the third time.

Professor Tony Lewno is a cell biologist, with expertise in laboratory instruction and experimental design. He will be teaching this course for the third time. He has also led three VISION trips with University of St. Thomas.

Application Procedures & Deadlines
Applicants for this course will be reviewed through a selection process that will include a formal interview. Not all applicants are guaranteed an interview. Students selected for an interview will be notified by email after the application deadline. Applications are available on the Study Abroad web site. Complete applications are to be submitted to the International Education Center.

Priority application deadline is April 8, 2011
Final application deadline is October 3, 2011

All information is current as of March 28, 2011 and is subject to change – Check our website for updates

International Education Center • 44 N. Cleveland • 651.962.6450
Mail 44C • studyabroad@stthomas.edu
www.stthomas.edu/studyabroad