

# MUHLENBERG COLLEGE INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY IN COSTA RICA

## Spring Courses Combined with Two Weeks of Travel, Service and Research in Costa Rica

**Program Description:** In this interdisciplinary program, students explore solutions to the delicate problem of environmental and cultural conservation in developing countries with a focus on Costa Rica. During the spring semester, students develop projects and prepare for the two-week study/research/travel experience to Costa Rica at the end of May. This preparation includes study of the area's ecological diversity; political, cultural and social issues; research skills; and relevant Spanish vocabulary and conversation skills. In Costa Rica, students explore a variety of habitats, live in and interact with members of a small town (Las Juntas), and conduct both community service and independent research projects. Research and art projects focus on the ecology, sociology, culture, and public health of the region. One of the objectives of the program is to remove the blinders of specific discipline-based learning and of our own culture to show that if we are to develop lasting solutions, we must consider the environment in relation to the people who live in it.

### **Students must register for one of two courses that will be held simultaneously:**

**SUS 350 – Environmental and Cultural Conservation in Latin America. Professor Rich Niesenbaum.** Students in this course will focus their project work on issues around environment, development, public health, women's issues, and other socio-economic factors. A minimum of two semesters of Spanish is a pre-requisite for this course. This course can satisfy the S or D requirement, counts towards the Biology and Environmental Science Majors, Sustainability Studies and Public Health minors, and is an RJ Fellows course.

**or**

**ART 381 – Special Topics: Field Studio in Costa Rica. Professor Joseph Elliott.** Students in this course will explore and document the human and natural environment of Las Juntas. Media can include drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, video/film, sound, or mixed media. Preparation will include practice studio work at Muhlenberg and preparation for portable site-based work in the field. Studio space will be provided in Las Juntas, including digital media capability. Art made by students in the course will be exhibited in Las Juntas, and in the Center for the Arts Galleria. At least one semester of studio art or a production course in Communications or Film is required as a prerequisite. Familiarity with Spanish is recommended. This course counts toward the Art Major, Art Minor, Film Studies Major, or Communication Major, with permission of department head.

**Next offering:** Spring semester of 2010 with a 13 day trip to Costa Rica with Professor Niesenbaum and Professor Elliott in late May. We will accept up to 16 students (8 in each course). Applications are due on or before October 23, 2009. Applications are currently available from Dr. Niesenbaum and on-line. Once accepted into the program a non-refundable \$100.00 deposit will be required to register for the course. Visit the program web site for additional information: <http://www.muhlenberg.edu/depts/biology/faculty/niesenbaum/cr.html>

**Conditions in Costa Rica:** Students in both courses must be able to cope with challenging living and physical conditions including the presence of insects and other wildlife, heat (no air-conditioning), physical activity, close quarters, and other aspects of tropical field work and living.

**Travel costs:** Due to the unpredictability of airfares and other travel expenses we offer an estimate of expenses. We estimate that the cost of our program will be between \$1900 and \$2400. This includes airfare, housing, meals, ground transportation, park entrances and instruction. Accommodations are safe, but very basic including sleeping in schools, churches, and tents. There may be incidental expenses such as tips, gifts, snacks, beverages and other purchases but these do not usually exceed \$200.00. Payments will be made in two installments during the spring semester. There are definite opportunities to obtain sponsorship to cover all expenses, please see Dr. Niesenbaum for more information

**Program Highlights:**

- Incredible travel experience
- Focus on research and community service projects
- Opportunities to interact with people in small non-touristic community
- Hike jungles, climb volcanoes, see monkeys, and experience new cultures
- Small group interaction with faculty and local experts
- Visits to schools, medical clinics, and conservation sites

**Community Service:**

Students must also be committed to performing community service during the academic year in Allentown and while in Costa Rica. Examples of Community Service Projects in Costa Rica are:

- Serve a medical clinic by traveling to small villages and assisting medical staff
- Community painting and beautification projects
- Serve an elementary or high school by teaching English
- Serve an environmental group dedicated to watershed restoration by collecting data, planting trees, and performing clean-up
- Serve an ecomuseum by updating their displays and translating material into English
- Assist a women's recycling cooperative
- River Cleanups

**Still Interested? Do you have questions?:** Please contact Dr. Niesenbaum:

Rich Niesenbaum: x3258, [niesenba@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:niesenba@muhlenberg.edu) or

Professor Elliott, x3453, [elliott@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:elliott@muhlenberg.edu)

Information Session:

More Questions?? Come to an information session on Thursday October 15th at 430 in Shankweiler 440

**Environmental and Cultural Conservation in Latin America**  
**Muhlenberg College, Spring 2010**

**You may hand write your responses on this page, or include this information on a separate computer-typed page. Please send your completed application and a copy of your transcript to Dr. Richard Niesenbaum (Bio) by October 23, 2009.**

**Application Cover Sheet**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Home (parents') Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone: At Muhlenberg:** \_\_\_\_\_ **At home:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Which course are you interested in: SUS 350 or ART 381**

**Previous international travel experience:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Continued==>**

**SHORT ANSWERS. Please respond to each of the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. Limit yourself to one substantial typed paragraph (or two shorter ones) per question.**

- 1) Why do you want to participate in this program? What do you hope to study while in Costa Rica? Which course would you take or is your preference (SUS 350 or ART 381) and why? (You might want to discuss how this course relates to your current studies, as well as preliminary ideas you have for your independent research project.)
  
- 2) The experience in Costa Rica is challenging with conditions akin to rustic camping. Heat, hikes, insects, no hot water, and daily 6 AM wake-ups are among the many challenges. Explain how you are equipped to deal with such hardships, and how you have dealt with hardship in the past.
  
- 3) What experience (past or present) have you had working in or with a community, and how did it make an impact on your life? (This can be an experience you've had through travel, here in Allentown, or in your home town.)
  
- 4) What will you do between now and our trip to show your commitment to Spanish? Those who benefit most from this program seem to be those who are willing and able to speak in Spanish (albeit with errors) as much as possible. What will you do to reach this level of proficiency?
  
- 5) List the courses you have taken (or will be taking in the 200-2009 school year) that are related to any of the following: the environment, Latin American culture, Spanish language, developing countries, sciences, sociology, or anthropology.

**Application due by October 23, 2009**

**Questions:**

**Richard Niesenbaum, x3258, niesenba@muhlenberg.edu**