



## KIIS Costa Rica, Summer 2022

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### SPAN 455 Topics: Costa Rican Culture and Identity

**Professor:** Dr. Satty Flaherty-Echeverría

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**Instructor's office hours:** on site and by appointment

*Syllabus subject to change*

### Course Description:

This course examines contemporary Costa Rica, its culture, its people, their way of life and the transformations that have taken place over time. Students will learn about the diverse regions of the country and thus its geography and people via short stories, poetry, songs and a novel. Through a close reading of literary production and scholarly articles, students will be able to identify socio-historical processes of nation building, the construction of identities in a Central American context, in a Caribbean context, to explore the limits and multiple interpretations of what constitutes Costa Ricanness.

### Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

#### KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

#### Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

### Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

Students will acquire a basic foundation of the historical and socio-cultural background of the formation of Costa Rica as an independent country and its development via literary texts. This

course will expand students' knowledge and enthusiasm about the history, literature and culture of contemporary Costa Rica. Students will be able to compare the themes and topics of multiple texts, identifying influences on and transformations of Costa Rican culture and its inhabitants over time and its impacts to Central American Culture. In addition students will analyze the power and limits of language in regards to the impact on peoples of Costa Rica. *This course requires proficiency in Spanish.*

### **Major Topics covered in the Course**

Students will learn about Central American and Costa Rican geography, linguistic regionalisms, race and class dynamic, as well as the development of sustainable/ecological tourism in the country and the region at large.

### **Course Components**

#### **Required Materials**

- ☐ All Reading Materials in pdf. See google drive (You can download or print them, you should have easy access to them with no internet)
- ☐ A composition notebook, pens, pencils and colored pencils, camera/phone camera
- ☐ 3 Ziploc bags with school supplies (markers, pencils, construction paper, cards, small books, stickers, small books, any thing you'd like to donate, etc.) We will use and donate these for your visits to the local schools.

#### **Grading**

Pre-departure homework (to be completed a week prior departure) 5%

Class participation/Site visits 10%

Intentional observations 15%

4 Interviews 10%

24 *diarios* 15%

12 Reading Annotations 10%

Creative assignments 10%

2 Five-minute Oral Presentations 5%

Final Project + Reflection 20 %

### **Course Components**

**Pre-departure homework:** Before we leave you must complete three photo albums and do first reading with assignments in your journal. Please familiarize yourself with Costa Rica as a country and the cities we will visit (La Paz, San Ramon, La Fortuna, Manuel Antonio).

**Intentional observations:** These are writing assignments that will help you think and deeply reflect on your experience abroad. For example, you will have to write your expectations for the trip, notice how people are represented in daily life and during our guided visits, you will reflect on readings and write a glossary/keywords, also you will write about transformative experiences during the trip.

**Interviews:** You will have the opportunity to interview different people during our time in Costa Rica.

Please follow the questions from the schedule and record all the answers in your journal. Don't forget to title it, write the full name of your interviewee and date it. Please take a picture of you and your interviewee together.

**Daily journal entries/Diarios:** This activity is very important since it will give the space to think, record, collect and be creative in this study abroad experience. I will check your journals periodically. Please follow the format given. Don't forget to date it.

**Creative assignments:** Are opportunities for you to experience Costa Rica to its full potential. They are also fun memories you will keep [hopefully] forever. Drawings, tastings, color coding, finding names, eating with creativity, smelling, speaking, using all your senses to be as present and connected as possible during the trip. See the descriptions in google drive and follow the schedule for due dates.

### **Reading Annotations**

You will have to create *anotaciones de las lecturas* in your journal. Please follow the format provided. These entries are an opportunity for you to write about key points on the readings, make connections and become familiar with new vocabulary. Your journal will be checked periodically during the term.

**2 Five-minute Oral Presentations:** You will have to prepare two 5 minute oral presentations. As time gets closer I will give you themes or ideas you can present on. These can be informal, like a casual explanation, though you will be graded on delivery and familiarity with the topic in Spanish. Thus, I expect you to prepare sufficiently beforehand.

**Final Project + Reflection:** This is a three part project.

1) You will complete an analytic essay (3-4 pages) on contemporary Costa Rican cultural production. You are expected to discuss your ideas with me prior to writing it.

2) A reflection essay (2-3 pages) answering the following questions:

a) What values, beliefs, and behaviors have I learned from my host country that I want to try

to maintain while back in the US? In what ways might these values, beliefs, and behaviors conflict with US culture? How can I find support for these new values?

b) What do you plan to do in order to actively integrate new knowledge, interests and

skills into your university experience/professional path?

3) A creative page of a shared google site of what you gathered in your journal that you would like to

share publicly. This google site will tell our story and our experiences in Costa Rica.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required and of utmost importance. KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

### **Class Participation**

Before each class, you should have completed the reading, looking up unknown vocabulary and thinking critically about the text(s). The in-class participation grade is based

on various aspects such as: one's informed response and preparedness to the discussion topic of the class, questions and demonstrated engagement with the subject matter. Occasionally, you will have written homework assignments, creative prompts to collect or create which will be integrated into the following class, and these too will count toward the class participation grade.

Your grade includes both the quality of the activity and your level of participation in other students' activities.

**Grade Scale:**

90-100%.....A  
80-89%.....B  
70-79%.....C  
60-69%.....D  
59% or less.....F

**Attendance Policy:**

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

**Disability Accommodation:**

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, [maria.canning@wku.edu](mailto:maria.canning@wku.edu), to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, [haley.mctaggart@wku.edu](mailto:haley.mctaggart@wku.edu), if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

### **Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:**

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Deborah Wilkins (270-745-5396 / [deborah.wilkins@wku.edu](mailto:deborah.wilkins@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@wku.edu)) or Joshua Hayes (270-745-5121 / [joshua.hayes@wku.edu](mailto:joshua.hayes@wku.edu)). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/eeo/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.