1. **Course Description:** This course introduces the student to the extraordinary variety of plants, animals, and ecosystems of tropical regions. Students observe and study the wide range of habitats in the natural regions of Ecuador (a recognized center of mega diversity), from Pacific coastal regions (or Galapagos Islands), to Andean highlands, to the cloud forests surrounding Mindo. Emphasis is on understanding biodiversity issues in the tropics and on conservation strategies needed to protect these dwindling resources. Prerequisite: One year of college-level biology or permission of the instructor.

2. **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.

3. **Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:** Upon completion of this course students will have a greater knowledge of the natural regions and the native inhabitants--
plants, animals, and humans, of Ecuador. Through various instructional activities and field experiences in diverse settings in Ecuador, students will gain an appreciation of the incredible diversity and complexity of tropical ecosystems. They will also have a better understanding of the current rapid loss of these species and ecosystems, of the reasons for these losses, and of what attempts have been made to slow this destruction and to restore these ecosystems. Students will explore not only the local ramifications of the habitat destruction, but also the possible effects worldwide. Specific topics that will be addressed include: tropical climate and geography, natural regions and major life zones, ecosystems and forest dynamics, species diversity in the tropics as compared to temperate zones, identification of dominant and unique plants and animals in different life zones, threats to tropical systems (deforestation, habitat fragmentation), case studies and strategies in tropical conservation.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

1. Introduction to tropical climates and geographic patterns; Andean ecosystems and elevation zones; cloud forests and paramo; characteristic plants and animals.

2. Rainforest ecosystems, forest types; rainforest structure, diversity, and function; rivers through rainforests; dominant and unique plants and animals.

3. Island biogeography; rare and endemic species of the Galapagos; problems of invasive species and overfishing; impact of farming, ranching, mining, and timbering in the tropics.

4. Endemism and extinction; survey of tropical ecosystems; deforestation and conservation of biodiversity; national parks and preserves; future of the tropics in age of global warming.

5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement: Not Applicable

6. Required Readings and Materials: (1): Kricher, John. 1999. A Neotropical Companion. 2nd ed. Princeton University Press. Readings provided by the instructor and assigned readings from Internet sites. Students should consult with the instructor before May 1, 2013, for all assigned readings. Students will also be required to purchase a Rite In The Rain Spiral Notebook - Journal #393.

7. Graded Assignments: Students will be evaluated according to the following criteria: participation in class discussions and required study excursions (50 points), reading guides (100 points), field journal (100 points), and final exam (100 points). For the final exam, students will prepare essays on topics selected by the student (in consultation with the instructor). Point total is 350 points. For the Galapagos portion of the trip, you will have additional assignments including the field journal (50pts) and additional readings (50 points). Grading scale is:

   89.5-100 = A
   79.5-89.4 = B
   69.5-79.4 = C
   59.5-69.4 =D
8. 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.

9. 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, 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, 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.

10. 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, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU’s Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu) or Joshua Hayes (270-745-5121 / 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.