



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Costa Rica Program, Summer 2025

BIO 475 Topics: Tropical Biodiversity and Conservation

Instructor: Agus Sofyan, Ph.D.

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

Course Description: This course introduces students to the extraordinary variety of plants, animals, and ecosystems of tropical regions. Students will observe and study the wide range of habitats and species in the natural regions of Costa Rica. Habitats to be visited vary from montane, valley, marine, and cultivation areas such as Arenal Volcano National Park, La Paz Waterfall Natural Park, National Park in Pacific Coast, Butterfly Farm, and Coffee, Sugarcane, and regional fruit or vegetable plantations. Emphasis is on understanding biodiversity issues in the tropics and on conservation strategies needed to protect these dwindling resources.

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 Specific Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply ecological and evolutionary theory to the biodiversity patterns observed in Costa Rica.
- Compare and contrast the biogeography and species richness of the biomes and ecosystems in Costa Rica.
- Gain confidence in abilities to explore new places and concepts.
- Evaluate and prioritize conservation programs.
- Identify common flora and fauna of Costa Rica.
- Explore the importance of indigenous ecotourism and sustainable development.

Major Topics covered in the Course: This course will cover basic principles of biodiversity, tropical ecology, and conservation.

Required Readings and Materials:

Kricher, J. (2017) *The New Neotropical Companion*. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0691115252

Readings of Peer-reviewed journal articles

Course Components/Assignments: Grading will be out of a total of 1,000 points, and will follow the grading scale below:

Pre-Departure Assignments		
Readings and Assessment	Assessments of reading comprehension of course reading material and watching lecture videos.	100 points
Assignments in Costa Rica		
Journal Entries	Daily entries that include descriptions of sites complete with notes on the flora and fauna observed, species richness and classification of the ecosystems visited.	200 points
Participation in all activities	Students are expected to attend all lectures, tours, and field trips. Each unexcused absence will result in 50 points deducted from grade.	400 points
Oral Presentation	Students are expected to give a 10 – 15 minutes oral presentation and reflection about the trips and the course in general.	100 points
Final Exams	Final exam will assess your ability to apply field experiences to the course material.	200 points

Grading Scale: Grading will be out of a total of 1,000 points, and will follow the grading scale below:

A = 900 – 1000 pts,

B = 800 – 899 pts,

C = 700 – 799 pts,

D = 600 – 699 pts,

F < 600 pts

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, 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.

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 Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@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.