



S F S THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

Justice, Resilience, and the Environment

SFS 3820

Syllabus

The School for Field Studies (SFS)
Center for Ecological Resilience Studies
Atenas, Costa Rica

This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.

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COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that may present. In other words, the elephants are not always where we want them to be, so be flexible!

Course Overview

Justice, Resilience, and the Environment (JRE) explores the concepts of justice, conflict, and social change within the Costa Rican context. Costa Rica is renowned for its significant efforts in forest regeneration and biodiversity protection. Tourism campaigns to highlight the tropical wonders often obscure the struggle between human development goals and the rights of nature. We will examine the connection between postcolonial practices and current development strategies to better understand Costa Rica's efforts to protect people's rights while honoring the rights of nature.

This course assesses community attempts to resist existing structural and institutional arrangements and encourage social change to better meet human needs in balance with the environment. We will see how groups create accountability through grassroots knowledge and power in Costa Rica, locating theory in concrete examples. We will analyze key themes of resilience-building including indigenous land rights struggles, agroecological production, seed sovereignty, and agrotourism.

Working with community stakeholders, students will conduct first-hand analysis of social issues. They will develop skills essential to future advocacy, community organization and the insights necessary for social change. Projects will examine the significance of social research in struggles for social justice. Field experiences in this course include working with indigenous communities, regenerative farmers, and communities tackling waste management issues. Students will conduct quantitative and qualitative research to prepare written, oral, and visual presentations that reflect their understanding of justice and social change. This fieldwork will prepare students for a final directed research project on the intersection of social and environmental justice challenges.

Learning Objectives

The core skills students will learn in this course are critical thinking and analysis, field techniques, communication skills as well as collaboration and time management. The specific objectives of the course are as follows:

- To examine stakeholders and events in the historical development of Costa Rica and how they impact present day development strategies and rights protection.
- To become acquainted with concepts and methods of resilience that apply to issues regarding development, public policy making, environmental laws, and public attitudes regarding human interaction with and reliance on natural world.
- Recognize and respect alternative ways of knowing and communicating, including indigenous practices, rural practices and artistic expressions.
- To critically analyze the complexities in environmental issues, including the responsibility to future generations, the problem of moral standing of human and non-human species, sustainability regarding human development, global environmental challenges, and environmental justice.
- To critically assess alternative approaches to responsibility to nature through an environmental justice framework. To differentiate diversity-building and destructive practices in agriculture including social and environmental effects.
- To identify the socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism at the individual and community level and use data to recommend effective means of facilitating regenerative tourism.

- To compare the development and resilience practices in Costa Rica with the Panama situation on during the international field trip.
- To formulate your own social and environmental justice ethic and to articulate and defend these ideas with clarity and consistency.

All trips, discussions, materials, movies, and readings are part of the course so please come prepared to enjoy and learn throughout the program! You will learn and develop experimental design, interviewing techniques, basic descriptive statistics, proposal writing and communication skills.

Assessment

Assessment Item	Value (%)
Field Lab	20
Field Exercise	20
Reading Reflection	10
Midterm Project	25
Final Essay	15
Participation	10
TOTAL	100

Field Lab: Local Market, Local Food? (20%)

Local markets can provide a range of benefits by encouraging local production and supporting local economies. Is the food at markets local? Food that is produced with agrochemicals, which are used at high rates on conventional farms in Costa Rica, can have detrimental impacts on the local environment and human health. We will analyze the links between food origins, food production and resilience by conducting a survey at the Atenas Farmers Market to determine: 1) what percentage of the food is produced locally, 2) whether it is produced using agroecological or conventional farming methods, and 3) if market customers are interested in purchasing local and agroecological products.

Field Exercise: Seed Saving and Food Sovereignty (20%)

Preservation of functioning ecosystems depends on the reorientation of food systems to ensure a resilient food chain from production to consumption. Current conventional food production systems based on mechanization and agrochemicals are neither environmentally nor socially sustainable. Costa Rica is experiencing challenges to maintain local food sovereignty. Over 90% of the seeds used in Costa Rica are not certified by any producer, such as large agroindustry corporations. Seeds are instead bought, sold, and traded by farmers, seed cooperatives and small-scale producers. However, legislation has been proposed to require registration and, in effect, the privatization of seeds. This proposed restriction in the trade or sale of unregistered seeds threatens farmers' rights to save and trade seeds. We will visit Finca Orgánica San Luis to better understand how they are preserving ecological and cultural diversity through seed saving. This farm has started a seed business that sells organic, open-pollinated seeds that are adapted to local climate issues. We will explore how farmers work to preserve access to local seeds that have evolved with the environment as an act of resistance against proposed legislation that would require registration and, in effect, the privatization of seeds. Based on the information from the field trip and our own research, we will develop tools that Finca San Luis and the seed-saving community can use to convey information about using and sharing local seeds. We will also plant and monitor seeds at the Center greenhouse and collect data on best conditions for propagation, resource needs, and care to ensure we create diversity and produce healthy food on campus.

Reading Reflection (10%)

You will select one assigned reading during the semester and write a one-page reflection. Reflections may include a summary of key points and should contain your own assessment, analysis and/or insights on relevant points. You should also connect these points to our class topic. You will be asked to briefly share your insights with the class on the day the reading is assigned.

Midterm Project: Family Gardens Assessment (25%)

There has been growing interest in intensifying local food production to mitigate the effects of food shocks and food price fluctuation. Attention has turned towards home gardens as a strategy to enhance household food security and nutrition. Home gardens are an integral part of local food systems of developing countries and have endured the test of time. In Costa Rica, this important practice has been on the decline. We will visit families that have installed small household gardens in the Atenas area as part of a community program to encourage family-level food production. We aim to assist the project by evaluating food production, the use of organic waste as fertilizer, and identify operational challenges these families face.

Final Essay: Bringing Your Finding to “the People” (15%)

Part of our job as researchers is to share our academic findings with a general audience. In this final essay, you will write an engaging essay based on either your FLAB, FEX, or experiences on the Panama field trip. You may take an advocacy role by promoting actions, solutions or change based on your findings. You will then find a forum to digitally publish your findings, such as a blog, or organization. The aims are to hone your popular writing skills and spread understanding about your research topics.

Participation (10%)

A student’s ability to synthesize and share ideas is critical to the individual and classroom learning process. Participation in class and a general high contribution to group learning are expected at SFS. One’s ability to be a strong member of a learning community will enhance the grade assigned at the end of the program. Evaluation will reflect your actual contribution to the analyses, not simply the amount of time you talk. Thus, making thoughtful contributions that build upon topics of discussion are an important element of participation.

Grading Scheme

A	95.00 - 100.00%	B+	86.00 - 89.99%	C+	76.00 - 79.99%	D	60.00 - 69.99%
A-	90.00 - 94.99%	B	83.00 - 85.99%	C	73.00 - 75.99%	F	0.00 - 59.99%
		B-	80.00 - 82.99%	C-	70.00 - 72.99%		

General Reminders

Honor Code/Plagiarism – SFS places high expectations on their students and we hold students accountable for their behaviors. SFS students are held to the honor code below. SFS has a zero-tolerance policy towards student cheating, plagiarism, data falsification, and any other form of dishonest academic and/or research practice or behavior. Using the ideas or material of others without giving due credit is

cheating and will not be tolerated. Any SFS student found to have engaged in or facilitated academic and/or research dishonesty will receive no credit (0%) for that activity.

“SFS does not tolerate cheating or plagiarism in any form. While participating in an SFS program, students are expected to refrain from cheating, plagiarism and any other behavior which would result in a student receiving credit for work which they did not accomplish on their own. Students are expected to report any instance of cheating or plagiarism by others.”

Class Courtesies

- Arrive at class on time.
- Come to class ready to participate.
- Create space for all students to participate and respect all opinions.
- Do not use computers or other electronic devices for reasons other than note-taking. If internet access is too great of a temptation, do not bring devices and computers to class.
- If you cannot come to a class due to illness or other serious issues, inform the professor or HWM. Email or check with professor later to find out what you have missed.

Deadlines – Deadlines for assignments are established to promote equity among students, to allow faculty enough time to review and return comments and grades before other assignments are due, and to avoid clashes with other activities and courses. Therefore, deadlines are firm, and extensions will only be considered under extreme circumstances. When appropriate, the files should be placed in the assigned folder within the students drive on the server. Late assignments will incur a 10% penalty for each day that they are late. Papers submitted after 3 days of the dateline will not be accepted. Please plan to avoid such situations. Assignments will be handed back to students within one-week grading period.

Readings – Assigned readings will be provided in a packet before the course begins. It is important that you read all materials before class since the volume of the material in the class requires a brisk pace. You are expected to have read all the assigned articles. In some classes, students will be assigned to lead the group by highlighting important concepts and raising questions for the group to consider/discuss.

Content Statement – Every student comes to SFS with unique life experiences, which contribute to the way various information is processed. Some of the content in this course may be intellectually or emotionally challenging but has been intentionally selected to achieve certain learning goals and/or showcase the complexity of many modern issues. If you anticipate a challenge engaging with a certain topic or find that you are struggling with certain discussions, we encourage you to talk about it with faculty, friends, family, the HWM, or access available mental health resources.

Participation – Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one lecture can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the course is mandatory, it is important that you are prompt for all activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises and class activities, and simply get involved.

Course Content

Type - **L**: Lecture, **RA**: Reading Analysis, **D**: Discussion, **RP**: Role Play, **FL**: Field Lecture, **FEX**: Field Experiment, **GL**: Guest Lecture, **O**: Orientation/Context, **FLAB**: Field Lab, **LAB**: Lab/Workshop

*Required readings are in **bold**

No	Title and outline	Type	Time	Required Readings
1	<p>Costa Rica's social structure and development What historical, political, and economic factors have advanced and limited Costa Rica's sustainable development model? Costa Rican culture & the pursuit of sustainable development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental policy and social justice. • Costa Rican social system and development • Costa Rica's main social and env. dev. issues 	L; D	2.0	Sada, The Curious Case of Costa Rica.
2	<p>Where are we coming from? Depleted resources. What underlying, systemic paradigms cause us to deplete our ecological and social resources without replenishing them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational • Cost/Benefit analysis • Externalities 	L; D	1.5	Bader, Costing the Earth
3	<p>Where are we going? Resilient futures. How do we create regenerative societies from existing development frameworks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circular economy • Transformative framework 	L; D	1.5	Hopwood, Sus. Dev: Mapping Different Approaches Raworth, Circular Economics
4	<p>Manu/El Progreso Farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and env. impacts of multinational monoculture production. • Monoculture and agroecological farming practices 	FL	4.0	
5	<p>Monocultures Why does Costa Rica continue to rely on conventional agriculture and what are the costs? Role Play – Food producer, labor, and community discussion</p>	D; RP	1.5	Film: Luxury at what Cost: Pineapple Production in C.R.
6	<p>Social and Ecological Resilience How can people create local solutions to protect their rights to have basic needs met while supporting a healthy environment?</p>	L	2.0	Adger, Social and ecological resilience: are they related?

No	Title and outline	Type	Time	Required Readings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the relationship between the devaluation of nature and classes of people Movements of resilience and resistance 			
7	Agriculture and the Circular Economy How can we feed the world's population justly? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand challenges around monocultures Importance of whole food systems Evaluate challenges and solutions to securing food supplies 	L; D	1.5	Shiva, Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest. Gálvez, People of the Corn
8	Finca Organica San Luis/ Seed Plantea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic production Enraizadas farmer-to-customer food delivery Seed Plantea seed business 	FL	4.0	Peschard, Keeping seeds in our hands
9	Social and Environmental Justice How do we ensure environmental justice for communities of color, low incomes and in the global south as well as future generations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justice framework to access natural resources in the context of equitable development Social movement organization and action 	L	1.5	Carruthers, D. V. (2008)
10	Thinking in systems How can we build community resilience? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm examples Community examples FEX Assignment – Center sustainability projects 	L	2.0	Video: Applying resilience thinking
11	Community Resilience – MV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What strategies are community members using to create social ecological resilience? 	FL	1.5	Little, Enhancing food security through localized community currency
12	Women and gender in development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of gender in colonialism and development Gender perceptions of work and care National and regional protection mechanisms Gender roles in C.R., past and present Ethical Issue: How do historical gender expectations influence society and specifically environmental sciences? 	L; D	1.5	Patel & Moore, "Cheap Care"

No	Title and outline	Type	Time	Required Readings
13	<p>Indigenous rights and resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous cultures in Costa Rica • Concepts of nature and identity • Conservation objectives and indigenous people's roles in land management • Ethical Issue: How can indigenous people protect their lands and cultures within existing frameworks? 	L; D	1.5	<p>Mares & Pena, Environmental and Food Justice Toward Local, Slow, and Deep Food Systems</p> <p>Sylvester, O. et al. The Protection of Forest Biodiversity can Conflict with Food Access for Indigenous People</p>
14	<p>Quitirrisí Food Security and Culture- FLAB</p> <p>Field Lecture – Indigenous food security</p>	FL	4.0	
15	<p>Tourism as a development tool</p> <p>Can tourism support economically, socially, and culturally resilient communities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism • Objectification of the <i>other</i> or cross-cultural learning? • Sustainable Tourism Certifications • Community participation in tourism 	L; D; RP	1.5	<p>Butler, The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution</p> <p>Honey, "Costa Rica: On the Beaten Path"</p>
16	<p>Regenerative Tourism</p> <p>How can communities have more control to ensure local benefits? What is the role of tourists as consumers of place, culture?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measuring env. & social impacts of tourism • Local determination • Tourists' responsibility 	L; D	2.0	<p>Higgins-Desbiolles, Introduction: Socialising Tourism</p>
17	<p>Local Food Harvesting and Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about food species on campus • Harvest food from campus and local sources • Prepare and preserve food 	LAB	1.5	
18	<p>Community Gardens- Midterm project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview families that have received small greenhouses from UNDP/Coope Atena development funds • Gather and share data on food production, strengths, and challenges of the project • Present reports and videos 	FEX	4.0	

No	Title and outline	Type	Time	Required Readings
19	Tourism and environmental ethics in Panama <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of tourism in Panama • Indigenous tourism • Develop project techniques • Ethical Issue: What are the benefits/ challenges of tourism for various social groups? 	L	1.0	Theodossopoulos, Tourists and Indigenous Culture as Resources
20	Field trip to Panama	FL	7.0	
21	Final Project Develop projects that address local challenges by applying resilience principles to community building and design.	D; LAB	3.0	
	Total hours		50	

Reading List

1. Adger, W. N. Social and ecological resilience: are they related? *Progress in Human Geography* 24(3): 347-364. 2000.
2. Beder, S. Costing the Earth: Equity, Sustainable Development and Environmental Economics, *New Zealand Journal of Environmental Law*, 4, 2000, 227-243.
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7. Haeger, A. & Little, M. & Amel, Elise & Calderón, Gabriel. (2021). Transformation Toward Sustainability on a Costa Rican Coffee Farm. *Case Studies in the Environment*. 5. 10.1525/cse.2021.1227777.
8. Higgins-Desbiolles, F. Introduction: Socialising Tourism in *Socialising Tourism: Reimagining Tourism's Purpose*, (Eds. Higgins-Desbiolles, F., Doering, A., Chew Bigby, B.)
9. Honey, M., "Off the Beaten Path" from Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?, *Island Press*, 2008.
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11. Mares, T. & Pena. D. (2011). Environmental and Food Justice Toward Local, Slow, and Deep Food Systems.
12. McPhual, J., "Costa Rica Struggles with Indigenous Land Rights", *Tico Times*, Dec. 7. 2015

13. Patel, R. and J. Moore, *The History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*, Univ. of California Press, 2017.
14. Peschard, K. and Randeria, S. (2020). 'Keeping seeds in our hands': the rise of seed activism, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 47:4, 613-647, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2020.1753705
15. Sada, M.J., *The Curious Case of Costa Rica*, *Harvard International Review*, Sept. 17, 2015.
16. Shiva, V., "Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest", *Yes! Magazine*, Dec., 2012.
17. Singer, P., All Animals Are Equal. *Philosophical Exchange* 1, (1974), 103-116.
18. Sylvester, O., et al. The Protection of Forest Biodiversity can Conflict with Food Access for Indigenous People, *Conservation and Society* 14(3): 279-290 2016.
19. Theodossopoulos, D., Tourists and Indigenous Culture as Resources: Lessons from Embera Cultural Tourism in Panama, In: Carrier, James and Macleod, Donald, eds. *Tourism, Power and Culture: Anthropological Insights*. Tourism and Cultural Change, Channel View, Bristol, pp. 115-133.

Suggested readings:

1. Baatz, A., Climate change and individual duties to reduce GHG emissions. *Ethics, Policy and Environmental*, 17(1), 1-19.
2. Banerjee, J and E. Duflo. *Poor Economics*, Chapter 1, 2011.
3. Cafer A, Green J, Goreham G. A community resilience framework for community development practitioners building equity and adaptive capacity. *Community Dev.* 2019;50(2):201–216. doi:10.1080/15575330.2019.1575442
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5. Colbert, E. "A Reporter's Field Notes on the Coverage of Climate Change", *The Yale Environment* 360, March 11, 2009.
6. Hawken, P. *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*. New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2017.
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9. Koeppel, D. *Banana: The Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World*. Hudson Street Press, 2008.
10. Klytchnikova, I, and P. Dorosh. How tourism can (and does) benefit the poor and the environment - a case study from Panama, (2009), World Bank, available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/10237/520460BRI0EnBreve1460Box34549B01PUBLIC1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
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13. Mann, Charles. *The Prophet and the Wizard: Two Remarkable Scientists and Their Dueling Visions to Shape Tomorrow's World*, 2018, New York, Knopf.
14. McCrear R, Walton A, Leonard R. A conceptual framework for investigating community wellbeing and resilience. *Rural Soc.* 2015;23(3):270–282. doi:10.1080/10371656.2014.11082070
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19. Paterson, B. Ethics for Wildlife Conservation: Overcoming the Human–Nature Dualism, *BioScience*, Volume 56, Issue 2, 1 February 2006, Pages 144–150.
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21. Pollen, M. *The Botany of Desire*, Chapter 4 Potato, Random House, 2002.
22. Purdy, J., Our place in the world: A new relationship for environmental ethics and law. *Duke Law Journal*, 62(4), 857-932.
23. Raworth, K. (2017) *The Doughnut Economy: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-century Economist*. London: Random House Business Books.
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26. Sen, A. “Development as Capacity Expansion”, *Readings in Human Development*, 2003.
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30. Vaneekhaute LE, Vanwing T, Meurs P, Abelshausen B, Jacquet W. Community capitals of a Paramaca Maroon village in pictures: a photovoice study on community resilience in the context of large-scale gold mining. *Community Dev J.* 2019;54(2):233–253. doi:10.1093/cdj/bsx036
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