

DST 4930 PeaSt 4005/7980 TAM 4549/7001 WGST 4874/7874

## **Costa Rica: An Alternative Way Social Justice, Human Rights, and Narratives**

**2020 MU Winter Study in Costa Rica - 3 graduate or undergraduate credits**

**Instructors:** Monika Fischer; German & Russian Studies; Center for the Digital Globe  
Valerie Kaussen, Romance Languages & Literatures

**Course description:** This course aims to examine how narratives give voice and bear witness to a diversity of values, beliefs and experiences reflecting the need for a just social world and responding to injustice, inequality and human suffering. The emphasis will be on understanding the way Costa Rica views civil society, social justice and public health reflected in the narratives of various institutions that we will visit.

Within the context of the course, students will connect their readings on human rights, public health and social programs with fieldwork and explore the way narratives and storytelling influence and determine policy, the meaning of national identity in a civil society and national pride. The overall question asked is: What is Costa Rica's 'story of another way'?

Students will be asked to engage in online learning modules before they arrive in Costa Rica as well as after returning home. They will analyze various principles depending on their major focus of study – for example, issues of social justice: the status of minorities; the workings of public health including the connection to social services, in particular for children and women; efforts to reduce health disparities, gender and wealth inequalities, discrimination against the indigenous population.

Questions raised are: What are the narratives that shape healthcare settings, social justice, indigenous business practices and how are they related to social programs? Do they reflect the specific socio-cultural needs of local populations, in particular of women and minorities in Costa Rica? How do artisan cooperatives like Chieton Moren represent indigenous communities of Costa Rica?

In San Jose we plan to visit several NGOs working on issues of poverty and social injustice, an artisan community, a women's hospital and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights which will give students the opportunity to connect theory with practice.

After this program, students will be able to

- demonstrate their understanding of a civil society.
- recognize the distinctive viewpoints of Costa Rica's 'story of another way'.
- understand basic concepts of social justice, public health in particular pertaining to women, children and minorities.

- identify the strategies by which the government and civil society seek to address the social determinants of equality in Costa Rica.
- recognize how stories serve as prevalent forms of communication in private and public discourse.

**Site Visits:** Rahab (NGO for sex workers), Maria Auxiliadora (NGO for impoverished elders and children); Women’s Clinic; a correctional facility; an artisan cooperative representing 25 indigenous communities of Costa Rica; the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; TBA.

**Course Texts:** No books must be purchased for this course, as all readings will be distributed through Canvas.

**Grading and Course Components:** Course grades will be based on four components, each of which will be equally weighted:

- Engaged and prepared participation in pre- and post-class online activities 30%
- Engaged and prepared participation during excursions 20%
- Journal connected to assigned readings & questions 25%
- Multi-media project/story/paper 25%

**Active participation** in class activities and class discussions pre- and post-travel, as well as full participation in scheduled activities in Costa Rica are required for full participation points. Participation also includes **completion of all readings** which will be reflected in your participation in discussion and your reflection on the materials in your journal. As well as completing all online tasks before and after traveling to Costa Rica.

**Reflective Learning Journal:** You will receive specific tasks but you will also keep a journal as a means of recording your impressions, identifying things you need to learn more about or questions you have, consolidating what you are learning, and reflecting deeply on distinct experiences and your experience as a whole.

**Multi-media story:** The storytelling project is an opportunity for you to explore a health or cultural behavior. More detailed information will be given.

**Graduate credits:** graduate level work is required for graduate credit. Graduate students will have to adhere to a different set of pre-departure readings including academic journal articles. Their final paper is required to be more detailed and in-depth analysis.

**Accommodations:** TBA

**Grading Scale:** MU grades as follows:

98-100% => A+	88-89% => B+	78-79% => C+	68-69% => D+
93-97% => A	83-87% => B	73-77%=> C	63-67% => D
90-92% => A-	80-82% => B-	70-72%=> C-	60-62%=> D-
			<59% => F

**Information and Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the Office of Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.missouri.edu>), S5 Memorial Union, 573- 882-4696, and then notify me, as directed by the Office of Disability Services, of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for students with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

**Academic Integrity:** The [MU Office of the Provost](#) has written the following statement on academic dishonesty: *Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.*