**UCOR 3600/3800 Sustainability in Nicaragua**

Nicaragua is a developing nation situated in a region of spectacular natural resources and yet its people struggle economically. This course will use the lens of science (both natural and social) to characterize Nicaragua’s abundant biological and physical resources while exploring the tensions that arise when deciding how to exploit these resources in an ecologically and socially just manner. Throughout the course, we will examine resource management, conservation, and community development approaches that have shown promise to begin to address the challenges.

Sustainable development has been defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (from the Brundtland Commissions 1987 report Our Common Future). Sustainable development ties together concern for the limits of natural systems with the cultural, social, political, and economic challenges faced by society. Clearly these definitions demand that we consider natural systems in the context of the communities that affect, and are affected by, them. Inherent in the theme of sustainable development are not only issues best addressed by the methods of natural sciences, but also those best addressed by some of the disciplines of the social sciences. Hence, the examination of sustainable development in Nicaragua requires that we consider content from and use methodologies of multiple disciplines. Nicaragua is a country grappling with the interplay of these issues as it faces questions about how best to develop its abundance of natural resources while balancing concern for people who live near and otherwise depend upon them. It is with this backdrop that this course explores some possible approaches to development of Nicaraguan resources in an environmentally and socially sustainable way.

This course is designed as a unique model for SU Study Abroad: an intentional collaboration between SU and our Sister University Universidad Centroamericana (UCA), in which faculty from UCA deliver the majority of the content for the course and the course is populated by a significant number of UCA students along with our students. The outcome, we hope, will be a rich and unique academic and cultural experience for our students as well as theirs.

The course for our students will begin in Seattle with two meetings during Spring quarter to prepare them for the experience. Included in these meetings with include the usual preparation for travel to a developing country as well as reading and discussing texts that will introduce them to the history and culture of Nicaragua. We will then travel to Nicaragua for 19 days during the summer. The course will require a special application process and preparation as well as a financial commitment beyond tuition.

Nicaragua is uniquely situated as an ecological convergence zone with dry tropical, pre-montane humid region, and cloud forest terrestrial ecosystems. In addition, it boasts coastal beach and mangrove estuary as well as harboring the two largest lakes in Central America. Despite its abundant natural resources, Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. This sets up a tension between the significant social needs of the people and the sustainable use of the abundant, but threatened, natural resources. It is this paradox that will be explored in the course.

The course will be a mixture of guest lectures and learning activities in Managua and field excursions to sites chosen to maximize student exposure to the strengths of the UCA faculty that allow them to examine the challenges of ecological as well as economic sustainability.

Sustainable development of resources requires that we consider natural systems in the context of the societies that affect, and are affected by, them. Inherent in sustainable development and resource management decisions are not only issues best addressed by the methods of natural sciences (how is the non-human community impacted, how threatened is this species, how best to protect?), but also those best addressed by some of the disciplines of the social sciences (what impact does top down intervention have on a community, are there ways to preserve environments that empower and economically benefit the community, what gender dynamics show up, how does poverty affect resource use?). Hence, the critical examination of sustainable development in the country of Nicaragua requires that we consider content from and use methodologies of multiple disciplines and is, at the same time, an excellent topic for students to hone their skills in one of the disciplinary methods. The course will be cross-listed as either Global Challenges in Natural or Social Sciences depending on the needs and interests of the student.