

Anthropology 451: FIELD SCHOOL IN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY:
Globalization and Gender on the Ground in Nicaragua

Central Connecticut State University
Class Meetings: Spring Semester, TR 5:15 to 6:30
Travel dates: March 20 to 30

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The Field School is a critical component for students who wish to develop the skills and experience for future cross-cultural work. Nicaragua is a setting that welcomes CCSU students in anthropology, business, engineering and technology, geography, political science, psychology, history, International Studies, Latin American studies, public health, Spanish-- and more!

The course's title, "**Globalization and Gender on the Ground in Nicaragua**," refers to the unique socio-economic history of Nicaragua. Nicaragua is notable as the most recent country in the hemisphere that underwent a socialist revolution, then a neo-liberal revolution and is now establishing a mixed economy, all in the midst of thirty years of social revolution affecting gender, class and ethnic relations. The region of Esteli, where our program focuses, provides an acute lens on the results of that history. Located on the Pan-American highway, Esteli has a long history of agricultural and economic globalization, dating even before the export coffee economy established in the late 1800s. Its unique economy includes the production of top-quality cigar-wrapper tobacco (like the Connecticut valley!) brought to the region by exiles from Castro's Cuba, a variety of agricultural cooperatives, several *maquiladoras* or assembly plants, eco-tourism, and some of the longest-standing Fair Trade coffee export arrangements.

We begin the program in Connecticut, where students will study Nicaragua's culture, economy and history and prepare for their study abroad. In Nicaragua, we are based in the beautiful highland region of Esteli, in north-western. We will travel within the region and explore Nicaragua's socio-economic diversity, including the indigenous communities there; the Pacific Coast (including the beach!) and its challenges; and the capital city of Managua. We end the course with the post-fieldwork second half of the semester in Connecticut to complete library research and write-up, and share our slides, culture shock and ways of incorporating the Study Abroad experience into our "States-side" work and lives.

The program includes a service learning project, working and living with the residents of Esteli in neighborhood beautification, as well as a visit to Hartford's Sister City of Ocotal, where the people of central Connecticut have helped establish a very successful micro-enterprise loan program. The service learning project and sister-city visit will facilitate our immersion in the community, as will the home-stays with local Esteli host families. Accompanied by the on-site Study Abroad program's topical briefing lectures/seminars, the course work includes readings, a cross-cultural journal, field exercises and notes, and individual research in both Connecticut and Nicaragua.

The Field School structure closely models the opening weeks of any anthropologist's field research, once they begin participant observation in a community. In addition to general participant observation and research notebook development, students will carry out symbolic analysis, oral history interviews, genealogical methods, kinship analysis, spatial analysis, consumption analysis and local-level market research.

Course Goals: Qualitative and quantitative cross-cultural research skills
Background in international eco-environmental sustainability issues
Background in cultural diversity (race, class, gender)
Background in economic and cultural globalization (including alternative trade models)
Cross-cultural experience and Spanish language skills

Required Books:

- 1) The Best of What We Are, John Brentlinger, 1995
- 2) Fire From the Mountain, Omar Cabezas/Sandinino's Daughters, Margaret Randall
- 3) After Revolution: Mapping Gender and Cultural Politics in Neoliberal Nicaragua, Florence Babb, 2001
- 4) A reading packet develop by the professor
- 5) A Field Guide to Nicaragua: the instructors will review a few possibilities for you.
You might also find useful a Spanish phrasebook (Lonely Planet has a good one).

Requirements: Journal/Reading Response (25%)

Field Exercises and Book (25%)

Topical Research paper, including an 8-10 page write-up (25%) and Peer Review (5%)

Attendance, participation and development of the Field School (20%)

READINGS AND CLASS SCHEDULE:

PART ONE January 27 of Class to March 17: Preparation for Nicaraguan Field Research

Jan 27: Getting Together, Getting Ready! Welcome, long term preparations, how to keep your journal and reading response books, cross-cultural experiences

Angrosino, chapter on the Field School experience

Feb 3: Introduction to Nicaragua, the Sandinistas and the United States

Journal and Reading Response: Your preconceptions of Nicaragua
Becoming Bicultural

Feb 10: Nicaragua in the World System

Lecture on Globalization, Class and the debt crisis

Exercise on observation, house mapping

Keeping a field notebook

Feb 17: The Great Divide: the Highlands and the Atlantic Coast, Nicaragua's Diversity

Exercise: Informal interviewing

Feb 24: La Familia: Kinship, Gender and Society

Lecture: Kinship analysis

Exercise: Kinship analysis

Mar 3: A Day in the Life of... Everyday Education

Exercise: Time diary

Mar 10: Worldview and What Matters

March 17: Logistics: Practical Preparations and Courtesies

Journal: Preconceptions

In-Class: Useful Spanish Phrases

Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, March 18, 19, 20: Fly to Nicaragua

PART TWO: Esteli!

Field School: First Impressions, Time, Space and Family

Exercises: First Impressions, House Mapping, Kinship and Gender, Making Dinner

Thursday, March 19: **Meet, settle with families, totter around the neighborhood**

Journal: First Impression

**Friday, Day 2 Esteli Family Homestay Orientation & Tour of Esteli, including
cigar-wrapping factory**

Saturday, Day 3 Esteli Countryside Nature Preserve & Cooperatives (Miraflor)

Sunday, Day 4 Esteli Church services & spending time with family

Monday, Day 5 San Juan del Rio Coco bus Coffee cooperatives Homestay

Tuesday, Day 6 Ocotal bus Esteli historic sites & indigenous

leaders (Hartford's Sister City & microenterprise project

Wednesday, Day 7 Esteli Center for Indigenous Medicine & Women

Leaders

Thursday, Day 8 Esteli bus to Leon Farewell in Esteli, Tour of Leon

Friday, Day 9 Beach (Poneloya) Beach activities

Saturday, Day 10 Managua Managua Market, Unions & Maquiladoras

Sunday, Day 11 Travel back to USA

PART THREE: Back in Connecticut

March 31: Culture Shock!

Journal: Back home....

April 7, 14: One of these weeks will be a Research Week, No class meeting, but rather individual meetings with professor. The other will be The US in Nicaragua and the Nicaragua in the US: Readings:

Journal: Impact of US on Nicaragua and Nicaragua on US

Exercises: Market, Making Dinner

April 21: Individual and group meetings to discuss final papers

April 28: This week or the next, we visit Park Street and the Mercado

May 5: Second to last class: Rough drafts for peer review due

May 12: Last class: **Peer reviews due**

Journal/exercise: Tips for future students

Outside in the woodlands

Final exam: Final Work Due

Grading Policies:

1) **Class participation** is an important part of this course and consists of **What We Agree Upon**:

Policies I have used on past:

A) **Attendance**: More than one absence (a week) will hurt a student's grade. Students are responsible for documenting their attendance by signing the attendance sheet. I am taking attendance to encourage your exposure to the material available only in class and to encourage your participation and

support in class discussions. Perfect attendance will help the final grade. After one absence, each further absence deducts two percentage points from final grade. Whether or not you attend the session, you will be responsible for the material presented in class, and I will not reteach class during office hours.

B) Participation and Development of the Field School: As part of this class, you are responsible for keeping up with the reading, active listening, discussion participation, supporting each other in sharing, risk-taking and feedback. You are also responsible for developing ideas and exercises and itinerary suggestions that make the Field School Even Better.

Very Important: The course is planned carefully and assignments must be completed In Sequence. You will need time to think, read and write. You will also benefit from talking/arguing with each other outside of the class. The Anthropology Library in DiLoreto 002 and the table in the Anthro office have been traditional and well-used venues. Please set aside the time necessary. In the CCSU catalogue, six hours per week outside of class is the standard. **Remember that in the CCSU Anthropology Department, we are interested in education and not in MacBachelor's...**

2) Exercises and Book Review: We'll do exercises in and out of class, in Connecticut and Nicaragua.

3) Final Paper/Peer Review: There are two possible research strategies for this paper. One strategy is to interview and prepare a life or oral history of a Latin American who interests you. We will practice informal interviewing. You must spend a minimum of three hours with your consultant. In the second strategy, you will choose a topic to research. I will provide a list of possibilities, but you are free to develop your own paper topic based on the issues and debates raised in the course, and the field exercises that you undertake. Your topic **MUST BE APPROVED** by me.

As a scholarly exercise, papers should contain a) a **THESIS STATEMENT** clearly defining the specific question or issue you will address and **WHY** it is **IMPORTANT**, b) the use of at least **TWO** of the course's readings, as part of the discussion/comparison of your subject's life and/or your topic. Descriptive summaries of ethnographic facts or one author's position will **NOT** be acceptable.

Peer Review: Drafts of papers are due Tuesday, May 5, as noted on syllabus: Bring two copies, one for me and one for a peer reviewer. If you wish, I will assign a number to everyone to use instead of your name. Peer review of the rough draft of another student's paper shall consist of a two-page evaluation of the paper, drawing on knowledge gained from the course to offer constructive--and specific--comments and suggestions regarding content, organization and style. All reviews and any comments made directly on the draft will be due Tuesday, May 12, so that authors may use these in revising their papers. If these are received late but in time for the peer to benefit, partial credit might be arranged. **AFTER THIS**, no credit will be given.

Essay Writing Suggestions

The following pointers are guides for writing a successful essay for my class, as for any class. The first two points are crucial for any good essay, academic or not.

1) **Voice:** Demonstrate your competence with the reading's issues and advance an argument, a position, an original and challenging synthesis or hypothesis.

2) **Writing:** Good writing means good sentence and paragraph structure, a clearly stated thesis, clear typing and accurate spelling. Success in this area goes a long way with me. A first draft seldom demonstrates all of the above.

3) Answer all parts of the question **OR** talk with me before the due date about your topic idea.

4) Use the class material (the readings, films, class discussion and lecture) in your argument. Do not regurgitate detail to "prove" you've kept up; **DO** present the issues of the materials in your own words. Lengthy quotes are not needed; they use space without demonstrating much.

5) Do **NOT** repeat the question as your thesis sentence. **DO** indicate in your essay title or cover page that question you are addressing, if several choices were assigned.

6) If the essay length is a minimum of four pages, write four full pages, normal formatting, not 3.75. A good idea is to write 4.25 pages. You should have plenty to say, and I will be happy to suggest points to expand.

4) **Journal/Reading Response:** You will keep a journal of your thoughts in response to the Field School's adventures, before, during and after travel, and in response to the readings.

Reading Suggestions: The course material is rich; each chapter or article can be read several times. With each reading, more becomes clearer, more connections are made, more consequences become apparent.

a) For a FIRST reading of an assignment, get the MAIN IDEAS. Don't get stuck in details; these will be helpful in your later readings. Pay attention to the reading focus questions I give.

b) After your first reading and BEFORE class, try to sum up the main focus and your primary response in ONE WORD or PHRASE.

c) Next, sum up the reading in one phrase, such as "This article is about _____." This is a topic sentence.

d) Then try one sentence: "This article's main point is _____." This is a thesis sentence.

e) I (and the rest of the class) will always find interesting the connections and consequences that you worked out in the assignment's first readings. Bring those also!

5) **Late and Missed Work:** I will deduct one grade level per day for assignments received after the due date. For example, if your paper due Tuesday was handed in on Thursday and earned a B+, it would earn a B-. Late reading journals can receive no grade higher than a B-.

6) **Rough Drafts:** I am happy to read rough drafts of assignments before their due date.

7) **Incomplete Grades:** I allow incomplete grades for students who have passed the first half of the course, who have a legitimate reason for not completing the semester's work and who speak with me a week before the final class.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR READING, READING JOURNALS, ASSIGNMENTS AND WRITING

Grading Criteria: I grade the written or diagramed homework assignments as follows:

a) The exercise is handed in on time: in class and on due date

b) The exercise demonstrates clarity of communication: correct grammar, punctuation, spelling and sentence structure. Assignment has been proofread and corrected for typos.

c) The writing is responsive to the assignment: instructions were followed, including format and length.

d) The level of thinking demonstrates: an understanding of course concepts; that facts have been distinguished from opinion; that the concepts are applied creatively or originally.

e) Staple all papers--loose leafs or pencil will not be accepted. Do not use plastic folders.

Grading Systems: A Prose description of my grading:

A: Achievement that is goes well above and beyond, or is truly exemplary, of the assignment

B: Achievement that goes significantly above the level necessary to meet the assignment requirements

C: Achievement that meets the assignment in every respect

D: Achievement that deserves some credit due, even though it does not fulfill the assignment

F: Assignment either was not completed, or was not completed in a manner that earned enough credit

A Numerical description of my grading:

A: 100-95%

A-: 94.9-90%

B+: 89.9-87%

B: 86.9-83%

B-: 82.9-80%

C+: 79.9-77%

C: 76.9-73%

C-: 72.9-70%

D+: 69.9-67%

D: 66.9-63%

D-: 62.9-60%

Fail: 59.9% and lower

Important: Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes cheating on assignments, papers or exams, plagiarizing (misrepresenting as your own work any work written by another person), and

submitting the same paper or substantially similar paper used to meet the requirements of another course, without arriving at an agreement with all of the professors concerned. Any evidence of these forms of academic dishonesty is grounds for failure in this course.

Accommodation and Alternative Formats: Students with disabilities who require accommodations in meeting this course's requirements should meet with me as early as possible in the semester, in order to work out best options. I would be happy to develop these accommodations with you. It is your responsibility to contact me and provide me with formal documentation BEFORE assignments are due.

Students Whose First Language is Not English: Feel free to talk with me early in the semester about any extra assistance that would be helpful in meeting this course's requirements. I am fluent in Spanish.