



THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

Tourism and Island Systems: Assessment of Sustainable Practices

Syllabus, Summer I 2018

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Office hours by appointment

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Bocas del Toro, Panama



Course Overview

This course introduces the concepts and principles of sustainable tourism alongside the evaluation of ecosystem health and diversity. This unique field-based program allows students to determine how natural habitats and human livelihoods coexist in the dynamic socio-economic context of Bocas del Toro, Panama – one of the fastest growing tourism destinations in Latin America. To foster deep learning, assessments will be based on interacting directly with local ecosystems and stakeholders from the tourism industry, government, indigenous communities, and civil society – to understand how each interpret the challenges and the roles they play in fostering sustainable destination development.

This course introduces tourism destination governance as a multi-scalar (local, regional, national, and international) and multi-actor framework for understanding how behavior can be steered towards sustainable outcomes at the destination level. It covers the concepts of sustainable development and includes the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism; positive and negative impacts of tourism development; and principles conducive to sustainable tourism planning, community involvement, and development. The course adopts the problem-based, place-based learning format which promotes critical thinking, analytic skills, and problem-solving skills along with team work.

In short, The Panamanian government has positioned Bocas del Toro as a ‘bull’s-eye’ for targeted increases in tourism. This course examines the social and environmental problems caused in past tourism development phases and examines the tools tourism providers, government officials, tourists, and local people have at their disposal to potentially usher in a new, more sustainable future for the archipelago.

Learning Objectives

The core skills students will learn in this course are field techniques, analytical methods, communication skills and critical thinking, as well as team work and time management. The specific objectives of the course are the following:

1. Understand principles of sustainable development within the context of Bocas del Toro
2. Identify challenges, weaknesses and strengths to sustainable tourism delivery within the context of Bocas del Toro.
3. Identify the socio-economic and environmental impacts on tourism at the individual and community level.
4. Explore and understand the major ecosystems present in the archipelago of Bocas del Toro; their status and health.
5. Recognize different types of niche tourism activities (surf tourism, dive tourism, residential tourism, adventure- / eco-tourism, etc.) and the capacity to foster sustainable community development.
6. Evaluate tourism providers’ performance based on global sustainable tourism indicators.

In this course we will go on many field trips. Come prepared for many days of intensive activities that demand strength and stamina! You will wake up early and sometimes get back to the center just before dinner. You will learn experimental design, field techniques in sustainable development and tourism assessment, interviewing techniques, basic descriptive statistics, proposal writing and communication skills.

Assessment

We expect active participation in all aspects of the course, from the discussion and analysis of the assigned readings to the review of literature, classes and field work. Some of the course experience is a group effort; some represents your individual work. In the first few weeks of the course the students will engage in short exercises to gain practical skills in the field and understand the natural and human dynamics of the region. In the remaining weeks you will take part in a SWOT analysis project - the subject of which will be determined in part by your interests. You will then organize your findings and observations to create a sustainable development proposal for Bocas del Toro (or a sector of the tourism industry) that clearly outlines your preliminary findings and supports your goals.

Student performance in this summer course will be evaluated based on the assessment items and their proportional weight to your final grade described below:

Assessment Item	Grade Weight
I. Ecosystem field report	20%
II. Group interview assignment and presentation	20%
III. Provider assessment/Sustainability	20%
IV. Tourism SWOT analysis and proposal	30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospectus / plan • Data gathering / investigation • Analysis of findings • Project write-up • Presentation 	
V. Participation and contribution	10%
TOTAL	100%

I. Ecosystem field report (Due June 26th): We explore marine, coastal, and terrestrial environments throughout the duration of the course. You will be asked to write accounts of the condition of these environments based on your observations, faculty lectures, and comparisons with the literature. Students are welcome to include video and photographs along with their written reports. Please refer to the Guidelines for Writing Field Reports located in the summer 2018 folder on the Z drive. The Z drive is accessible on the student computers in the laboratory. *Note: To access the Z drive, the computers must be connected to the staff wifi.*

II. Group interview assignment and creative presentation (Due June 22rd): In groups of 2 or 3, Students will select a tourism industry subset (i.e high-end ecotourism, surf tourism, resident

locals, Marine protected area tourism) or issue and gather interviews from stakeholders to present the sustainability considerations in Bocas surrounding your chosen industry or issue.

You must record (video or voice – if the informant will allow, if not handwritten notes are fine) interviews with at least 3 tourism industry providers (brokers – tourism operators or government officials), 4 tourists, and 2 local community members impacted by the industry subset or issues you chose to focus on.

The goal is to tell a narrative to a popular audience that synthesizes theoretical themes from class with existing research on your topic (or industry sector) in Bocas, and with stakeholder perspectives. Once your stakeholder data is collected you must organize it around themes and present your main findings **creatively** to the class. Examples of presentation techniques include: a video, a skit, a podcast, a website, a blog, etc., which you will present to the class.

III. Assessing tourism providers in action (Due June 24th):

Part 1: (20% of grade) Using the Global Sustainable Tourism Council's (GSTC, 2016) Industry Criteria for Sustainable tourism providers assess La Loma's or Palmar's performance as tourism operations based on the categories listed in the GSTC (2016) document. You may use information from their website, interviews with owners, and observations to discuss how each category and sub-category is addressed by the provider (or not). If you were to make one practical suggestion for improving their practices to better conform to the GSTC's criteria, what would it be, why, and what category would it fall under?

IV. Tourism SWOT analysis and report (June 29th): This assignment is designed to be a formal assessment of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of a policy, business, or practice. Students will design a project that assesses these factors related to the sustainability of a sector of the tourism industry in Bocas del Toro. The goal is to determine which practices and policies are consistent with sustainable practice and which practices are not. Each student will then make recommendations to stakeholders based on current information and findings. This applied project in BDT will help students to develop skills they can use in environmental evaluation in contexts around the world and potentially to influence actors and agencies involved in tourism governance.

V. Participation: A student's ability to be a good colleague is important. Participation in class and a general high contribution to group learning is 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.

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

Readings: Assigned readings will be available on the student server. 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 of the assigned articles, and to demonstrate your comprehension by participating in class discussions each day.

Plagiarism and Cheating: Using ideas and materials of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. A grade of zero will be assigned to anyone caught cheating or aiding another person to cheat, either actively or passively. Unless specifically stated otherwise, all assignments should be individual pieces of work.

Appropriate use of technology: SFS has worked hard to provide internet access to all its staff and students. Inappropriate uses include gaming or excessive video/music downloading. **No screens (laptops/tablets/phones) are permitted during lessons** unless otherwise dictated by faculty. Inappropriate use will result in the loss of this privilege.

Deadlines: Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated for several reasons:

1. Deadlines are a part of working and academic life to which students need to become accustomed.
2. Deadlines promote equity among students.
3. Deadlines allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments before others are due.

As such, deadlines are *firm* and extensions will only be considered under the most extreme circumstances. Late assignments will incur a 10% penalty for every day that they are late. This means an assignment that is five minutes late will have 10% removed, an assignment that is one day and five minutes late will have 20% removed, and so on.

Course Content

Type- L: Lecture, **FEX:** Field Exercise, **E:** Exam, **FT:** Field Trip, **GL:** Guest Lecture, **CS:** Case Study

No. & TYPE	DESCRIPTION	TIME (hrs.)	FACULTY	Reading
Week 1				
TIS01	Course introduction – Expectations and Excitement!	1	LM, CK	(Harding, 2006)

No. & TYPE	DESCRIPTION	TIME (hrs.)	FACULTY	Reading
TIS02 FT/L	FT to BIOMUSEO- Introduction to the Panama's Geological and Ecological History and Importance	1	CK	
TIS03 FT/L	History of Panama I- Casco Antiguo – Colonial history and its revival as a tourism product and development strategy for the city	1	LM	
TIS04 FT/L	Visit to Miraflores locks , Panama Canal - From dream to reality and from foreign ownership to Panamanian control and expansion.	1	LM	(Carse, Keiner, Henson, Lasso, & et al., 2016)
TIS05 FT/L	Sustainable surf tourism and social inquiry – While on the pacific coast in Playa Venao, we will discuss surf tourism, as a form of nature-based adventure tourism with the power to change coastal towns. We will also discuss research questions and design.	1	LM	(Ponting & O'Brien, 2013) (Topsfield, 2016)
TIS06 FT/L	The Marine Environment- How and what does coastal development impact? A walk along the beach in Playa Venao.	1.5	CK	(Bertness et al., 2014) - Chapter 18
TIS07 FT/L	History of Tourism	1	LM	(Mowforth & Munt, 2003)
TIS08 L	Tourism in the tropical highlands of Panama	1	LM	(Benson, 2015)
TIS09 FT/L	Agro tourism – Student groups attend Finca dos Jefe's to learn about the history of the Coffee industry and direct trade as a driver sustainable production.	2	LM,CS	(Lyon, 2013)
TIS10 FT/L	The Cloud Forest – Bird and Forest tour/walk	2	HH, GL	
TIS11 FT/L	Introduction and orientation to Bocas del Toro: A walk through Bocas town and guest lecture from one of Bocas' first tourism entrepreneurs on the history of the archipelago and tourism.	2	LM	(Stephens, 2008)
TIS12 L	Travel Debrief – From Panama City, to the Pacific Coast, To Boquete, to Bocas. Why not fly?	1	LM	(West & Carrier, 2004)

No. & TYPE	DESCRIPTION	TIME (hrs.)	FACULTY	Reading
Week 2				
TIS13 L	Tourism Destination Governance Framework	1	LM	(Laws, Agrusa, Scott, & Richens, 2011)
TIS 14 L	Socio-ecological Systems and Tourism – Understanding how tourism is reliant upon a basket of common pool resources and thinking about the processes in which they can be governed.	1	LM	(Ostrom, 2009)
TIS 15	The Marine Environment: Introduction to marine ecosystems in Bocas del Toro	2	CK	(Seemann, 2014)
TIS16 FT/L	Tourism’s Ecological Impact & Marine Tours and Tourism: Dolphin bay lecture	1.5	CK	
TIS17	Forest preserves and tourism: Visit to the Floating doctors preserve	1	HH	
TIS18 FT/L	Tourism and protected area management in Bocas del Toro, Isla Bastimentos National Marine Park / Zapatilla Island visit.	2	LM, CK, HH	(Guerrón-Montero, 2005)
TIS 19 L	The rainforest	1	HH	Chapter 1 (Forsyth & Miyata, 1984)
TIS20 FT /L	Community based tourism, aid agencies, and NGOs: The potential and challenges associated with using cultural tourism as a mechanism for economic growth in indigenous communities.	1.5	LM	(Mach, 2019)
TIS21 FT /L	Ecotourism: A luxury good? – Health and wellness tourism, Permaculture tours, jungle lodges.	1.5	LM	(Denslow, 1987)
TIS22 L/FT	Large scale tourism development: Is Mass Tourism Really Fading? Visit to Red Frog beach. Learn about their approach to sustainability. Walk in Red Frog forest (Data collection)	1.5	LM	
TIS19 FEX	The Rainforest- The Solarte forest (Data Collection)	1.5	HH	(Forsth & Miyata, 1984)
TIS23 L/FT	Volunteer Tourism The potential and challenges associated with using Volunteer tourism as a mechanism for	4		(Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012)

No. & TYPE	DESCRIPTION	TIME (hrs.)	FACULTY	Reading
	economic growth in indigenous communities. Visits to floating doctors and Give and Surf			
TIS24 FEX	Assessing the environmental impacts of tourism on coral reefs: An underwater analysis at a heavily visited coral reef.	1	CS	
TIS25 L	Voluntary Private sector initiatives and sustainable tourism: Assessing the impacts of tourism providers using standardized criteria. We will also interrogate the problems associated with certification schemes (such as, greenwashing, costs, and institutional oversight).	2	LM	(Blanco, 2011) (Geerts, 2014)
TIS26/27 FEX	Assessing tourism providers in action: Using Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria to score hotel performance: Visit to La Loma and then Palmar (overnight)	2	LM	(GSTC, 2016)
<i>After week two, during the weekend (Saturday & Sunday) students will have a chance to explore approved activities and adventures during time-off of program. Some personal expenses may incur if a student wants to engage in personal travel or events.</i>				
Week 3:				
TIS28 CS/FT	Semi-structured interviews: Introduction to group projects	1	LM	(Bernard, 2006)
TIS29 FT/FL	Tourism & Environmental Sinks: Overburdening the island system with waste. What are the main drivers? What strategies are in place to correct the problem? What still needs to happen?	1	LM	(Bourque, 2006)
TIS30 CS/FT	Tourism management: socio-economic dimensions 1: Livelihood dependence on tourism: boats, beds, bars, and beaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study trip: Starfish Beach and the degradation of Bocas del Drago area • Snorkeling for starfish 	1	CK, LM	

No. & TYPE	DESCRIPTION	TIME (hrs.)	FACULTY	Reading
TIS31 CS/FT	Tourism management: socio-economic dimensions 2: Livelihood dependence on tourism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study trip: Loss of fish stocks: Transitioning fishers to tour guides 	1	CK, LM	(Marine Community Ecology and Conservation, 2014, ch. 20-Threats to marine ecosystems)
TIS32 F/L	Foreign investment in tourism and Land Rights: Film Screening, Paraíso for Sale	1	LM	(Honey, 1999)
TIS33 CS/FT	Tourism management: environmental dimensions-Habitats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study trip: Coral crashing: diver, snorkeler and boat damage 	1	CK	
Week 4: SWOT Project				
TIS34/35 FEX	Over the course of about a week students will analyze a sector of the tourism industry in Bocas (eg. Surfing, diving, sport fishing, sailing, hosteling, “eco-tours”) or analyze a policy or practice related to tourism (waste management, recycling). Using a SWOT analysis perspective, students will assess Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of the sector or policy and write a report which aims to be informative and provide potential avenues for solutions to local Bocatoreños who engage in the sector for livelihood. The Sustainability themes-economic, socio-cultural, environmental- must have prominent roles in the student projects. The projects will have collaborative elements; students may work together in teams no larger than 2 or 3 and may produce a co-written proposal at the end. Details will be provided during the first week of the program. Each student group will give a presentation to peers and / or community members.	15.0	LM, HH, CS	
TIS36	Student group presentations			

No. & TYPE	DESCRIPTION	TIME (hrs.)	FACULTY	Reading
TIS37	Bocas Tourism in Comparative Perspective	1	LM	
	Total Contact Hours	61		

Readings

- Benson, M. C. (2015). Class, Race, Privilege: Structuring the Lifestyle Migrant Experience in Boquete, Panama. *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 14(1), 19-37.
- Bernard, H. R. (2006). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (4th Edition)*. Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Bertness, M.D., Bruno, J.F., Silliman, B.R. & Stachowicz, J.J. (2014). Services of Marine Ecosystems: A Quantitative Perspective. In Fortier (Ed.), *Marine Community Ecology and Conservation* (pp. 403-425). Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, Inc.
- Blanco, E. (2011). A social-ecological approach to voluntary environmental initiatives: the case of nature-based tourism. *Policy Sciences*, 44(1), 35-52.
- Bourque, O. R. (2006). *Analyzing the recent rapid tourism development in Panama's Bocas del Toro Archipelago: is socioenvironmental justice attainable?* MA Thesis, Clark University.
- Buckley, R., & Ollenburg, C. (2012). Tacit knowledge transfer: Cross-cultural adventure. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 419-422.
- Carse, A., Keiner, C., Henson, P., Lasso, M., & et al. (2016). Panama canal forum: From the conquest of nature to the construction of new ecologies. *Environmental History*, 21(2), 206-287.
- Fletcher, R. (2014). *Romancing the Wild: Cultural Dimensions of Ecotourism (New Ecologies for the Twenty-First Century)*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Geerts, W. (2014). Environmental certification schemes: Hotel managers' views and perceptions, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. 39, 87-96.
- GSTC. (2016). *GSTC Industry Criteria*. GSTC. Retrieved from http://www.gstcouncil.org/images/Integrity_Program/Criteria/GSTC-Industry_Criteria_only_v3_21Dec-2016_Final.pdf
- Guerrón-Montero, C. (2005). Marine Protected Areas in Panamá: Grassroots Activism and Advocacy. *Human Organization*, 64(4).
- Honey, M. (1999). *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development : Who Owns Paradise?* Washington, D.C: Island Press.
- Laws, E., Agrusa, J., Scott, N., & Richens, H. (2011). *Tourist Destination Governance: practice, theory and issues*. Wallingford, UK: CAB International.
- Lyon, S. (2013). Coffee tourism and community development in guatemala. *Human Organization*, 72(3), 188-198.
- Mowforth, M., & Munt, I. (2003). *Tourism and Sustainability: Development, Globalisation and New Tourism in the Third World*. London: Routledge.

- Nadasdy, P. (2005). Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism. *Ethnohistory*, 52(2).
- Ostrom, E. (2009). A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability of Social-Ecological Systems. *Science*, 325, 419-422.
- Ponting, J., & O'Brien, D. (2013). Liberalizing Nirvana: An analysis of the consequences of common pool resource deregulation for the sustainability of Fiji's surf tourism industry . *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.
- Stephens, C. (2008). *Outline of History of the Province of Bocas del Toro, Panama*. Eustis, Florida: SPS Publications.
- West, P., & Carrier, J. (2004). Ecotourism and Authenticity: Getting away from it all? *Current Anthropology*, 45(4).