

Latin American Studies Program Community Immersion Experience

Program Coordinator: Britney Villhauer

Office Hours:

8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The Costa Rican Community Immersion Experience/Practicum provides you with an opportunity to live in a community outside of the one in which you lived throughout the first half of the semester. Your community experience offers you a new context in which to **explore how Costa Ricans view and respond to their reality**. The main goal of your time in these communities is to **build rich relationships** with your hosts that allow you to **practice your Spanish language skills** and learn about a unique context and region of Cost Rica through **experiential learning and participation** in a small business/non-profit organization/co-op/agricultural/educational setting. Students' placements will depend on their specific academic interests.

REQUIREMENTS

The following is required of you during the Community Immersion Experience/Practicum:

- ❖ **Willingness to assist** - in everything or nothing (as your hosts deem appropriate).
- ❖ **Tenacious engagement** - prioritize interacting with your hosts above personal habits (internet, ipod).
- ❖ **Flexibility** – walk a path that you have never traveled.
- ❖ **Observant eyes, sensitive ears, and an inquisitive spirit** – to help you dig beneath the surface.
- ❖ **Gracious heart** – recognizing that your hosts are inviting you into their world for a brief time.
- ❖ **Perseverance** – through experiences that may be difficult and uncomfortable (and rich in learning potential).
- ❖ **Completion of assignments** – reading the text and completing 3 essays

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

A. Participation/Attitude

The following is required of you during the Community Immersion Experience/Practicum:

- Willingness to assist - in everything or nothing (as your hosts deem appropriate).
- Tenacious engagement - prioritize interacting with your hosts above personal habits (internet, ipod).
- Flexibility – walk a path that you have never traveled.
- Observant eyes, sensitive ears, and an inquisitive spirit – to help you dig beneath the surface.
- Gracious heart – recognizing that your hosts are inviting you into their world for a brief time.
- Perseverance – through experiences that may be difficult and uncomfortable (and rich in learning potential).

B. Written Report of Project

Students will complete a summary/reflection of the project in which they are partnering in their community immersion. Students need to achieve a broad and deep understanding of how the project functions in order to be able to identify objectives, methodologies, and outcomes of the project. Students must then critically reflect on their time working in the project. **Since students have a limited understanding of the context into which they have entered in their immersions, students will have to practice high cultural sensitivity in gaging to what level is most appropriate to engage with their hosts in their analysis.** Students may end up not sharing their ideas with their hosts if this is not appropriate. Reports will be **4-5 pages**, Reports must:

- Summarize the general objectives and methodologies of the project. This is an overall analysis, not reflection on the personal experience of the student. For example, harvest season at a farm may take place when students are not present, but it is important to understand this undertaking in the bigger picture of the farm.
- Identify potential problems/challenges/opportunities in context of the project. What is the most challenging dynamic that your hosts face in their reality? What are bigger-picture, contextual realities that impact the work of your hosts?
- How does your faith impact your analysis or interpretation of the reality of your host family/project? What does it look like for you to put yourself in the shoes of your hosts, and transform your worldview to understand reality from their perspective?
- How has working in this project affected you personally? What were the most important lessons you learned? What takeaways will impact your future career decisions?

Due Date Written Report: upon return to LASP, **April 16th**

C. Critical Evaluation- Book Review

Students will select a book (to be approved by instructor two weeks prior to the immersion) that they will read and review during their time in their community immersion. Book selection depends on the interests of the students as well as the relevance to contemporary discussions on Latin America. Unlike a book report, which is just a summary, a book review must complete three components: First, a review provides a concise summary of the book's content, including a relevant description of the topic and thesis. Second, a review must include a critical assessment of the content, with the student's reaction and opinion of the content presented. Superior reviews will include a faith component to this reflection, as well as a connection to the student's work in their community immersion. Third, in addition to analyzing the work, a review will provide a future assessment of the text, in which students will address the potential for the book to contribute to other students understandings of Latin American realities. This should provide a recommendation of the book's academic value to future students and an understanding of how future students may benefit from the text. Essays should be **6-8 pages**, typed, double-spaced.

Due Date Critical Reflection: upon return to LASP, **April 16th** or as soon as you are able to send it via email: britney@lasp.co.cr

Potential Topics of Analysis:

- Sustainable Development
- Politics in Latin America
- Latin American Theologies
- International Relations
- Country Specific (Cuba, Nicaragua, etc.)
- Women's Issues
- Indigenous
- Globalization
- Democracy
- Revolution
- Cultural Diversity
- International Business
- Marginalization
- Economic Inequality

D. Final Reflective Essay

During the first half of the LASP semester, you engaged diverse cultures in Central America, shared in life with multiple host families, completed language study, and participated in numerous *conferencias* during Perspectives Seminar. You traveled to different regions in Costa Rica and to Cuba, comparing the realities of different contexts in Latin America. This essay asks you to integrate these experiences with reflections on your faith journey.

The Reflection Essay requires you to respond to the guided questions outlined below. While it is important to address the three broad areas listed below, you are not required to respond to each point/question listed. **Do not mechanically answer each question; rather integrate them into a narrative of your life, experiences, and reflections.**

Where I Stand

What pre-LASP life experiences (neighborhood, friends, education, church, family, personal struggles, etc.) inform your attitudes, values, opinions, faith positions, and overall worldview?

Seeing More Clearly

How do your experiences in Latin America accompany the above mentioned life experiences to create new faith insights that encourage you to “see” in new ways? How have your interactions with Latin Americans, readings/speakers, and other semester content influenced (or not) your views on theology?

Acting More Faithfully

- A. How are you being challenged to *act* on your new insights?
 - in relation to seeing the world from the perspective of the marginalized
 - in relation to your involvement with a church
 - in relation to your future career
 - in relation to how you will use resources (education, time, money, natural resources)
- B. What core values and commitments (concern for the marginalized, living in community, solidarity, economic justice, simplicity of lifestyle...) will define your faith and practice?
- C. What career and personal decisions might international business students consider to leverage their experiences in Latin America?

The essays will be evaluated for completeness (does it respond to the central categories/questions and does it meet the minimum length requirement of **6 double-spaced, typed pages**, depth of reflection (does the author show evidence of substantial personal reflection on the issues?), and technical accuracy (does the author reference semester materials – readings, speakers, experiences – to support their reflections and analysis and do spelling and grammatical errors interrupt reader comprehension?).

Due Date Final Reflective Essay: upon return to LASP, **April 16th** or as soon as you are able to send it via email: britney@lasp.co.cr

COURSE GRADING

A. Participation/attitude	20%
B. Written Report of Project	25%
C. Critical Evaluation-Book Review	25%
D. Final Reflective Essay	30%
	100% Total

SPECIAL NOTES

Late Submission: There will be a 5% per day grade reduction for any assignment that is turned in late. Academic Dishonesty: In the event of plagiarism, no credit will be granted for the assignment. Other disciplinary action will follow.

LASP Grading Scale

A = 90-100 pts Excellent, creative and integrative work, revealing superior analysis and content

B = 80-89 pts Good, competent and complete work

C = 70-79 pts Adequate performance

D = 60-69 pts Poor, does not fully meet requirements

F = 0-59 pts Substandard performance

A 93-100	B+ 88-89	C+ 78-79	D+ 68-69	F 0-59
A- 90-92	B 83-87	C 73-77	D 63-67	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	