Course Syllabus

Vivir Bien: Well-Being and Resilience in Andean and Amazonian Communities
LACB-3005 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Bolivia: Multiculturalism, Globalization, and Social Change

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description
While the first seminar outlines a larger context of struggle and grounds students into the social realities of the nation, the second seminar focuses on community well-being and resilience. Students will inquire into how different Bolivian communities are employing a range of resources to find new ways forward in the face of rampant change. In particular, they will explore Western concepts such as resilience, well-being, health, and happiness, in dialogue with the Bolivian concepts of vivir bien (living well) and ayni (reciprocity), asking how these different ways of viewing the world affect communities’ encounters with globalization and Bolivia’s contemporary sociopolitical struggles. They will examine how these understandings and interactions play out at both the community and the family levels. Students will ask: How does migration affect families, and how do they cope? How are childhood and adolescence changing in an increasingly globalized context? What is happening to gender roles? How do reaffirmations of cultural tradition, spirituality of different origins, healing, new ways of looking at education, harmony with Pachamama (mother earth) and the arts all provide potential routes to resilience? Do NGOs and government agencies play a positive or negative role in improving community lives and striving for sumak kawsay (living well)? Through the seminar lectures, experiential activities and direct engagement with a range of local community members in Andean and Amazonian communities, they will begin to construct their own understandings of the complex psychology and socio-politics of community well-being in Bolivia.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Discuss the culturally constructed nature of well-being and happiness with references to Western/US, Andean, and Amazonian concepts as viewed in the seminar.

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- Analyze how geographically and culturally diverse communities in Bolivia cope and/or respond creatively to the challenges provoked by globalization.
- Consider why some communities thrive and can be considered “healthy” in these attempts to respond to rapid change, while others may become “depressed” or downtrodden. Simultaneously, they will be able to analyze why some well-intentioned interventions work and others fail.
- Critically analyze the psychology and socio-politics of community resilience in the Bolivian context as a base for future explorations or possible professional work with diverse communities outside of Bolivia.

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in Spanish.

Course Schedule

*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers’ availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Andean Communities and the Quest to Live Well
In this module, students delve into the question of how to live well in the face of rampant change. After an overview and introduction to the course, they learn about Andean understandings of well-being from an Aymara shaman and priest. They then travel to La Paz where they will examine Aymara understandings of well-being in two new sites: urban feminist and artist communities and indigenous universities. Students then move to a homestay in a traditional Aymara village on the shores of Lake Titicaca to explore these ideas in yet another Bolivian setting. Throughout the module, students will examine the complex connections between tradition, the contemporary context, and socio-political change.

Session 1: Course Overview. Positioning our Analysis: US Concepts, Bolivian Concepts
Are ideas of “living well” culturally defined? What is community resilience and well-being? Students will explore differences and similarities between Western and indigenous ideas: individual happiness vs. connectedness (family, community, earth/past, present, future). Why is a culturally-informed perspective necessary when doing community work?

Required Readings:

Session 2: Andean Cosmovision: Living Well in Community
This class provides an introduction to living well from an indigenous Andean perspective.

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Session 3: Andean Understandings of Reciprocity and Healing
This session builds on the prior one and takes students deeper into Andean ideas.

Required Reading:

Community Living Experience. In this three-day communal living experience and workshop in La Paz, students stay with “Comunidad Mujeres Creando Comunidad.” Students learn about this organization’s “feminismo comunitario,” which incorporates Aymara views into an urban feminist context. How are Bolivian women challenging patriarchy and proposing new models of “living well” where the ideas of Andean “complementaridad” are truly respected?

Session 4: Aymara Influence on Community Feminism

Required Reading:

Visit to Teatro Trono, an artist community working with street kids, theater, radio program, decolonizing the body through dance, etc. We will pick up our discussion of living well now in communities involved in the arts drawing too from the music education program we saw in Sucre.

Session 5: Social Justice Theater as an Alternative for Street Children

Required Reading

Session 6: Education for Living in Harmony at a Rural Indigenous University

Required Reading

Homestay in the Aymara village of Tocoli. For four days, students will live with local families in an Aymara community on the shores of Lake Titicaca. The community of Tocoli has been devastated by out-migration and is trying to revitalize itself through intercultural exchange and the construction of a unique interfaith spiritual center.

Session 7: Efforts to Revitalize Rural Community in the Face of Urban Migration

Session 8: Discussion and Analysis of Module 1

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Final Module Assignment: Reflective Paper #1

Module 2: Living in Harmony with Pachamama: Amazonian Communities and Environmental Health
In this module, we move to the Bolivian Amazon, which is being destroyed at an even faster rate than in Brazil due to uncontrolled extractivist practices and policies. Without the security of physical place, communities can hardly hope to thrive. Students will explore efforts at resilience and resistance in this context of ecological devastation. We will introduce concepts of eco-psychology and explore how these ideas might relate to Amazonian cosmovision. Students will contrast what they find in these communities with their prior observations in Cochabamba and the Aymara village of Tocoli.

Session 1: Introduction to Eco-psychology
What alternatives are being proposed inside and outside of Bolivia for healing and living in harmony with nature? A context is provided for understanding the environmental devastation and attempts at healing in Bolivian communities in the Amazon. Students will be introduced to the emerging field of eco-psychology, which views the environmental crisis as a psychological crisis where humans of western civilization have separated their identities from the rest of the natural world, seeing the planet as material resources for human consumption.

Required Readings:

Session 2: Current Extractivist Practices and Environmental Devastation in Bolivia

Required Readings

Session 3: Traditional Amazonian Cosmovisions: Living in Harmony with the Environment
How are Amazonian cosmovisions similar to and different from Andean cosmovision, particularly given that there are over 30 ethnic groups in the Bolivian lowlands. How do these cosmovisions specifically address living in harmony with nature?

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**Rural Village Stay Experience.** For two days, students will live with local families in an indigenous community in the Bolivian Amazon (possibly in the Chiquitana community of Santa Rita), where they will observe and participate in daily community life and gain an understanding of the struggles faced by communities in a region with increasing rates of deforestation and the pressures of urban migration. They will also learn what this community is doing to respond to these challenges and remain resilient.

**Session 4: Efforts at Community Sustainability in the Face of Environmental Destruction**

Lectures/visits to several community projects and/or NGOs working to support sustainable and harmonious living in the Amazon. This may include NGOs working with families to replace slash and burn farming or cattle-ranching techniques with more sustainable practices, government programs to raise awareness among children about environmental issues affecting Amazonian communities, indigenous communities and/or women’s groups working to sustainably harvest and commercialize forest products such as palm seed oil as an alternative to deforestation, and whether or not the visions of international conservation organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund match those of local indigenous communities.

**Required Readings:**

**Session 5: Discussion and Analysis of Module 2**

**Final Module Assignment:** Reflective Paper #2

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

**Description of Assignments**
A more detailed description with specific grading criteria will be made available for each of the assignments below.

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- **Module Reflection Papers** are due at the end of each of each course module. These papers must critically address the main theme of the module by drawing on lectures, field visits, and readings.

- For each of the three modules in this course, a group of students will be prepare and lead a stimulating class discussion about the concepts and controversies introduced in this module, referencing readings, lectures, and field visits. Students must submit thoughtful and thought-provoking discussion questions ahead of time for approval.

- **Participation.** This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions, and excursions.

**Assessment:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module Reflection Paper 1</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module Reflection Paper 2</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead Group Module Discussion</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Grading Scale**

- 94-100%   A   Excellent
- 90-93%    A-
- 87-89%    B+
- 84-86%    B   Above Average
- 80-83%    B-
- 77-79%    C+
- 74-76%    C   Average
- 70-73%    C-
- 67-69%    D+
- 64-66%    D   Below Average
- below 64  F   Fail

**Alternative Forms to Written Assignments**

In this course, as for all courses on this program, students are invited to submit some or all of the assignments in formats other than the traditional written paper. Alternative (or nontraditional) formats could include photography, video, music, creative writing, painting, etc. Students must obtain prior approval from the AD for nontraditional formats and set up clear criteria for insuring academic rigor.

**Video Students**

Students who plan to produce their ISP in video format are required to submit the journal either partially or completely in video format.

**Expectations and Policies**

- **Assignments:** Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation, and presentation of evidence.

- **Excursions:** Many of the visits will be to underprivileged areas, challenging students to understand how historical oppression and public policies affect the lives of peoples.

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today. Students are expected to be respectful and curious as they engage with these experiences.

- **Readings:** Students are responsible for all of the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear in class. The readings will help place the classes in context, engage lecturers, generate questions for class discussions, and deepen student knowledge of particular issues discussed in class.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.