

Ecuador: Indigenous Community Wellness and Autonomy LACB3000 (3 credits)

Course Description

Explore indigenous Andean and Amazonian worldviews in Ecuador by engaging with community-based organizations, local government entities and scholars. You will examine the philosophic principle *Sumak Kawsay*, a plentiful life in harmony with nature, and learn how it provides the foundational framework for an alternative paradigm to development, in which community wellness and autonomy are prioritized.

From an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective, concrete cultural practices of care and healing will be studied, including traditional healing and ethnobotany in the Kichwa worldview. How these practices sustain political mobilization, indigenous government and epistemological decolonization will also be discussed. In the capital city of Quito and during educational excursions to the Andean Highlands and the Upper Amazon Basin, you will engage with local initiatives promoting bilingual cultural education, performing arts, and cultural and language revitalization. In addition to your homestay in Quito, you will participate in a short rural stay in an indigenous Kichwa community, where you will have direct exposure to Andean worldview principles such as reciprocity and redistribution and where you will participate in collective agricultural work known locally as *minka*.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- *Describe* the philosophic principle *Sumak Kawsay*.
- *Compare and contrast* indigenous Andean and Amazonian worldviews with western development paradigms and concepts from ecopsychology and liberation psychology.
- *Distinguish* how community practices of care and healing sustain political mobilization, indigenous government, and epistemological decolonization.
- *Analyze* local initiatives promoting bilingual intercultural education, performing and visual arts, cultural and language revitalization.
- *Apply* the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* to concrete practices of wellness in Ecuador and possible practices in your home communities.

Prerequisites

Two semesters of college-level Spanish

Language of Instruction

Spanish

Instructional Methods

The teaching and learning philosophy of this course is grounded in an experiential education model and decolonizing pedagogy. Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational.

Required Texts

Koathari, A. & Salleh A. et al, Eds. 2019. *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. AUF: Creative Commons.

Oviedo, A. (2017). *Sumak Kawsay: Arte de vivir en armonía*. Quito: Global Sur Editores.

Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2013) *Ch'ixinkax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores*. Buenos Aires: Tinta De Limón Ediciones.

Hidalgo, A.L, et al. (2014). *Antología del pensamiento indigenista ecuatoriano sobre el Sumak Kawsay*. España: FIUCUHU.

Additional readings and articles as assigned

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

- Prepare & Lead Discussion (20%)
Each student, as part of a small group, is expected to prepare for and lead one group discussion based on the readings, lectures, and activities for the week. Further details for this assignment will be covered in class.
- Academic Journal (35%)
Students choose two main themes covered in course. For each theme they present selected notes from lectures, selected notes from readings, and a critical personal reflection. Further details for this assignment will be covered in class.
- Final Reflection Project and Presentation (35%)
Work on this assignment will be a cumulative process ending in a final product in which students are asked to propose a model of how they would apply the concepts and paradigms of wellness and community learned in this course to their own lives, universities and home communities. Students may work individually or in small groups. Students are encouraged to be creative: final products may be in the form of a written reflection paper, poetry or a creative writing piece, film or photography, music, theater,

children’s literature, or another format approved by the academic directors. All students will give a 10-minute presentation of their project. Further details for this assignment will be covered in class.

➤ Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions, and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.]

Assessment

Prepare and Lead Group Discussion	20%
Academic Journal	35%
Final Reflection Project and Presentation	35%
Participation	10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination of the Final Reflection Project and Presentation. It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at

that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Grading Scale

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

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Moodle. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course,

what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.

- **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Classroom recording policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.]

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*

Each module in this course covers major themes in a classroom seminar setting or through field visits, followed by a weekly discussion session. Occasionally, local college students join the discussion and share their views on the reading topics. Course readings are selected from a diverse bibliography. Beyond what is listed in the syllabus, supplemental articles are also distributed to students based on current events and relevancy.

Module 1: Amazonian Communities and Worldview

In this module, students will consider a range of topical themes including Amazonian indigenous worldview, ethnobotany, cultural revitalization, political mobilization, and bilingual intercultural education. Student will spend three days in the Upper Amazon Basin, visiting the community-based organizations Sacha Warmi, Puka Rumi, and ACIA (Association of Indigenous Communities of Arajuno).

Excursion: Four nights, three days in the Upper Amazon Basin on the Pastaza River

Readings:

Oviedo, A. (2017). *Sumak Kawsay: Arte de vivir en armonía*. Quito: Global Sur Editores.

Hidalgo, A.L, et al. (2014). *Antología del pensamiento indigenista ecuatoriano sobre el Sumak Kawsay*. España: FIUCUHU.

Module 2: Andean Communities and Worldview

In this module, students will examine local government entities and community-based organizations in the city of Quito (while living with homestay families) and in the Andean Highland Province of Imbabura, where you will have direct exposure to Andean worldview principles such as reciprocity and redistribution and where you will participate in collective agricultural work known locally as *minka*. Other topics explored will include Kichwa Andean worldview, indigenous government, language revitalization, performing arts and traditional healing. Students will engage lectures with university scholars and visits with the Kichwa Council of Otavalo, FICI (The Indigenous and *Campesino* Federation of Imbabura), APAK (The Association of Kichwa Audiovisual Producers), and Wiñay Kawsay (Community Media)

Excursions: Two nights, three days in the Imbabura Province of the Andean Highlands

Readings:

Koathari, A. & Salleh A. et al, Eds. (2019). *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. AUF: Creative Commons.

Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2013) *Ch'ixinkax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores*. Buenos Aires: Tinta De Limón Ediciones.

Module 3: Imagining and Applying New Paradigms of Wellbeing

In this module, students will have the opportunity to reflect upon the knowledge learned and shared during the previous Amazonian and Andean modules and begin to imagine how they might apply these concepts and paradigms of wellness and community to their own lives, universities and home communities. Students will compare and contrast concepts of Kichwa Andean and Amazonian worldview with Western concepts of development, liberation psychology and ecopsychology.

Readings:

Robinson, L. (2009). Psychotherapy as if the World Mattered. In Buzzell, L. (2009). *Ecotherapy: Healing with nature in mind*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Chalquist, C. (2009). Critical Ecotherapy, Public Health and Environmental Justice in Ecotherapy Research and a Psychology of Homecoming. In Buzzell, L. (2009). *Ecotherapy: Healing with nature in mind*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Macy, J., & Johnstone, C. (2020). *Active Hope (revised): How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy* (Revised ed.). New World Library.

Golden, C. (Retrieved June 19, 2017). *What is Ecopsychology?* Retrieved from <http://soulcraft.co/essays/ecopsychology.html>

Watkins, M., & Shulman, H. (2008). *Toward Psychologies of Liberation (Critical Theory and Practice in Psychology and the Human Sciences)* (2008th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Watters, E. (2010). Introduction. In *Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche* (1-9). United States of America: Free Press.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.