INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Mario Morera  
CREDITS: 4  

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will explore Costa Rica through historical, social, cultural, and political themes, and will be supported by class discussions, readings, cultural activities, guest speakers and fieldtrips. Students will have the opportunity to consolidate their linguistic skills while learning the socio-cultural dynamics composing the country’s identity Costa Rica. Every topic will be studied in and out of class in modules covering themes related to: history and people; food; theater and cinema, music and dance; and literature; and they will be directly related to the course’s underlying theme: Costa Rica, the happiest country in the world. Students will work with an anthology including a series of essays, reports and studies offering different perspectives of the Costa Rican identity. All coursework, including conferences and fieldtrips, will be in Spanish.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:  
- To contextualize Costa Rica from different interdisciplinary perspectives.  
- To contextualize Costa Rica in its position of the happiest country in the world  
- To learn about the country’s past and present history.  
- To approach the sociocultural experience in Costa Rica from an academic perspective.  
- To visit different locations in Costa Rica where the students will witness the topics developed in class.  
- To debate on local current affairs and connect them to the students urban and rural experiences.  
- To discuss different specific topics directly with experts on such areas.  
- To develop tools of communication and critical thinking in order to discuss life in the country.  
- To be able to make comparisons between urban and rural life, social dynamics and problems.


COURSE CONTENT:  
Module 1: History and people: from ancient times to XXI century Costa Rica.  
Module 2: Food: Notions of local gastronomy. Regional identity and social dynamics.  
Module 3: Immigration and transculturation: Bilateral cultural relations between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and the arrival of other groups.  
Module 5: Music and Dance: Art and popular expression.  
Module 6: Literature: Happiness in narrative. Are we really happy?
ASSESSMENT:
Course evaluation (100 points)
- Attendance and participation 20 pts. (class, fieldtrips and cultural events)
- City exploration essays (3 x 10 pts) 30 pts.
- Neighborhood walk (2 x 10 pts) 20 pts.
- Final exam 20 pts.
- Oral presentation 10 pts.

*Essays: Every student will write 3 essays of 4 pages each in which they will share how they apply what has been learned in class to their daily living and to the social and academic activities they carry out during the program.

In order to appreciate and learn what living in Costa Rica is like it is necessary to go out and get to know and experience everything the country has to offer: places and events you can observe and in which you can participate. The activities found here below will provide more insights on having more opportunities to start your inclusive life in this country. You can visit these places of be part of these activities either with your conversation groups or with your families or local friends.

The essays must be typed double spaced and must indicate your name, course, date, essay number and activity.

You must write about 3 of the following activities. Each one of them has a list of guiding questions that might help you to explore the place or activity. Feel free to combine answers and personal comments. Do not forget to take a notebook with you so you can record as much info as you can. Deadlines will be announced in class. If you have a different topic you want to write about you must visit with the course’s instructor for previous approval.

1. “La feria del agricultor” or Farmers Market: Try to go with a family member, early in the morning on a Saturday or Sunday.
   - What products did you see that you did not know before?
   - Who are the sellers and the buyers?
   - What are the prices like? High? Low?
   - What was your favorite product?
   - What is the history of the Farmers Market? (you will have to interview people in order to know this.)
   - How is it different from similar activities in the US?
   - What did really catch your attention? Why?
   - What did you like the most? The least?
   - What was the atmosphere like?
   - Where do the products and farmers come from? How do geography and climate influence in the production?

2. A religious ceremony: Most families in Costa Rica are catholic, however there are many others who practice other creeds. Ask a family member to invite you or accompany you to a religious ceremony of any kind. Remember that you will be there as an observer who wants to learn
about religion in this country. Try to be open minded regarding what goes on around you and you could be able to learn more of your local family and society in general.

- What was the place where the service took place like?
- Did you understand what the presiding person said?
- Was it similar to other services you have attended before?
- What was the assistants’ attitude during the service?
- What do you think of the role of Christianity in Latin America?

3. “La Asamblea Legislativa.” or The Costa Rican Congress: The sessions take place in the afternoons. Do preparatory research on what is being discussed.

- What were your expectations?
- What was the issue being discussed?
- Describe the debate. What was it like?
- What reactions did you notice in the audience?

4. Go to a theater presentation, a national movie or a cultural event: Read any local newspaper and find out about activities like those, one that really catches your attention.

- Describe the venue. What is it like? What is its history?
- What kind of people attended the presentation? What were they dressed like?
- What do you think of the people who sponsor events like these? Is the situation similar to those in the US?
- If you went to see a play, what aspects should be important to write down?
- What do you think of fine arts when compared to street art?

5. A soccer game: check a local newspaper to learn about soccer games. Try to go with a family member of a local person who can tell you more about the national passion for this sport. Try to analyze not only the physical part, but also the cultural aspects.

- Who played? What was the game like, dynamic, boring, why?
- What was the fans behavior like?
- How do you compare that game to other sport events in the US?

6. “Parque Zoológico Simón Bolívar” or Simón Bolívar Zoo: It was inaugurated on July 24, 1921 and it is located in the old and enigmatic Barrio Amón. It was named after the South American revolutionary because of his efforts in the local independence movements. It was created to preserve endangered species and to be a local place for education and research. Today is administrated by la Fundación Pro Zoológicos (FUNDAZOO).

- What flora and fauna species did you see? Where do they come from? Why are they there?
- Describe the infrastructure and explain how it helps to the institution’s purposes.
- How would you describe the flora and fauna conditions, the way they are treated and the places where they are?
- Describe the kind of visitors. What are their comments, reactions and the way they use the facilities?
- Compare it to other zoos you have visited.
- Take a walk around and enjoy one of the most famous places in San José.
ACM POLICY ON ACADEMICS
A complete listing of ACM policies can be found in your student handbook.

Class attendance and participation: You are expected to attend and participate fully in all classroom sessions, site visits, and field trips.

Academic honesty: Actions of dishonesty are destructive to the well-being of the academic community, and ACM staff respond to them vigorously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic theft will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may result in failure for the course.

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CLASSROOM CONDUCT
Laptops, tablets and mobile phones are strictly forbidden during class time.