

Caribbean Environments

Dr. April Karen Baptiste

ENST/ALST 3xx: “Let’s go to Paradise– really: An extended study of Caribbean environmental concerns in Trinidad and Tobago”

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Office Hours: TBD or by appointment

Class Location and Time: TBD

Course Overview

This course introduces students to the key physical environmental settings as well as the concerns facing the Caribbean region. It evaluates the mosaic of ecological settings, their use, threats and adaptive capacity. This course seeks to show the complexity of the region beyond the sand, sea and sun stereotypic view. Students will be allowed to critically analyze critical scientific and media readings on the different ecological settings as well as the respective stressors. The course has an extended study component to Trinidad and Tobago, which will provide students with the unique ability to view the ecological settings studied and interact with the local community to determine concerns and threats currently experienced by the community.

This course seeks to address a number of broad questions:

1. What are the main ecological zones in the Caribbean region?
2. What are the main uses of these ecological zones?
3. What are the major environmental and social stressors within these ecological zones?
4. How are these stressors addressed within the local Caribbean context?

Required Readings

A mixture of peer-reviewed articles, book chapters and media articles will be used during this course.

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to provide students with an interdisciplinary approach to environmental issues in the Caribbean region, using Trinidad and Tobago as an example:

1. Provide a clear understanding of the Caribbean region and the various ecological zones
2. Understanding the underlying environmental stressors facing these ecological zones
3. Develop a critical analysis of how communities are affected by environmental stressors
4. Present clearly your ideas about environmental justice to an audience

Course Assignments

ALL assignments must be completed on or before the due date. **NO LATE assignments will be accepted unless in dire circumstances** in which case it is the student’s responsibility to **speak with the instructor prior to the due date** to work out whether extensions will be given.

List of Assignments

Individual Work

Class Participation

Critical Media Assessments (10)

Journal Reflections (Extended Study)

Group Work

Research paper

Peer Review of draft papers

Final Paper

Paper Presentation

Academic Policies

Students with special needs: Students who will need special arrangements or consideration due to documented disabilities should speak with me early in the semester. They should also consult with Lynn Waldman, Director of Academic Program Support and Disability Services, 315-228-7375 in the Center for Learning, Teaching, and Research concerning disability concerns and appropriate accommodations.

Religious Holidays: This syllabus tries to comply with Colgate Holiday Policy. If there are any conflicts please discuss with me very early in the semester so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Academic Honor Code: Colgate has a very strong Academic Honor Code to which all students are subjected and will apply to all assignments both graded and ungraded. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will be reported to the fullest extent.

Writing Center: The Writing Center is a great resource and while some students may have acceptable writing skills there is always room for improvement particularly within the academic setting. Please use this resource as often as possible particularly for your take home assignments in order to improve the quality of assignments that are turned in. This will greatly improve your work and help to improve your writing skills.

Library: This course has a research component to it to allow students to develop and refine their research skills. Particularly with your research paper and critical media assignments you will need to perform and report a sophisticated level of findings that goes beyond a simple internet search. Please use the library and its staff to help in this regard. There is a large number of electronic and print media that will help in developing quality research throughout the semester.

Course Expectations

Attendance policy: Attendance is important in this class in order to improve group dynamics as we go through the course. Absences will reduce the number of opportunities for quality contributions to class participation, forming a sound and closely knitted group, as such students are advised that missing **more than two (2) sessions** will result in a reduction of your class participation grade and a potential of being removed from the extended study. If students miss two sessions for sickness, these count toward the 2-session allowance. In cases of **extreme circumstances** where an absence cannot be avoided above the 2-session limit please contact the instructor immediately.

Class Participation:

- a. Your class participation grade will be determined by the extent to which you are present and engaged in the class. Be prepared, on-time and take an active and critical role in the class discussions. This is not based on quantity but also quality of contributions so I encourage those that are shy to challenge yourself during the semester to voice your thoughts as this will be crucial as we build a team.
- b. There are several dimensions to the participation grade: presence, preparation and participation

Presence: Learning is a cumulative process and as such your presence is key to all the class sessions. It is also strongly recommended that students attend ENST Brown Bag Luncheons as this aids with critical thinking development. As courtesy to all students please:

- Arrive on time
- Turn off cell phones and store them
- Avoid laptops
- No texting, twittering, facebooking or the like
- No noisy food ☺
- Be prepared to spend entire class period in the classroom – excessive leaving will not be allowed as this is distracting to your colleagues

Excused Absences: I will consider these on a case by case basis once documentation in a written form is provided by an Academic Dean, Coach or appropriate administrative source. Student athletes in season must provide a list of schedule and absences signed by your coach in the *1st week of the semester*. It is the student's responsibility to meet with me to discuss implications of class absences.

Preparation: You are expected to read all text prior to each session. This will allow you to be able to contribute to class discussions. When preparing for class, avoid last minute readings. One method that has worked for me in the past has been to read and discuss the material in groups prior to the class session. This has proven to be very helpful. Make notes of key points and concepts while reading. Also make note of questions of things that may not be clear for class discussions. Try to make connections between what you are reading and your research project as well as personal experiences. These are also welcomed during class discussion as it brings theory into practice.

Participation: We are all learners and we can learn from each other. To facilitate this, we would respectfully listen to each person's point of view and if the need arises challenge respectfully each other's view. If a person feels he/she will have difficulty speaking in class for any reason, please see me within the first 2 weeks of classes.

Critical Thinking: This is the ability to consider multiple perspectives on environmental issues/problems and think about them in ways that make connections to life experiences, theory and larger current events. It is a process of developing questions that challenge our assumptions and beliefs and avoid simplistic answers. These are important to help develop critical thinking.

Critical Media Assessment Guidelines

Critical Media Assessments are mandatory for all students. This form of participation helps to allow students to put theory into practice by applying concepts to current real world situations. The media is to be used to get a sense of the thoughts of your peers and to have a conversation about the topic outside of the classroom setting.

A critical media assessment is assigned for each topic or ecological zone that is studied. For each assessment there will be two group leaders. Leaders will be responsible for sourcing two media pieces that are no more than 1 year old. The media source must be from a local Caribbean newspaper or news source (radio or television) – short new clips can also be used. These media pieces will be posted to an online forum 48 hours prior to class session. Each student will then read/view the news piece and write a 1-2 page critical review of the piece using concepts from class readings.

During Session 2 of the class session – leaders will then facilitate a discussion on the pieces. Both media pieces and responses will be assessed in the following manner:

News Piece

The news piece will be selected by your peers (**discussion leader(s)**). Discussion leaders are to collaborate on their media choice to ensure that there is variety and minimal overlap but to ensure that there is some relation to each other and the class topic for that day. Both pieces are to be posted to the Moodle Forum. These media pieces must be submitted **at least 48 hours prior to class sessions**. News pieces will be graded on the following rubric:

Grading Criteria	A	B	C
News piece is applicable to class topic	X	X	X
Provokes students to pry into to assigned readings	X	X	
Provokes connections to personal experiences/real world examples and class discussions where relevant	X		
From a reputable Caribbean news source	X	X	X

Responses

Written responses are then due in the class session following the posting. Each student is required to respond to the news piece posted in 1-2 pages. Students should remember that even though this is a short response piece, there should be an avoidance of making unsubstantiated statements by linking to some of the literature where possible to support their thoughts. Students should also try to tie in their responses to either personal experiences or real world examples where possible. Students are asked to put some thought into their responses, as these would also be graded based on the following rubric:

Grading Criteria	A	B	C
Response is clear and concise	X	X	X
Make explicit connections to theories and concepts in assigned readings	X	X	
Make explicit connections to personal experiences/real world examples and class discussions where relevant	X	X	
Quote selectively and judiciously	X		
Be error free	X	X	X

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Research Paper: Students would form pairs (2) and each group would work on a research paper that is based on one of the ecological zones that will be studied during the semester. Students will design and work on most of this paper during the semester but will complete the paper with empirical data once the extended study is completed. Each group would be required to prepare a proposal on the desired topic to be graded and approved by the instructor. Each group is then required to present their research at the end of the extended study in Trinidad.

There are several layers to this project and students are expected to work on these throughout the semester in order to produce a high quality of work. The following is a break down of the timeline and assignments involved for this project.

Important Research Paper Deadlines

Date	Major Milestone
	Groups and Paper topic are to be submitted
	Meet with Professor Baptiste to discuss topics for approval – Particularly the empirical data component
	In class library session on doing research for peer reviewed articles, APA citation style and annotated bibliography and poster making
	Paper proposal including research question or hypothesis and annotated bibliography with 7 peer reviewed sources
	Draft of paper due via online submission
	In class session of peer reviews of draft projects
	Final paper submitted via online submission
	Paper presentations

Final Exam Assessment: This will be in the form of a completed research paper and associated presentation which would be submitted in Trinidad following the extended study.

Class Lecture:

Written Assignments: These should be type written, 12 pt, Times or Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced. **American Psychological Association (APA) style** should be used when referencing. All written assignments that are take-home, including your research paper and your news review pieces must use proper referencing. All assignments will be collected at the beginning of class –

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any assignment that is given after this will be considered late. **It is the student’s responsibility to give in assignments at the beginning of class.**

Grading

Class Participation	10%
Group paper	
Paper Proposal	5%
Term Paper	20%
Paper presentation	10%
Class lecture	
Reading quality	10%
Lecture facilitation	10%
Weekly news critical reflection	20 %
To be submitted each week – write up before discussion session	
Journal	
Must include incorporation of theoretical concepts	15%
TOTAL	100%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week/Dates	Topics	Readings
1 Day 1 Half Day Schedule	Introduction and Syllabus Review	
Day 2	History of the Caribbean	
2 Day 1 Session 1 Session 2	History of Caribbean Critical Media assessment	Guest Lecture: Brian Moore Media piece on the history of the region
3 Day 1 Session 1 Session 2	Sustainability in the Caribbean Critical Media	How is sustainability perceived in the media

		for the region?
4 Session 1	Land Use Issues Industrial Development	
5 Session 1 Session 2	Land Use Issues Industrial Development Social Issues Critical Media	What are the main industrial concerns raised in the media?
6 Session 1	Land Use Agriculture	Types: Industrial, organic Major products
7	Out of town – AAG Conference	
8 Session 1 Session 2	Land Use Agriculture Social and environmental concerns Critical Media Assessment	What are the major concerns of the agriculturalists in the Caribbean through the media eyes?
Spring Break Recess		
10 Session 1 Session 2 Afternoon Session	Forest Resources Types, how they are used, environmental concerns, reforestation issues Critical Media piece Swimming/Snorkeling/Scuba Classes	Major concerns? 1 hour session
11 Session 1 Session 2 Afternoon Session	Coastal Resources Wetlands Critical Media Swimming/Snorkeling/Scuba Classes	Types, locations, major types in Trinidad Social concerns surrounding wetland use 1 hour session
12	Coastal Resources	

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Session 1	Coral Reefs	Types, locations, major type in Tobago; importance etc Social and environmental concerns surrounding reefs Documentary “In Hot Waters”
Session 2	Critical Media	
Afternoon Session	Swimming/Snorkeling/Scuba Classes	
13	Coastal Resources	Types, common in Trinidad; importance for local economy, problems facing the biodiversity Portrayal of this industry in the media? 1 hour session
Session 1	Sea Turtles	
Session 2	Critical Media	
Afternoon Session	Swimming/Snorkeling/Scuba Classes	
14	Tourism	How is the Caribbean portrayed in the media? Using images, advertisements, video etc assess the portrayal and how this influences environmental concerns. 1 hour session
Session 1	Perceptions of Caribbean, major tourism destinations, problems	
Session 2	Critical media	
Afternoon Session	Swimming/Snorkeling/Scuba Classes	
14	Pre-departure session – final packing concerns etc	1 hour session
Afternoon Session	Swimming/Snorkeling/Scuba Classes	