

# **ECUADOR, AN ANDEAN COUNTRY**

(Taught in Spanish)

## **Sample Syllabus**

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**Lecturers:** Viviana Maldonado, María Sol Villagómez and Nicolás Cuvi

## **Description**

The seminar offers a panoramic view of Ecuador's economic, political, social, cultural and environmental reality. The seminar focuses its attention on the Ecuadorian reality, but also considers the situation of other countries in the Andean region that share a similar reality. Through different planned activities, the seminar will allow students to understand the principal issues and challenges facing present-day Ecuador, as well as how to reflect and give meaning to their daily lives and experiences.

## **Objectives**

1. **Reflect on the cultural immersion process during the semester, and be conscience of the way in which cultural baggage contributes to the fostering and/or obstruction of cultural adaptation.**
2. **Understand the issues that Ecuadorians from different social groups and classes have to face day-to-day, and the strategies they put into play in order to come out ahead.**
3. **Analyze the way in which racism, gender discrimination, and social inequality manifests in the country; and the various initiatives that different marginalized groups put into action for improving their own conditions.**
4. **Gather and consolidate different community players' points of view, through full participation in host family life, community service and at the university; and through the implementation of qualitative research techniques.**
5. **Demonstrate respect and understanding of cultural beliefs and practices even though they may differ from one's own beliefs and practices.**

## **Activities**

The seminar includes the following activities: discussion sessions, community service, study trips and the host family stay.

### **a. Discussion Sessions**

These sessions will take place every Monday afternoon from 3:30-5:30pm. The sessions will offer a unique space for deep discussion and analysis of topics and questions that emerge from daily life, community service, host family living and assigned readings. Student participation in the sessions is fundamental. For each session, the students must have read the selected material and prepare a written report

in which they analyze and provide an opinion about questions found in the reading. In some sessions, students will be in charge of leading the discussion.

### **b. Community Service**

The community service component represents an excellent opportunity to learn about the situation of Ecuador's most vulnerable groups and the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and religious organizations that work in favor of these groups. Each student will designate two weekly sessions (of three hours each) for their community service. One of the responsibilities of the community service consists of maintaining a field journal in which students register their experiences and the most important occurrences during their weekly visits to the institution, as well as respond to the questions indicated in the Fieldbook. For the final seminar, students must prepare a visual presentation (photographic) of their community service experience. More information about the field journals and the visual presentation can be found in the Fieldbook.

### **c. Study Trips**

To deepen student's knowledge about topics discussed in the seminar, students will take part in two study trips. The first will be to the Galápagos Islands, which are known worldwide for their flora, fauna and unique beauty. In the Galápagos, students will be able to appreciate the biodiversity that characterizes Ecuador, and learn about some of the practices that are endangering the island as well as efforts by the population and some institutions that are working to protect it. The second study trip will take students to the community of San Clemente, an indigenous Quechua community located in the foothills of Imbabura (to the north of Quito). There, students will interact with the indigenous population of the area and will get to know, first hand, their way of life and on-going issues and projects.

### **d. Family Stay**

The host family stay is a valuable opportunity that allows students to become involved in Ecuadorian culture and to get to know people of different ages and backgrounds. The program includes two distinct home stays. The first and longest will be in Quito with a professional, middle-class family. The second stay, of a few days, will be with an indigenous family in the community of San Clemente.

## **Evaluation**

Final grading will be calculated in the following way:

- Final Evaluation 20
- Community Service 20
- Field Journal 15
- Reports on Readings 15
- Participant Observation 10
- In-Depth Interview 10
- Presentation on Community Service 5
- Fictional Story 5

Total

100

## Discussion Topics and Assignments

### Typical Semester Schedule:

Date	Topic	Assignment
Week 1	– Overview of the seminar: objectives, topics, methodology, and evaluation.	-Letter to family (see Fieldbook) -My host family and kinship relations (see Fieldbook)
Week 2	-Panoramic view of Ecuador: geography, demographics, economy and politics	-Reading: John Creswell, <i>Qualitative inquiry and research design</i> (chapter 4)
Week 3	-Qualitative research and its principal focus	-Select and describe the topic for the ISP (in writing) -Field Journal 1 (See Fieldbook)
Week 4	-Presentation of research topics -Research design plan	-Design research plan – Report on reading: articles from Telesur and BBC
Week 5	-Principal economic, political and social changes in Ecuador since 1950	-Report on reading: Carlos de la Torre and Andrés Ortiz, <i>Populist polarization and the slow death of democracy in Ecuador</i>
Week 6	-The Citizen’s Revolution: goals, contradictions, and conflicts	-Field Journal 2 (see Fieldbook) Review information about the Galápagos Islands.
Week 7	-The Galápagos Islands: a historical, environmental and social look.	
Week 8	– No class. Trip to the Galápagos Islands	-Fictional story based on experience at the Galápagos Islands (see Fieldbook) – In-depth interview: Gender discrimination in Quito (see Fieldbook)
Week 9	– Gender discrimination and the women’s movement in Ecuador	Report on reading: <i>Concentration of assets and poverty reduction in post-neoliberal Ecuador</i>
Week 10	-Social inequality and poverty in Ecuador	-Report on reading: Carmen Martínez: Managing diversity in post-neoliberal Ecuador.
Week 11	-The indigenous movement and the plurinational state	-Report on Reading: Rosemarie Terán: <i>Educación, cambio institucional y equidad</i> – Field journal 3 (see Fieldbook)

Week 12	-Ecuadorian identity: dispute about its meaning	-Prepare for the final evaluation -Field Journal 4 (see Fieldbook)
Week 13	-Final evaluation	-Prepare visual presentation on community service experience (see Fieldbook)
Week 14	-Visual presentation on community service experience	-Prepare ISP oral presentation -Prepare ISP draft
Week 15	-ISP Oral presentation -Turn in ISP draft	-Prepare ISP oral presentation -Advance on ISP
Week 16	-ISP oral presentation -Turn in final ISP	-Prepare final version of ISP
Week 17	-Program evaluation	

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## FIELDBOOK

During the semester in Ecuador, students will carry out a series of exercises that will allow them to reflect on their own experience in Ecuador, as well as prepare them for the process of collecting information necessary for the development of their Independent Research Project (ISP).

### **Exercise 1: Letter to My Family or Friends Back Home**

Students will write a letter to a member of their respective families: father, mother, siblings. The letter should emphasize first impressions of Quito, *Quiteños* and their way of life, as well as the main experiences of cultural adjustment with the host family, outside the home, etc. The letter must be written in Spanish (except with permission by the professor) and be approximately three pages in length, double-spaced.

### **Exercise 2: My Host Family and Kinship Relations**

Students will construct a map of their family's kinship relations. The exercise will consider the extended family that includes grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and other members of the family. The objective of this exercise is not only for the purpose of understanding the host family structure, but also to learn the names of family affiliations (aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, grandparent, grandchild, cousins, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, etc.).

### **Exercise 3: Fictional Story about the Galápagos**

Students will write a story in which they record their impressions and experiences from the trip to the Galápagos Islands. The story should be minimum three-pages in length, double-spaced. This assignment is completely free form and encourages unleashed creativity.

### **Exercise 4: Gender Discrimination in Ecuador**

Students will conduct in-depth interviews with members of their host family and/or their community service institution on the topic of gender discrimination in Quito. Students should follow the steps below:

1. Design the interview that is going to be used.
2. Interview two people. It is recommended that students interview people of different ages and gender. To capture the information of the interviewee, students should select the most appropriate mechanism: digital recording or simultaneous transcription.
3. Write a report (minimum four pages, double-spaced) that includes the most relevant aspects of each interview and notes differences and similarities between perspectives. In the end, students will carry out a comparative exercise between the way gender discrimination is expressed in the United States and Ecuador.

### **Exercise 5: Rural life and Indigenous Culture**

From the San Clemente community stay, describe and analyze an aspect of the way of life and culture of community members: use of medicinal plants, the role of children in agricultural work, gender roles in indigenous families, etc.

For the above, students will perform a participant observation exercise during their rural experience and time living among indigenous families. The exercise should follow the steps below:

- Clearly define a topic that will be observed, for example: gender roles in the indigenous community.
- Design an observation plan.
- Observe the selected topic area and make notes in the field journal.
- Write a report (minimum four pages, double-spaced) in which the collected information is presented and an interpretation of the information is discussed.

### **Exercise 6: My Community Service Experience**

Students must record in their field journals the most important facts and events that occur during their community service visits. In addition to noting their experiences and daily events, students should record the following in their diaries:

#### Diary 1

- What is the name of the community service institution?
- What services does the institution offer?
- What type of people look after the institution?

#### Diary 2

- What activities do you carry out in your community service? (Describe)
- What difficulties do you encounter in the development of activities in your community service site? (Explain)
- Do you consider the activities you carry out in your community service to be useful and/or beneficial for the institution and community? In what ways? (Explain)

#### Diary 3

- Have you been able to create relationships with those receiving services from the institution and/or with the employees of the institution? (Explain)
- Have relationships with people from the institution been positive or negative? (Explain)

#### Diary 4

- What challenges did you find in your community service?
- How did you confront these challenges in your community service?
- What did you learn in your community service about the community and the institution with which you collaborated?

### **Exercise 7: Reports on Readings**

Students must write a report on each assigned reading. The first part of the report should include a summary of the reading in which the central thesis of the text and main

arguments are presented. In the second part of the report, students will analyze and/or comment on one of the text's themes that interested them.

### **Exercise 8: Visual Presentation of the Community Service Experience**

Students must prepare a visual presentation about their community service experience. Presentations can be photographic but also in video. The presentation must focus on three areas: 1. the institution and its principal characteristics: infrastructure, services offered, etc., 2. the people who benefit from the institution: age, social and ethnic group they belong to, problems they encounter, etc., and 3. Experience working in the institution. In this last part, it is important that the students' presentations state not only what they learned the most, but also the problems they had to sort out daily.