

INS 599-95  
**Global Health & Development:**  
**Harnessing the Theoretical with the Practical Experience**  
Winter Intersession 2010  
San Blas, Panama

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**Course Background:**

This course was designed for the student with a genuine interest in international development & global health and who seeks to gain the practical experience that one often reads about in text books and journal articles. Students will travel to one of the remote indigenous villages in the San Blas, Panama and live and learn among the Kuna Indians. The San Blas is a magnificent archipelago of 366 islands in which 66 are inhabited by an estimated 60,000 Kuna Indians. While *Tule* is the first language, most people, especially the young, speak Spanish. It is not surprising to find an elderly man familiar with the English language since the Kunas have a long history of working with the Englishmen as they sailed through the San Blas Islands in the early and mid 1900s.

Since 1980 Professor Porcelain, as part of the University of Miami Field Epidemiology Survey Team (F.E.S.T.), has conducted research and participated in programs collaboratively with the Kuna Indians on tropical dermatology (such as skin infections and infestations), water and sanitation in the prevention of diarrheal diseases (e.g. cholera), nutrition, community health, education and economic strategies for health development. In the 1990's Porcelain initiated a not for profit organization called M.A.C.A.W. (*Mothers and Children Around the World*) to bring resources to the San Blas Islands during the Noriega crisis when supplies were not reaching all the islands. Consequently, she has a unique familiarity with the Kuna society and has established and maintained a good relationship over the 28 years of this collaboration.

Students will travel to one of the remote villages, Ticantiki (*Niadup* in the Tule language dialect), and reside with families who will receive compensation. We will also maintain a field home in one of the building structures that served as the field research station for University of Miami F.E.S.T. from 1986-2003.

This course will expose students to the indigenous Kuna health, economic, political, social, cultural and environmental aspects of their life and consider the different perspectives of international development.

**Student Learning Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this course students will be able to:

( 1) Discuss the integration of western and traditional health care practices of the Kuna life

*Strategy to achieve this objective:* meetings with community health workers, traditional healers and community members

(2) Explain the educational system in *Kuna Yala*

*Strategy to achieve this objective:* Participating in school activities and meetings with school teachers and students

(3) Evaluate the role of economic activities in the daily life of a Kuna individual from learning about the art of *mola* sewing, basket weaving, fishing, coconut trading, and more.

*Strategy to achieve this objective:* Living with families and participating in some of their daily activities

(4) Understand the political system in *Kuna Yala*

*Strategy to achieve this objective:* Participating in a *congreso* meeting and discussion with community leaders and elders

(5) Describe social and cultural activities as a way of Kuna life

*Strategy to achieve this objective:* Participating and observing traditional dance/song, visiting island museum to preserve Kuna Yala, washing clothing in river, collecting firewood/preparing meals

Today there is a great demand for people that have both theoretical skills coupled with practical ways to approach community development. While the usual pedagogical setting offers students the opportunity to examine the different paradigms and perspective on best practices in international development that will promote better health and safety of populations, it is the intent of this course to give students a unique understanding on how such approaches may be adapted in a real world setting.

In March 2009 Professor Porcelain traveled to Ticantiki to meet with the chiefs (*Sahilas*), community health care workers, school teachers and community families to prepare for the 2010 intersession course. During this visit, in a community gathering of more than 50 youths (students and young adults), the group requested more information about HIV/AIDS. Many did not understand and were concerned about contacting this disease. Therefore, in coordination with community health workers we may conduct culturally relevant educational forums and discussion groups about the topic and obtain the approval of the head chief on the information we will share with the youth. Students that have an

interest in health education on HIV/AIDS are asked to express their interest early so plans and coordination with the Kuna health workers can be developed further.

Students are (1) Encouraged to begin reading about the Kuna society early so they can identify an area of interest they would like to focus on during their stay in Niadup. (2) Advised to schedule a meeting with Professor Porcelain sometime in November (before the Thanksgiving Break) to identify any additional reading for their area of interest, and determine if they would like to participate in any developing any educational program. One example of a potential educational activity is a culturally relevant water hygiene program. Access to potable water arrived in the community in 2008 and the health workers suggested that they need to develop an outreach program about the appropriate methods for collection/storage/use of the water and its association with diarrheal diseases on the island.

#### **Requirements for Enrollment:**

Students must be in good physical and mental health, willing to endure hot climate, live in an austere environment without running water and electricity, flexible, work well with others, and sleep on an air mattress with a sleeping bag or in a hammock. The Kunas sleep in hammocks and retire early and rise before dawn. Students should have some working knowledge of Spanish; however, a non Spanish speaking student will be paired with a Spanish-speaking student if this highly motivated student is approved for enrollment in this course. Every student must receive permission from the instructor to enroll in the course. Students must agree to follow appropriate protocol as described by the instructor. A list of required field supplies will be provided.

#### **Course Assessment:**

##### ***Overview:***

Students will be expected to read required material prior to their departure. Each student will select a topic of interest that is associated with international development and explore this area as it relates to the Kuna Indians. This can be on the topic of international studies, politics, anthropology, sociology, economics, environment, microbiology, nursing, epidemiology, public health, engineering, technology or other relevant topics. This is a trans-disciplinary approach to study international development and global health so you are encouraged to select a specific area of interest.

Undergraduate students will be expected to submit a 10 page paper at the conclusion of the course while graduate students submit a 20 page paper. This paper will be written in standard MLA format and consider the following:

- (1) Briefly discuss the history/ background of the Kuna Indians with focus on area of interest.
- (2) Identify one or more development perspectives and how it/they can be applied to the Kuna public health and well being,

- (3) Explore how the theoretical and practical application of such development approaches contribute to improving public health and well being by examining the economic, social, political, environmental, or technologic factors.
- (4) Discuss how this experience has contributed to your knowledge on international development and public health
- (5) Include scholarly resources, interviews, observations and of course, your creativity.

**Grading:**

Preparation to pursue area of interest in the field = 25% (checklist to be provided)

Participation in the field =25% (checklist to be provided)

Final paper = 50% (criteria listed above and rubric to be discussed and posted) – papers will be due on or before March 12, 2010

Required Readings:

1. Gatti, Anna and Andrea Boggio. Health and Development: Toward a Matrix Approach. Palgrave Macmillan ( 2009)
2. How, James. The Kuna Gathering: Contemporary Village Politics in Panama paperback edition (July 2002)
3. Sherzer, Joel. Stories, Myths, Chants, and Songs of the Kuna Indians (Lilas Translations from Latin America Series) University of Texas Press (2004)
4. Sandra Parsons Life on Kuna Yala. The Times. Part of a BBC documentary. June 17, 2008. (available in office)
5. Michael Gracey, Malcolm King. Indigenous health part 1: determinants and disease patterns. The Lancet Vol 374 July 4, 2009 65-75 (pdf available)
6. Malcolm King, Alexandra Smith, Michael Gracey\_Indigenous health part 2: the underlying causes of the\_health gap. The Lancet Vol 374 July 4, 2009 76-85. (pdf available)
7. Additional readings to be assigned based on student areas of interest

**Educational Movie( DVDs)**

Two recent short films by University of Miami graduate student, Julie Hollenbeck. Julie has traveled to the Niadup Island in the San Blas two times (spring 2008 & 2009). These professional quality movies have the benefit of Julie’s skill as a television reporter before returning to graduate school in marine affairs.

1. Hollenbeck, Julie “En Sus Propias Palabras/In their Own Words” ( Will be distributed-30 minutes)
2. Hollenbeck, Julie. “Kuna Marine Resource Use”

This movie examines marine overexploitation and the possible connection to the Kuna’s Social, Cultural and Spiritual Beliefs. It contains a brief history of the Kuna society and their changing exploitation of the natural resources around them and how it is impacting their own survival as a people. (Will be distributed – 11 minutes)

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **January 4-**

Final Planning/Preparation meeting at the University of Miami

10am-1pm- Meet in Ferré Bldg. (1<sup>st</sup> floor classroom) for overview, discussion of course requirements, health and safety protocol, packing/planning & preparation, and educational and learning activities in the field. Everyone will share all contact information and pose any last minute questions or concerns.

#### **January 5**

Depart Miami International Airport for Panama City

Van/driver will transport to hotel and rent van/driver for 24 hrs while in Panama City

Shop for food supplies, water and essential needs

Verify plane transport to Ticantiki

Pack supplies

Class dinner in Panama City and prepare for very early morning departure from hotel

#### **January 6**

Depart early morning (usually around 5:00am) for flight to San Blas- boat pick up to transport to the island.

Arrive Ticantiki and meet with the leaders to receive official welcoming

All enter the *Congreso* to establish living arrangements

Meet host families and settle in

Fix up course site- meeting site for nightly discussions

Lunch/Dinner as group (cooking arrangements to be determined on island)

#### **January 7- 13**

On island activities and meetings are being organized with local leaders and community participants.

Beware! The Kuna’s rise well before 6:00 am and if the movement of people in the household will not wake you the crowing roosters certainly will. Remember, there is no electricity so flashlights lead the way through the community. We will have nightly course meetings to review daily activities, discuss new

things learned and present any concerns. Students are expected to keep journal, log book and capture important information to share with their classmates. On island activities will include such things as: A visit with the health center (we will have access to the health center and related activities of immunization, well care, prenatal care, treatment), as well as opportunity to meet with non western medicine practitioners (herbalist); participate in school activities and the community has already asked if there are any UM students that would be willing to teach an English class for a few days. There are many activities that will be available for students to explore and learn more about the political economy and lifestyles of *Kuna Yala* that contribute to their development.

#### **January 14**

Early flight departure from Ticantiki to Panama City-

Van pick up at airport transport to hotel

Clean up/rest

Visit Panama Canal and the Canal Zone

End of the course summation discussion at dinner

#### **January 15**

Depart Panama City for Miami

Return home and continue the reflections