

Ecology, Community, and Indigenous Spirituality in the High Amazon

Program: Peru: High Amazon

Department: Anthropology

Course #: ANTH 396P

Credits: 4

Term: Winter 2009-2010

Dates: December 27, 2009-January 17, 2010

Living Routes Faculty: Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, PhD and Gillian Goslinga, PhD

Program Overview

The *Ecology, Community, and Indigenous Spirituality in the High Amazon* course is designed to give students a Quechua-Lamista experience of how these indigenous peoples of the Peruvian High Amazon understand and live the links between ecological, spiritual, and community health. Over the course of 21 days students will alternatively live in Quechua-Lamista communities, work with native farmers on sustainable agriculture, and ritually participate in Quechua-Lamista modalities of relating to the other-than-human living world (meaning the local ecology and spiritual energies that animate flora and fauna and with whom the Quechua-Lamista converse).

Seminars will prepare students for these immersion experiences while grounding their encounter in a political history of the region and the Quechua-Lamista struggle to not only retain cultural autonomy and protect their lands from encroachment, but also to “talk back” to global systems of capitalism and political organization. Students will learn to understand their personal experiences of cultural shock as an historical aspect of the politics of encounter between modern and non-modern modes of inhabiting life. The primary goal of the program is an immersion in a worldview that holds transformational possibilities for how to build inclusive and sustainable community based on principles of mutual respect, transparent dialoguing, and group process.

An initial five days of seminar intensives are followed by three immersion activities: a stay with Quechua-Lamista communities where students will be introduced and contribute to the rhythms of village life; a stay working with an indigenous farmer organization where students will engage in sustainable agriculture/forest regeneration, and a *dieta*, an indigenous shamanic contemplative retreat in the forest used to access knowledge of self in relation to the living world. All three immersions will combine to give students an integrated understanding of the links between ecological, spiritual and community health as experienced and practiced by the Quechua-Lamistas. Workshops in between activities will serve as spaces where these experiences of encounter will be processed.

Course Objectives

- Give students an integrated understanding of the links between ecological, spiritual and community health.
- Learn new ways to access knowledge of self in relation to the living world.
- Motivate students to find ways of creating effective solidarity actions between North and South.
- Understand the forces behind deforestation and learn ways to improve the situation with sustainable agriculture.
- Share and discuss with indigenous and mestizo farmers techniques that hold promise for an alternative to traditional slash and burn agriculture.
- Understand the role of forest burning and deforestation in the production of CO₂ and the climate crisis.
- Learn to create community across cultural, historical, and social differences.
- Learn effective ways of translating and communicating one's experience back home.

Learning Modalities

This course uses lectures, seminars, discussions, readings, site visits, small group work, hands-on student generated projects and cultural immersions as key strategies for allowing each student to develop mastery of course content.

Course Schedule

Note: The following program schedule is tentative and will be finalized by late August 2009 after the instructors conduct the final site visits.

Date	Location	Unit	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
27	Lima/Lamas	Arrival and welcome, rest	All attend		
28		Orientation/Community Building			
29		Language study and seminars			
30		Group allocations			
31					
1	Lamas	<i>Free day</i>			
2	Stays	Immersion #1	Community Stay	Retreat in forest	Agro-forestry (& tree planting)
3		Students pack and travel the night of the 1 st Jan			
4		4 nights stays, return to Lamas 5 th day am			
5	Lamas	Language refresh and group debriefings	All attend		
6	Stays	Immersion #2	Agro-forestry (& tree planting)	Community Stay	Retreat in forest
7		Students pack and travel the night of the 5 th Jan. 4 nights stays, return to Lamas 5 th day am			
8					
9	Lamas	Language refresh and group debriefings	All attend		
10	<i>Free day</i>				
11	Stays	Immersion #3	Retreat in forest	Agro-forestry (& tree planting)	Community Stay
12		Students pack and travel the night of the 10 th Jan			
13					

		4 nights stays, return to Lamas 5 th day am			
14	Lamas	Community debriefing	Project Proposals	Free evening	
15		Writing/Study			
16		Writing/study		Presentations and wrap up party	
17	Lamas/Lima	Packing and return home			

Schedule of Seminar Intensives

Date	8-10 AM	10:15 – 12:00 PM	2-4:30 PM	7-9 PM
27	Travel and arrival by 5 pm			Quechua welcoming ceremony/group building
28	Group building/ Orientation to curriculum	History of the Region	The Politics of Regeneration	Shamanism as Political Ecology
29	Language study	Study period	Regeneration and the Forest	Food as Medicine
30	Language study	Study period	12:30 PM Departure Takiwasi Center: Plants as Healers	Ritual and Community (Shunku Center)
31	Language study	Study period	Global Networks and Solidarity Economy	Group allocations/Preliminary Proposals, and New Year's Eve Party!

Post Immersion #1

Date	8-10 AM	10:15 – 12:00 PM	2-3:15 PM	3:30-4:30 PM	7-9 PM
5	Return to Lamas	Individual Group debriefs	Study Period	Language Refresh	Community Learning Analysis (all attend)

Post Immersion #2

9	Return to Lamas	Individual Group Debriefs	Study Period	Language Refresh	Community Learning Analysis (all attend)
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Post -Immersion #3

14	Return to Lamas	Individual Group Debriefs	Community Learning Analysis (all attend)	Final Group Proposals
15	Group projects and writing/study			
16	Group projects and writing/study		Group Presentations 1 – 7 pm	Wrap up celebrations!

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to complete all assigned readings in preparation for the seminar intensives, to keep and be willing to share with the group a journal of reflections on their feelings, observations, and visceral reactions of culture shock, participate in group building activities intended to create community both with Quechua-Lamistas and other (*mestizo*) local peoples as well as amongst themselves, and to create a final project that could take any of the following three forms:

1. Regeneration and Community: Create, perform and write about a community ritual with a focus that emerged from the stays;

2. Cultural Translation and its Politics: Take something experienced and come up with a way to communicate this experience to the folks back home;
3. Political Activism and Solidarity Economy: Draft an actionable plan for a North/South Coalition to address an issue encountered in collaboration with the Quechua-Lamistas and local mestizos.

As an accompaniment to these final projects, students will write a 5-7 page learning analysis critically reflecting on their immersion experience and the process of creating their final projects that will also draw on seminar readings and notes.

Grading

In this course faculty actively promote multiple means of evaluation and authentic assessment including student self-assessment, peer assessment, faculty-student debriefs and rubrics. In order for students to receive credit for this program through the University of Massachusetts, the faculty will submit a letter grade and written evaluation of each student's learning.

Bibliography

The course bibliography will be posted in late August of 2009