

## **Research in Action in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**

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June 2-July 1, 2016

### **Course Description**

This six-credit bearing service learning program explores the intersection of social science research techniques in the service of the work of community-based organizations, think tanks, and government agencies to document and address social justice concerns in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Its main goal is to build student capacity to conduct rigorous social science research while grasping how research interacts with the making of policies and activist organizing. Student participants will be matched with one of our host organizations, which will involve them for most of the regular week in activities related to addressing their ongoing organizing, activist, or research needs and which may include fieldwork, data analysis, and the development of evaluations of existing programs. In addition, one day of the week will be devoted to a seminar on social justice research techniques taught by Professor Decena and to additional activities (coordinated by Professors Decena and Portorreal) to acquaint students with current challenges and promising lines of inquiry for future work they might want to undertake. Seminar sessions will be guided by readings available in advance and will move between considerations of specific topics as well as by insights drawn from ongoing student field experiences. The final grade will be based on the evaluation provided by the institutional liaison on the internship work of the student as well as by the Director's evaluation of a final paper to be submitted no later than one week after returning from the Dominican Republic.

### **Course Objectives and Expectations**

This course is designed as part of Rutgers Study Abroad/International Service Learning programs. Students will learn much about Dominican society through their daily interactions, but much of the deeper learning that will occur will be focused on various institutional cultures: governmental, non-profit, research, etc. A key element in the student learning experience will go beyond the exercise of living in another society to the challenge of making engaged research practice a viable part of their training, quotidian experience, and contribution. My objectives are that students will learn the following:

- To develop familiarity with various social science research techniques, from quantitative to qualitative.
- Learn about Dominican institutional cultures ranging from the workings of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to offices of the state, think tanks, etc.
- Come to understand the realities of life in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, with a special emphasis on social justice concerns;
- Learn about social justice issues in the Dominican Republic to better understand the challenges and solutions provided in the context of this evolving society;

- Develop a multinational perspective on social justice activism and research as they operate in the Dominican Republic in comparison with the United States, with a special emphasis on poverty and the plight of Afro-identified populations;
- Improve their Spanish language skills through class work, internship experiences, and cultural immersion activities;
- Participate wholeheartedly in service projects dedicated to helping local communities;
- Reflect on the service learning experiences in the form of diaries so that students record and integrate their service learning experiences with classroom learning;
- Face the challenges of life in a foreign culture with humor and graciousness, showing a respect for local customs and a maturity to deal with the inevitable hardships that will arise;
- Act as ambassadors for Rutgers University and their country, remembering at all times that they are guests in another land.
- Develop awareness and knowledge of prevailing world conditions and developments and their causes, particularly in terms of recognizing and analyzing asymmetries of power at the interpersonal, community, national, and global level.
- Identify complex, macro-level economic, social, and cultural processes of globalization at work in the context of host community, and connect them to lived experiences of individuals and communities, recognizing many different forms of agency, resistance, resilience, and ingenuity.
- Grapple with the tensions and paradoxes of international “service” and volunteering, critically examining assumptions and expectations about one’s own role and impacts as an outsider in a community-driven effort.
- Recognize, appreciate and engage local perspectives, beliefs, and forms of knowledge with respect and humility.

This course utilizes several unique approaches to learning that are not common in traditional classroom courses. As such, they will require different demands of you as participants in the course.

**Experiential Learning:** Community-based service learning is highly experiential, meaning you may learn in ways that are informal and unstructured, and at times unexpected. By learning in the world, it is important that you appreciate the lack of clear-cut answers to deeply structural problems, and that you also develop the habit of critically evaluating the sources from which new knowledge is drawn and actively engage in the consideration of its validity/bias.

**Global/Intercultural Learning:** Crossing boundaries of culture, class, and language is a critical part of studying abroad, but it can also pose great challenges. In the Dominican Republic, you will be confronted with things that do not conform to your ways of seeing, knowing, or living. Try to embrace new perspectives and experiences, while showing respect for local customs and bearing in mind that no one cultural lens is sufficient for understanding the full human experience. When the challenges of life in a foreign culture inevitably arise, it is important to face them with humor and graciousness, and to be mindful of your position as a guest in someone’s home or community.

**Community-based Learning:** Community-based learning begins with the understanding that communities serve not as recipients of your charity or as backdrops for your service “adventure”, but as

co-educators, equal partners, and hosts. This requires being open to listening and learning from a variety of eclectic and non-traditional sources, including community workers, local residents, homestay families, and your peers. Therefore, listen actively and empathetically to those you speak with, and treat every person as a potential source of new knowledge and understanding.

**Reflection:** As mentioned above, experiential learning does not produce predictable or clear-cut learning outcomes. Therefore, the course will rely heavily on reflective activities and assignments designed to help piece together teachable moments into greater learning outcomes and connect them to the academic goals of the course. All forms of reflective practice require that you be active, thoughtful, and critically engaged in your own learning. It is your responsibility as a student in this course to think critically and self-reflexively about what you experience on a day-to-day basis.

### **Requirements and Grading**

Students receive grades through the Rutgers Study Abroad Program. One of my roles as Faculty Director is to assist you in transferring those credits and grades to fit with particular curricular requirements.

Course outcomes are assessed using the following methods:

- Faculty review of students' reaction papers to assigned readings
- Faculty review of student journals on their learning experiences
- Quality of student participation in the various seminars and program activities
- Faculty and organizational assessment of student internship work experience and contributions
- Student post-program evaluations of the experience (quantitative and qualitative)
- Student post-program essay that assesses what their learning on multiple dimensions

**Disciplinary policy:** There is a zero tolerance policy for student misbehavior while on this trip. The Dominican Republic is a more socially conservative society than the U.S., and you should conduct yourselves accordingly. I do not regularly supervise participants' behavior outside of class activities; any reports of students getting into trouble with program partners, internship sites, and local authorities may result in disciplinary action, possibly including the student returning home immediately and receiving a failing grade in the class. Students should know and abide by the Rutgers University academic honesty policy in preparing course work. Students are required to sign a Behavior Policy form.

### **EXPECTATIONS**

- Students are expected to do all the assigned readings for each class meeting.
- Students must keep a journal of their daily lives as well as their community service experiences. Highlights from the journal will be shared with other students and the professor during our weekly meetings. Anecdotes from the journals should also help students develop their reaction papers.
- Students write brief (3 page) reaction papers to each week's readings. These "reactions" should also engage formally the experiences recorded in your journals.

**The two text books for the course, Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and Malkki's *The Need to Help* are covered by the program. All additional readings for the class will be available in our sakai portal.**

**Assignments and Evaluation:** Assignments should be typed, double-spaced, and submitted on the dates indicated. The grades are determined as follows:

- **Participation** (20 %) – Students are expected to attend and participate in all meetings, class events, and group research exercises including research and service activities.
- **Journals** (20 %) – Students keep daily journals/diaries in which they reflect on their experiences doing fieldwork and service. In addition, students share their observations and reflections verbally in weekly group discussions and include reflections drawn from their journals in their reaction papers.
- **Internship site evaluation** (20%) – This final evaluation will be completed in conjunction with the internship partners and contact persons and in collaboration with the student. The goal is to provide everyone (the students, the internship partners, the faculty) on the strengths and elements that need improvement in the experience.
- **Weekly Assignments** (20%) – Students write brief reaction papers to the assigned readings or carry out small projects related to their internship work. To be discussed, carried out, and submitted in groups.
- **Final Paper** (20 %) –After the program, each student writes a 12-15 page final paper that reflects on the learning and growth that occurred as a result of all the activities in the program.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

[**Note:** Students must note that there will need to be some flexibility from week to week, given that our partner/host organizations will work with the Director/Co-Director in the development of specific programs for the delegation. In some cases, our seminar sessions and weekend time will be reduced in order to ensure we can make space for overall program activities. To the degree possible, Sundays will be left open for students to rest and catch up on journals and other work of their internships.]

## ARRIVAL WEEK AND OPENING ACTIVITIES

2 June 2016.	Student arrivals to Hostal Los Jensen
3 June 2016.	Morning Introduction and Decolonial Tour, Zona Colonial (Decena & Portorreal) 1:30-4 pm, Participant Observation, Escuela Vocacional de Las Ciénagas (Participación Ciudadana) 5:30 pm, Departure to CONAMUCA in San Cristóbal, Dominican Republic, from Hostal Los Jensen in Santo Domingo
4 to 5 June.	Training in Social Science Methods, Introduction to CONAMUCA, Social Activities. Evening arrival, Hostal Los Jensen.
READINGS:	Short readings by Professor Portorreal, in SAKAI

## WEEK I

6 June.	9-12 Welcome and Introduction Program, Participación Ciudadana 2-4 pm Meeting with COIN (Potential Interns and Decena only to meet with Dr. Paulino, COIN)
7 June.	9-11:30 am Welcome and Introduction Program, Niños de Camino 11:30-12:30 Lunch with team Niños de Camino

1:30-4 pm Welcome and Introduction Program, Centro Niñez Feliz  
8 June. Start of Internship Assignments (Participación, COIN, CENIFE, Niños de Camino)  
9 June. Internship Assignments  
10 June CENIFE Levantamiento, Bonao  
Activity at UASD University to be confirmed for the rest of delegation

**11 June JOURNALS WEEK I DUE**

Class meeting, TIME TO BE DECIDED, (3 hours)

READINGS: Díaz, up to page 50  
Malkki, Introduction and Chapter 1 (1-52)

12 June [To be confirmed] 9-1, Encuentro coordinadores de la Red de Observadores de PC

**WEEK II**

13 June 10-12 Appointment with Jonathan Baro, Trata de Personas  
Internship Activities, Wk 2  
14 June 9-12 Appointment with the National Police  
Internship Activities, Wk 2  
15 June Internship Activities, Wk 2  
CENIFE: Levantamiento, Baní  
16 June Internship Activities, Wk 2  
17 June CENIFE: Levantamiento, La Vega

Class meeting, TIME TO BE DECIDED, (3 hours)

READINGS: Díaz, 51-140  
Malkki, Chapters 2 and 3 (53-104)

**18 June Journals Week II DUE**

19 June FREE

**WEEK III**

20 June Internship Activities, Wk 3  
21 June Internship Activities, Wk 3  
22 June Internship Activities, Wk 3  
CENIFE: Taller mitigación desastres  
23 June Internship Activities, Wk 3  
24 June Class and visit, Museo del Hombre Dominicano  
READINGS: Díaz, 141-201  
Malkki, Chapters 4 and 5, 105-164

25 June CENIFE: Operativo médico

**26 June Journals Week III DUE**

FREE

**WEEK IV**

27 June Internship Activities, Wk 4

28 June	Internship Activities, Wk 4
29 June	Internship Activities, Wk 4
30 June	Final Internship Day; Evaluations and Closeout CLASS READINGS: Díaz, 204-end Malkki, Chapter 6 and Conclusion (165-208)
1 July	Final Class; Closing and Departures
<b>5 July</b>	<b>Journals Week IV DUE</b>
<b>8 JULY 2016</b>	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE FOR CLASS</b>