

Credits: 1.00

BSC 3931L
Special Topics in Biology Lab: Tropical Ecology - Study Abroad in Costa Rica
Natural Science Department

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Academic Department

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STUDY ABROAD APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Approval for participation in the program is subject to the participant:

- being a college student with a high school diploma
- being in good academic standing at the time of application (cannot be on academic warning, probation or suspension)
- being enrolled for credit in an approved study abroad program course
- interviewing with program's lead faculty member
- being approved by the Center for International Programs-paying all deposits and fees according to the fee schedule

The program plan for this class (class meetings and activities, etc.) meets the requirement of 47 contact hours for the course.

Requisites

Prerequisite: BSC 2011 and BSC 2011L.

Corequisite: BSC 3931. Please note that students who withdraw from lecture or lab will be withdrawn from the appropriate corequisite course (BSC 3931).

Course Description

This course is an open format lab course designed to address the needs and interests of the students as well as provide an opportunity to focus on current biological science techniques. Topics may vary from semester to semester but will be limited to a laboratory or field study format.

Course Schedule

Course Dates: 5/13 to 6/19/2026

Pre-program class meetings:

- Lecture: Wednesday (5/13), Thursday (5/14)
- Optional Weekend Sampling Field Trip to Florida Keys Friday (5/15) – Sunday (5/17)
- Data Analysis: Monday (5/18)
- Student Presentations: Tuesday (5/19)

Exam (online): 5/20-5/22
Travel Dates: May 26- June 3, 2026

Post-program class meeting: Friday, 6/5

Final project submission: June 16th by 11:59 pm via MyCourses

Course Content

The following are topics that will be discussed during this course before and during the program.

- Basic ecological and evolutionary concepts
- Coral reef ecology
- Sampling techniques and data collection
- Estuary ecology and mangroves
- Forest ecology
- Organismal biology: local flora and fauna found in Galapagos
- Conservation of many of the ecosystems above

Major Learning Outcomes and Objectives

1. The student will explain basic concepts in tropical ecology and demonstrate selected skills within the biological sciences by:

- a. explaining past and current advancements in tropical ecology.
- b. identifying the relationship between techniques used to study tropical ecology and the core techniques/skills learned in the biological science curriculum.

2. The student will demonstrate the ability to perform and apply current techniques/skills in tropical ecology by:

- a. analyzing, summarizing and critiquing research results relevant to techniques/skills in the topic.
- b. presenting methods and developing protocols in an oral and or written communication format.
- c. actively participating in weekly discussions focused on tropical ecology.

Criteria Performance Standard

Upon successful completion of the course the student will, with a minimum of 70% accuracy, demonstrate mastery of each of the above stated objectives through classroom measures developed by individual course instructors.

Assignments and Grading

Paper discussions during the program = 25%

Show & Tell = 25%

Field Notebook = 25%

Participation = 25%

Assignments are due or to be taken on the date assigned. No late work will be accepted.

Textbook

There is no required textbook for this course. All lecture material will be provided to the student through MyCourses and peer-reviewed articles will either be posted on MyCourses or obtained through SPC's online library.

Attendance

For this class, attendance is mandatory for all required activities before and during the program and will be used to determine active participation in the course. Assignments will not be permitted to be submitted late due to an absence. Tardiness **will not** be tolerated. We leave promptly at varying times and will leave without you. As we will not be going back to one place, you will have to find your way to us on your own. To ensure you know the start time each day, you will be told the night before the time to meet the next morning, and make sure to check our group chat in WhatsApp. For our pre-program classes, you must be there on time and ready to take notes and participate in the discussion. You are allowed to miss one pre-program lecture due to an excused absence. An excused absence is one that is verifiable with written documentation. You are still responsible for all material covered during class. If you have more than one absence for the pre-program lectures that are either excused or unexcused, you will be in violation of the attendance policy and a non-participating grade (WF) will be entered into PeopleSoft.

Expectations

Academic Integrity: SPC has an official policy on academic honesty and proper classroom behavior. We take this subject very seriously and **WILL NOT** tolerate academic dishonesty or inappropriate/disruptive behavior in the classroom. College policy states that a first offense (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) the **minimum** consequence is a "zero" for the assignment with no possibility of replacing the score. In addition, a report is made to the Academic Integrity Committee. This may not go onto the student's transcript, but, should a second offense occur, the student is then subject to expulsion from school. It is important to remember that everyone's goal should be to learn. Behavior that impedes the learning process of others will not be tolerated. Disruptive classroom behavior is any behavior that impedes the teaching/learning process, which includes talking or text-messaging during class, leaving before class ends, etc. Students are expected to be actively engaged in the learning process.

All **electronic devices** (cellular phones, laptops, iPods, etc.) are to be turned off before the class starts. Use of these devices during all scheduled class activities is allowed for class use only as requested by the professor. During unscheduled classroom activities or in the vans, you are allowed to use your devices.

Be on time. If you are late, we **will** leave without you, and it will count as an **unexcused absence**. You will receive a zero for that day's participation. Worse than that, if we are not returning to that location, you will be responsible for finding your way to us on your own.

Be prepared for rough conditions. This is a field course where every day you will be outside. The weather will be hot, buggy, and wet. You will be on your feet all day and you need to be in good physical condition to be able to participate in the activities. We walk for many hours sometimes over rough terrain and will be biking and snorkeling. Field clothes are expected to be worn on all field activities. This includes proper shoes (either closed-toed, fins, or sandals depending upon activity), sunscreen, hats, appropriate swimwear and bug spray. Points will be deducted for each activity that a student is not prepared for.

Stay hydrated. You must bring a refillable water bottle with you (BPA free).

Take care of your trash and do not litter. Since this is an environmental awareness course, please be mindful of your impact on the ecosystem. Put trash in its proper place and recycle when you can!!!! Points will be deducted if littering occurs.

You are representing SPC abroad. You must be on your **best behavior** which includes language used (no profanity), not talking while a professor, another student, or our guide is talking, respecting each other and everyone we come into contact with, wearing appropriate clothing and swimwear, staying with the group at all times, abstaining from possession and/or consumption of any type of intoxicants between event departure and return times, and removing yourself from the company of anyone indulging in intoxicants. Violations will result in the following disciplinary action (but not limited to): receiving a zero in the course, returning immediately from Galapagos at your own expense, and reimbursement to the college of funds expended on your behalf. *(In addition, you will be reported to your site Associate Provost for further disciplinary action.)*

Smoking is not allowed during scheduled class activities.

Special Accommodations

If you anticipate requesting of the Learning Specialist an accommodation for a documented disability, it is important to notify the International Programs office as soon as possible that you plan to make a request. Please also make an appointment with the Learning Specialist on campus to make your request as soon as possible. The Learning Specialist can be reached at 791-2628 or 791-2710 (CL), 341-4758 (SP/G), 394-6108 (SE), 712-5789 (TS), or 341-4532 (AC).

The instructor reserves the right to make changes where necessary to the schedule and assignments. Changes will be announced in class and/or MyCourses. (Students need to check MyCourses regularly for course information and are responsible to note any changes.)

Packing List

- Snorkel gear – mask, fins, and snorkel
- Bathing suit
- Beach towel
- Closed-toed shoes
- Sandals, hiking shoes
- Sunscreen (w/out oxybenzone)
- Mosquito repellent
- Sunglasses
- Shirts
- Shorts
- Sleepwear
- Toiletries
- Hat/visor if you want one
- Undergarments

- Socks
- Field notebook
- Camera w/ charger
- Pencil/Pen
- Laptop if you would like to take it w/ charger
- Reusable water bottle
- Money for grocery store and restaurants
- Cell phone charger
- Passport