Global Community Development: Service Learning

Service Project in Belize

Summer Session I, 2016

*Previous* Course Numbers, ECON 410VH(3), ECON 410V(3), WCOB 410VH(3), WCOB 410V(3), WCOB210VH(3), WCOB 210V(3)

**Instructors:**

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**Prerequisite(s)**: Approval from Study Abroad to participate in the Community Development Service Learning Program in Belize, Summer 2016.

**Upper-Level Credit:** To earn upper-level (WCOB 330V) credit, the student must complete the undergraduate business core before the course begins. In addition, the student is required to write an additional paper comparing and contrasting at least three differences in the informal institutions (culture, norms, etc.) between Belize and the United States and how those differences affect economic development differently in the two countries.

**Honors Credit:**  To earn honors credit (WCOB 330VH), the student must assume a leadership position in one or more of the projects and execute the project successfully. In addition, expectations for the course reports and papers will be high and will be graded at a higher level than non-honors students.

**Course Meeting Times:** The official class begins May 16, 2016. Classes in Fayetteville begin at 9am and could go as long as 4pm each day May 16 through May 19. Be prepared to meet for the full time. A part-time job is not an excuse for missing class sessions and work time. Travel to Belize is on Sunday May 22, and we return Saturday June 11. In addition, the business group will begin once per week for four weeks in March/April to discuss readings. Details of class meetings are listed below.

### COURSE PURPOSE

### This course focuses on the development, revision, implementation, and evaluation of projects in Belize designed to improve personal, social, and economic well-being of community members. The community projects are intended to be sustainable partnerships between students and the community members, with the community members continuing and building upon the initiated activities after the students have left Belize. Students will interact with community members, businesses, schools, and agencies as needed to meet the goals and objectives of the course.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to demonstrate achievement of the following educational objectives:

1. Gain knowledge of the historical, economic, political, and social dimensions of Belize.
2. Think creatively and use problem solving skills to develop or revise material for use in community development projects.
3. Utilize leadership skills and the ability to creatively adapt to unforeseen challenges and barriers while organizing and implementing projects. Honors students are required to take a leadership role in at least one project.
4. Deepen knowledge of business disciplines including economic development, marketing, accounting, finance and business planning.
5. Assess the economic viability and sustainability of particular projects with an understanding of how that relates back to public versus private goods.
6. Develop an appreciation for different cultures and living standards, and understand the relationship between cultural factors and economic outcomes.
7. COURSE READINGS

Readings are assigned on a weekly basis in March and/or April 2016. We will meet each week to discuss each of these articles.

* Wilson, Patricia, “Empowerment: Community Economic Development from the Inside Out.” *Urban Studies*, 1996 33(4-5), 617-630.
* Yeager, Timothy J. Chapters 1 and 3 of *Institutions, Transition Economies, and Economic Development*. Westview Press, 1998.
* Yunus, Mohammad, “Grameen Bank, Microcredit and Millennium Development Goals,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 4, 2004.
* Yeager, Timothy J. Chapters 4 and 5 of *Institutions, Transition Economies, and Economic Development*. Westview Press, 1998.

1. PROJECTS

The business team is expected to participate in several projects, including microlending, Cayes to Business, classroom teaching, and computer training. We will finalize and discuss these projects with you as they evolve.

1. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are required to familiarize themselves with the Academic Honesty policies set forth by University of Arkansas. These guidelines can be found in the current Catalog of Studies.

All assignments should be prepared specifically for this course, and should not have been used in any other course. All paraphrasing or quoting of others’ work should be properly referenced.

Questions about academic responsibility, plagiarism, cheating, etc. will be resolved in accordance with established University regulations. Cases in which there is evidence of cheating will result in penalties ranging from zero on an exam, paper or assignment, to University disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty is taken very seriously and will not be tolerated in any fashion.

1. TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

As has been practiced in this Special Topics Course since 2007 we will use a problem-based, service learning approach to teaching, combined with lectures on factual content. One of our goals is to promote student responsibility and engagement through a collaborative approach. A cohesive, respectful, and supportive atmosphere helps students to feel safe in asking questions and contributing actively to discussions. Another goal is to help students understand the relevance of theory, policy, research, and other academic material to business practice. Instructors approach this goal through the use of real practice examples, classroom experiences, and student projects that illustrate academic content. The classroom sessions include lecture/discussion, activities, work in small groups, oral reports/presentations, and problem-solving and analysis. Attendance and full participation in each class is expected. Students must receive permission from one of the instructors in advance of missing a class.

1. **COURSE EVALUATION AND GRADING**

Grading for each course component is explained below. Percentages are tentative and may be altered by the instructor.

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| Component | % |
| Spring semester and summer pre-departure written summaries and meeting participation (includes both attendance and professional contributions to discussions) | 10 |
| Development of Project Materials, Pre-departure | 10 |
| Pre-departure expectations writing assignment | 5 |
| Report to the Mayor, due upon departure from Belize | 5 |
| Project and economic institutions reports, due no later than June 26 | 25 |
| Personal Statement due no later than June 26 | 10 |
| Management and execution of projects led by the student | 35 |

1. **CLASSROOM POLICIES**

* Religious Observances: Although Christian religious holidays are reflected to some extent in the academic calendar of the University, holidays of other religious groups are not. If you are a member of another religion and you wish to be excused from class for religious reasons, you are expected to provide your instructors in writing before the end of the first week of classes with a schedule of religious holidays you intend to observe.
* Inclement Weather Policy: Barring floods or earthquakes in Belize for this year, none should be applicable.
* Accommodations: If you have a need, for which you will request reasonable accommodation, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities at 479-575-3104 (Voice) - 479-575-3646 (TTY) or on the web at <http://www.uark.edu/ua/csd/>.
* All policies and requirements of the Belize Study Abroad program apply fully to business students.

1. **The (NOT SO) FINAL WORD**

**It’s all about you**. We expect that you will find this course/experience to be like none you have ever had before. This course is unique in that YOU are in charge, faculty are facilitators. Taking a “back seat” approach before or during the in-country experience will greatly hinder your ability to complete tasks. It will also hinder your ability to grow through this experience. Should we see you eying that back seat, expect instructors to nudge you to the front.

**It’s all about the team.** While in most classes, your activities don’t generally impact (aside from group projects) the success of others in your class, this course is different. Your actions (or sometimes inactions) can have great consequences--both positive and negative--on not only your experience, but on the experience of other students this year and even our ability to offer this course in the future. Think before you act and work together as a community. Show respect for yourself, your fellow students, the University, and Belizeans at all times.

**Belize Community Development Project Academic Content**

Although the Belize Study Abroad program is a service learning course, there is a significant academic content. The academic content primarily comes from pre-course readings (listed on the syllabus) and post-course writing assignments, multi-discipline presentations in the week prior to our departure to Belize, and project preparation. Tim Yeager has participated in the program for five years, and Molly Jensen for four years. Each faculty bring different talents to the class. Tim’s focus is on economic development in developing countries. Molly’s is on service learning and community partnerships.

In the spring semester prior to the summer trip, we meet with students for four or five sessions to discuss different aspects of community development. Students learn that community development is about empowerment of the community, not about doing things for others. They understand that the projects we undertake are partnerships where the students’ job is to enable people in the community to accomplish more than they otherwise might—not to do it for them. We also devote considerable time to the New Institutional Economics theory of economic development. Professor Yeager was fortunate to have studied under Nobel Laureate Douglass North at Washington University in St. Louis, who was the main contributor to this theory. Students learn the basics of this theory, which stresses that economic development is a complex interaction of the formal rules of society, the culture, and the enforcement mechanisms. Upper-level students must write a paper upon their return from Belize identifying three cultural differences between the US and Belize and how those differences impact economic development in Belize. Finally, we spend some time discussing the roots of microlending. Students learn what is meant by microlending and how it is typically structured.

Because the Belize program is multidisciplinary, student do basic reading on various topics and hear presentations in the week prior to departure from faculty on ecology, anthropology, engineering, health care, social work, and education. They learn about the ecological challenges of Belize, the efforts to treat water systems, and AIDS prevention strategies, among others. It is a fascinating set of topics where even the faculty learn a great deal because we are absorbing content from outside of our areas of expertise.

Finally, students spend the week prior to departure preparing for their projects. In doing so, they learn or review the basics of marketing, finance and banking, accounting, and business planning. Many students have never put together a business plan, yet they are expected to walk people though one in Belize! This is a great motivator for learning. We also bring in guest speakers from the Writing Center where students receive tips to improve their business writing, and from the Center for Economic Education where students learn techniques for teaching economics to middle-school children.

Despite this academic preparation, the really deep experiential learning occurs in Belize where students lead their projects, make several oral presentations, teach in the classrooms, observe the rules and culture of Belize, decide whose business plan is worthy of a loan, celebrate their successes, and learn from their failures. Students are assessed through observation, community and project written reports, article reflection papers, and pre and post expectation papers.

All students are encouraged, and honors students are required, to take a leadership role during the trip. Typically they choose one project to manage. Faculty are facilitators; students do the planning and the work. The honors student is responsible for the final written report for the project, organizing other students and any in-country logistics.

Students always comment on their personal growth during the program. They report increased confidence and clearer career goals as a result of this experience. Many receive internships or jobs because this experience sets them apart. What an outstanding opportunity for a young adult!