FIELDWORK IN COASTAL CULTURE:
MAF 505-506 3 CREDITS

8-16 March  Spring Break 2013

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TA Courtney Avery

Through this fieldwork course you gain an understanding of coastal cultures while learning first-hand how to do ethnographic political ecology fieldwork. The course will take place over Spring Break 2013, the fourth Spring expedition to participate in the social analysis of the Guna’s indigenous coastal culture, in coordination with the ongoing Fair Trade and Public Health projects of Prof. Sherri Porcelain among the Guna. Students practice keeping a daily field journal, field notes from interviews, and complimenting entries with visual anthropological.

Itinerary:
Prior to going, we meet to assemble our Course Reader, everyone
contributing four relevant articles (see Reading below). This becomes our background reading and the subject of an exam before the field.

We will be flying into Panama City, then the next morning on to Niadub (Tikantaki) in the San Blas Islands for the week, staying with families among the indigenous Guna (Kuna) on this island where there still are no tourist facilities.

At our nightly seminar class and group dinners, everyone will discuss that day’s various interviews and observations, and examine their growing use of political ecology field methods.

**Objectives:**
We will be participating in the lives of the San Blas Guna, living in homestays, and attending the Congreso--their community organization that’s at the core of their indigenous religion. The course objectives are gaining an understanding of interactions among the various community and regional, national and international interest groups involved with Guna indigenous rights and access to coastal resources.

Locals will join in helping to translate their cultural perspectives. We will interact with the women, who sew molas for their families and for Fair Trade; men who fish; high school students who must travel to another island to study during the week; traditional healers; professionals in the school and clinic; leaders of the village Congreso; Guna indigenous rights advocates; coconut buyer middlemen who deal with itinerant Colombian boat traders; and those hoping to construct local tourism in the future. This ethnographic fieldwork experience lets you learn the political ecology approach.

You will carry out detailed, open-ended, life and work histories on a select research topic in the field. You write up your rough, interview notes each night into a coherent, fleshed out field journal. Note that your daily notes while interviewing people are just the raw material that you share in nightly class seminars. You also create a social network file, and

Once back in Miami, you utilize your field journal to write a ten-page research proposal posing political ecology questions set within the
framework gained during your exploratory field trip. The classic five-part proposal format is: statement of issue, historical and social background, hypotheses, methodology, and conclusions.

Our last class is held at the professor’s house to turn in your journals, present your research proposals, and share photographs and food from Guna culture.

**GRADING CRITERIA:**

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class/Field Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Journal of Interviews and Observations</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Network File</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay Exam on reading</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal and Presentation (10 pages)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**COST:** $1200 (travel package includes all food, lodging and In-country transportation, and visit to the Panama Canal; excludes international airfare and exit fee)

**Required Reading:**

*The Art of Being Kuna: Layers of Meaning Among the Kuna of Panama.* Mari Lyn Salvador (editor). UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History

**Course Reader**

In mid February, at our first class meeting, each student, who has carried out library and internet research, offers 4 articles for potential selection by the group for our Reader. Three of the articles are to be from anthropological journals and books. The fourth article is to address either San Blas environmental or national indigenous rights political issues.

As a group, we assemble our Course Reader, mandatory pre-travel reading and the subject of an exam.
Travel Tips and Packing Recommendations

Essential Travel Tips:
Purchase Divers Alert Network (DAN) basic $30 membership, or carry equivalent UM travel insurance to provide worldwide emergency medical evacuation.

Wear only jewelry and watches you would give away.

Wear a hidden money belt while in city and during travel. Carry a passport valid for more than 6 months, and your student ID card. Make photocopies of your credit card and passport to always keep separately. Give me a copy of your passport with your emergency contact info written on the back and your evacuation insurance card number.

Hand carry on flights: all valuables and your medical necessities camera, chargers and memory cards journal once you begin writing
Basic Packing:
duffle with wheels, or backpack you can carry
TSA locks to be able to leave your bags locked in village homestay
to avoid kids playing inside your bags.

journal and pens with waterproof ink (e.g. Bic) or pencils
day pack and large water bottle (so we can conserve on the use of
too much plastic, you can refill from gallon jugs)
personal utensils and mug
strong yet small flash light and batteries

umbrella for hot sun as well as downpours
large rain poncho for wet travel in boats
sunblock (e.g. Badger 30, great on function and organic)
hand sanitizer
bug repellant (e.g. Muskol, Skintastic)
mosquito net (Long Road, Berkeley on the web makes a great
traveler free-standing net)

good running/walking shoes and a pair of waterproof sandals
safari-type loose, cool long pants and long-sleeved shirts--best if sun-
protective clothing, and these will be the proper cultural attire for the
Guna village

Important: 6 small gifts (e.g. sewing thread, needles, sewing scissors,
sewing pins, 2 yards of a lovely ribbon for a mola; quality glass beads
in pure rich colors; fish hooks, fish fillet knife, nylon fishing line;
dictionaries; simple novels in English; school supplies; UM T-shirts,
caps) that we’ll offer as group thanks to our new friends and guides at
the end of our village homestays.