

Orientation Seminar
WFSC/ENTO 485
Study Abroad Program in Dominica
Spring Semester 2015
One hour per week

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Course Objectives:

- Learn about culture, geography, history, flora, fauna, and ecology of the Caribbean region and of the island of Dominica in particular.
- Develop skills necessary to plan group and individual research projects, learn fundamentals of research project design, quantification and replication, data analysis and interpretation of results, and writing research results in form suitable for publication.
- Prepare for Study Abroad trip in summer session, learn fundamentals of research design and analysis, plan group and individual projects, discuss structure of trip, logistics, trip planning, packing, etc.

Course Web Site: <http://dominica.tamu.edu>

Meeting Time and Place: every Monday, 6:00 pm, Nagle 213

Schedule

January 26	Introduction to the Dominica Program. Brief overview of course activities. A quick tour of Dominica. Introduction to Archbold Tropical Research and Education Center, Springfield: people and facilities. [JBW, TEL]
February 2	Fundamentals of tropical ecology: ecosystem processes, biological diversity and community ecology [TEL]
February 9	Introduction to field research: How to select a research question. Types of research projects appropriate for the course. Criteria used for grading group and individual research projects. Group discussion of students' interests and preliminary ideas for projects. [TEL]
February 16	Study Abroad Program: student forms (safety, medical, payment schedule), financial aid, passports.
February 23	Geology and geography of Dominica, plant communities on Dominica, Caribbean biogeography. [JBW]
March 2	History and culture of Caribbean and Dominica [JBW]
March 9	Fundamentals of data collection, organization, and analysis: quantification and replication. Discussion on status of group and individual projects. [TEL]
March 16-20	SPRING BREAK - NO CLASSES
March 23	Focus on Projects. Outline projects, groups, and logistics. [JBW, TEL]
March 30	Study Abroad Program: health, safety, packing, culture shock, gear, what to take, what to expect in Dominica. First Draft of Proposals due for Individual and Group Research Projects.
April 6	Writing your final report, format and organization of scientific journal articles, presentation of results and visualization of data. Keeping a course journal: what's expected and criteria for grading. Discussion on status of group and individual projects. [TEL]
April 13	Group discussion on individual and group research projects. [JBW, TEL]

- April 20 Visit with former Dominica students and learn about their experiences. Get the real story! Final details on what to pack, what not to pack, and what to expect in Dominica. [JBW, TEL]
- April 27 **Study Abroad Program:** Exit meeting. Group discussion on individual and group research projects. [JBW, TEL]
- Final Draft of Proposals due for Individual and Group Research Projects.**
- May 4 **Last Class:** Final planning and organization for the trip. Important!!! [JBW, TEL]
- May 26 - June 17 **Dominica!**

NOTE that in each class starting with February 9, we will have a group discussion on ideas and logistics for individual and group research projects. We will allow plenty of time to review past projects, present our ideas for future projects, and most importantly, discuss your ideas for future projects. Starting early with this process allows us all to reach a common understanding of what each project will entail, and enables us to identify any supplies or equipment that will be needed.

GRADING:

First Draft of Proposals for Individual Project	15 points
First Draft of Proposal for Group Project	15 points
Final Draft of Proposal for Individual Project	25 points
Final Draft of Proposal for Group Project	25 points
Class Attendance	20 points

TOTAL 100 points

RESERVE READINGS on Dominican geography, culture, history, flora, and fauna will be available throughout the semester in Dr. Lacher and Dr. Woolley's offices. Please do not remove them from their offices without asking first, and signing them out. Although there is no required textbook, students will be expected to read the reserve materials relevant to their projects. Reading up on Dominican history and culture will enrich your experience once you get to Dominica. We will also be passing out information on Dominica, research projects, and journals throughout the semester, and we will try to make links to web sites on Dominica available on our web site.