**METHODS IN PRIMATE BEHAVIOR AND CONSERVATION**

This course is designed to provide students with field experience in primate behavior, ecology, and conservation. The learning experiences for the course fall into four main categories: field exercises, seminars, lectures, and applied conservation. The field exercises and seminars offer instruction and experience in: methods of measuring environmental variables, including assessment of resource availability, (2) methods of collecting and analyzing the behavior of free-ranging primates, (3) techniques for estimating population size, (4) various methods for assessing biodiversity and (5) general research methods. Lecture topics will cover the behavior and ecology of Old and New World primates from an evolutionary perspective. Selected lecture topics include primate social/mating systems, foraging behavior, taxonomy and conservation. Guest lectures will focus on various aspects of research and applied conservation. Students gain experience in applied conservation through participation in Osa Conservation’s sea turtle monitoring, sustainable farming and reforestation programs.

**Course Objectives:**

• To understand and apply some of the methodological techniques used in primatological research.

• To understand the social and physical diversity within the order primates.

• To understand the “rules” of social behavior and the ecological influences on behavior.

• Appreciate the complex issues facing primate conservation efforts.

**Course Requirements**

**Field Exercises**: Students work in groups to learn the basics of primate field research. All methods will be first introduced and discussed, and then students will practice them in the field. The methods covered include (1) measuring behavior and (2) estimating population size, (3) measuring biodiversity. The data collected will be analyzed and written-up as lab reports.

**Scientific Article Presentations:** A seven-to-nine-minute oral presentation of a recent scientific research article on any aspect of primate behavior, ecology or conservation. Students are instructed not to simply read the paper, but provide an insightful critique of the methods, results and conclusions. (see scientific article review guidelines)

**Natural History Journal**: Daily journal entries are required. This can include drawings, detailed species descriptions and/or your observations, perceptions and feelings about the natural world around you. This is NOT a personal journal or diary. A nature journal records your responses and reflections about the natural world around you with the primary purpose of helping you develop scientific observation skills. You should have a separate notebook/journal for this activity and colored pencils. A grading rubric is provided.

**Class Participation**: Based on participation in lectures, seminars, field exercises and conservation initiatives. During the field trip students are required to participate in all assigned activities.

**Grade is based on:**

Field Exercise Write-ups 40%

Scientific Article Presentation 20%

Journal 25%

Class participation 15%

**Grading Scale:**

100-90 A

80-89 B

70-79 C

60-69 D

59 and below F

**Course Schedule**

Day 1

Arrive in San Jose, Costa Rica (airport code SJO), overnight in Alajuela (Hotel La Guaria)

Day 2

Day trip to Zoo Ave Conservation Park, overnight in Alajuela (Hotel La Guaria)

Day 3

Travel from Alajuela to the Osa Peninsula stopping en route at Carara National Park and in Dominical for lunch.

Dinner at Piro Research Station, Osa Peninsula

Introductory talk from Osa Conservation

Course and staff introduction, station rules and regulations

Day 4

Orientation Hike- learn trail systems, forest safety

Introduction to Costa Rica and its wildlife

Lecture: Rainforest Biomes

Day 5

Osa Conservation: Predator and prey relationships

Field exercise: Aging and sexing primates

Discussion: Aging and sexing primates

Seminar: Measuring behavior: ethograms

Lecture: Daniela Solano: Natural History of Costa Rican Primates

Day 6

Seminar: Behavioral sampling and recording methods

Data collection for behavioral sampling and recording methods exercise

Lecture: Primate Taxonomy

Article Presentations

Day 7

Seminar: Behavioral sampling and recording methods

Data collection for behavioral sampling and recording methods exercise

Lecture: Daniela Solano: Social Methods in Primatology

Article Presentations

Day 8

Field exercise: Behavioral observations of howlers

Discussion and write-up : Behavioral observations

Seminar: Estimating population density

Data collection: Estimating population density

Lecture: Primate Social Behavior

Article Presentations

Day 9

Data Collection: Estimating Population Density

Discussion and write-up: Estimating Population Density

Article Presentations

Day 10

Seminar: Habitat description/measuring biodiversity

Data Collection: Habitat Description/measuring biodiversity

Discussion and write-up: Habitat Description

Lecture: Primate Conservation

Day 11

Work on field exercise write-ups and journals

Article Presentations

Day 12

Depart Osa Conservation

Dolphin/snorkeling on the Golfo Dulce

Overnight Corcovado Beach Lodge

Day 13

Playa Preciosa

Overnight Corcovado Beach Lodge

Day 14

Finca Kobo chocolate and sustainable farming tour

Travel to Boruca

Overnight Boruca Indigenous Reservation

Day 15

Depart Boruca Indigenous Reservation after lunch

Travel to Alajuela; Overnight in Alajuela (Hotel La Guaria)

Day 16

Farewell beautiful Costa Rica- return home