

Sustainability and Conservation in Costa Rica

STUDY GUIDE – Spring 2023

Changes may occur

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1. Introduction

This study guide is a supplement to the Course Description of Sustainability and Conservation in Costa Rica. It will give information about the courses and advice on how best to study and carry out the different tasks.

If you have any questions related to academic writing, please contact costarica@kulturstudier.no

In case of other questions related to the course organization, please contact Mauricio Sánchez Hernández mauricio@kulturstudier.org

All other inquiries, please contact our office in Oslo, mail@kulturstudier.no or tel:+47 22358022.

2. Course Content

This section provides information about the different sections of the Sustainability course.

Part 1: Self-study

Learning outcome

The self-study reading period will provide students a basic background knowledge necessary to understand how Costa Rica developed its main economic activity during the 20th century and how Costa Rica controlled the negative impacts of this activity on the environment. You will write a reflection which answers two questions, one of them based on chapter 1 and chapter 2; while the second part will be based on the reading of chapter 7 and chapter 8 of the course book ***The Ecolaboratory: Environmental Governance and Economic Development in Costa Rica*** by Robert Fletcher, Brian Dowd-Uribe, and Guntra A. Aistara (editors).

Formal requirements

The reflection is to **be comprised of** approximately **1200 words**. All submissions must be submitted in **Aula Virtual** (online platform at UISIL), no later than **January, 31st, 2023**. During the first week of the program in San Isidro, you will get guidance on how to enter and submit a paper in **Aula Virtual**.

You must write your document in the following format: It must be a pdf document, **Times New Roman, 12 points, space 1.5 between lines**. This gives approximately 400 words on one page. It is absolutely essential that you adhere carefully to the formal requirements of both, this written assignment and all others during the course. This is a *working requirement* and must be passed (Approved) in order to complete the course. The intention is to give you an early orientation of how you will be assessed, and what to expect from the other submissions you will be required to compose during the course. Students will get the answer whether they approved the assignment during the month of February. Those students who did not approve must resubmit the assignment. Deadline for new submissions (Not approved) Wednesday 8th of March before 16:00 pm.

Research question 1

Chapters one and two of the course book explore how the role of the Costa Rican state as a regulator of the agriculture market has historically changed over the last 70 years, in particular with respect to the support of smallholders. Based on chapter 1 and 2, and the [documentary Buried Seeds](#), directed by Felipe Montoya, students will write a short reflection (600 words) about how this change has impacted the life and the socioeconomic livelihoods and of these peasants as well as the ecological conditions of agriculture.

Research question 2

Chapters seven and eight of the course book study how Costa Rica's relationship with forests has long been a turbulent one. Quite similar to other countries and regions of the so-called tropical world, throughout most of the twentieth century forests in the country represented a frontier to be conquered, to be destroyed in order to provide land for development. Forests were cleared to make place for agricultural crops and cattle ranching with direct economic incentives from government and international organizations. In the 1970s, however, this relationship with forests started to change in Costa Rica with the recognition that they were disappearing. Students will write a short reflection (600 words) about how Costa Rica managed to stop and revert deforestation.

Chapter 1:

Galt, R. E. (2020). The Costa Rican Agrifood System, 1961–2014: Assessing Neoliberalism’s Impacts on Agriculture and Diets. In R. Fletcher, B. Dowd-Uribe, & G. A. Aistara (Eds.), *The Ecolaboratory: Environmental Governance and Economic Development in Costa Rica* (pp. 25–57). University of Arizona Press.

Chapter 2:

Babin, N. (2020). Agrarian Questions, Neoliberalism, and the Persistence of the Costa Rican Coffee Peasantry. In R. Fletcher, B. Dowd-Uribe, & G. A. Aistara (Eds.), *The Ecolaboratory: Environmental Governance and Economic Development in Costa Rica* (pp. 58–74). University of Arizona Press.

Chapter 7:

Matulis, B. S., & Fletcher, R. (2020). Paying for PES: Taxes, Tariffs, and the World Bank in Costa Rica. In R. Fletcher, B. Dowd-Uribe, & G. A. Aistara (Eds.), *The Ecolaboratory: Environmental Governance and Economic Development in Costa Rica* (pp. 133–146). University of Arizona Press.

Chapter 8:

Breitling, J. (2020). Costa Rica’s Forest Transition Revisited. In R. Fletcher, B. Dowd-Uribe, & G. A. Aistara (Eds.), *The Ecolaboratory: Environmental Governance and Economic Development in Costa Rica* (pp. 147–160). University of Arizona Press.

Part 2: Studies in Costa Rica

Lectures

Generally, lectures will take place on Wednesdays from 13:15 – 15:00. There will be several guest lecturers. During week 1 students will get a document with an updated calendar with all guest lectures. It might happen that some few lectures will be given online. There will be a seminar about academic writing during week 1.

Day excursions and day excursions report

These visits will allow us to better understand the social and cultural dimension of sustainability and development in rural areas in the tropics. The submission deadline for the academic report on the two day excursions is Wednesday 1st of March, 2023.

The general topic for this report is the relation between the theory you have read in *The Ecolaboratory* (Chapters 3, 14, 15 and 17) and your observations and experiences during the day excursions. In the seminar about academic writing it will be explained how to best write this kind of academic field trip report and what the evaluation requirements are.

Overnight field trip

The overnight field trip (four nights in Longo Mai and one night in FUDEBIOL) combines a practical and theoretical approach. Kulturstudier students will be organized in medium-size groups (12-15 students) to visit and live in Longo Mai, departing on Mondays and returning to San Isidro on Fridays. The main academic goal of this stay is to get insight into the social and ecological reality of rural communities in Central America and learn some basics about agroecology and agroforestry in tropical ecosystems. The

main academic goal of the one-night field trip in FUDEBIOL is to experience and understand the importance of this reforestation project.

During Longo Mai visit we will learn about the history of this project: a kind of intentional community attempting to provide sustainable livelihoods to landless peasants through organic agriculture for self-sufficiency and forest protection. This overnight trip will also function as a cultural immersion to practice your Spanish and get experience of the Costa Rican lifestyle in the rural areas. As a Spanish and Sustainability student, you will live in the house of a Costa Rican family together with at least another student. While students are in Longo Mai, there will always be Kulturstudier staff on site. The trip from San Isidro to Longo Mai takes 45 minutes by car. The professors Mauricio Sánchez and Nadja Ehlers will visit the group during the trip in order to discuss and analyse how this trip has academic relevance for the course.

Longo Mai program

During your stay, there will be many academic and practical activities, such as:

- Conversatory about the history of Longo Mai
- Guided visit to the coffee and/or sugar cane fields
- Guided visit to the rain forest in Longo Mai natural reserve
- Guided visit and workshop in the permaculture project of the artist and activist Guadalupe Urbina
- Cocoa workshop: How to make chocolate from the cocoa tree
- Agroecology workshop: Students will experiment and learn about organic agriculture in the tropics
- Agroforestry workshop: Students will experiment and learn about the intentional combination of forest protection and agriculture to create sustainable land use practices in the tropics
- Conversatory about the ecological and socioeconomic challenges of this region
- Three Spanish lessons during your stay
- One seminar on academic writing with Nadja Ehlers

It is important to note that the agroecology and agroforestry workshops will require some moderate physical activity (approximately 3 hours each morning in Longo Mai). As a student, you will not be working in agricultural hard labor, the idea is to experience, experiment and practice some agroecological techniques and get a direct sensorial contact with the cultural and ecological dimensions of planting and keeping some crops such as cocoa, coffee, cassava, pineapple, passion fruit, heart of palm, and many species of fruit trees. Remember that it is necessary to wear proper clothing. Due to the high level of precipitation in Longo Mai, the fields and the forest may be muddy even during the dry season. Therefore, it is important to wear rubber boots during the workshops.

Group work and individual report based on the overnight field trip

Two weeks after the participation in Longo Mai, students will submit an overnight field trip report (individually). Besides, students will document their participation by writing a group post entry for a blog about the experiences of Kulturstudier students in Longo Mai. In the seminar about academic writing it will be explained how to best write this kind of academic field trip report and what the evaluation requirements are.

Final exam

During the final seminar students will get instruction and guidance about the final exam. In this 2 days take-home exam, students will answer two general questions that cover the learning outcomes for this course. Date: Last week of the course.

Part 3: Evaluations and exams in Costa Rica

UISIL uses the following grading for all the subjects.

Grading Scale

90 - 100%	A	Excellent
80 - 89 %	B	Good
70 - 79%	C	Fair
Less than 70%		Failed

Evaluation and submission dates

Exams and other submissions must be written in English.

Group work based on overnight field trip participation	10 %
Academic day excursions report Submission: Wednesday 1st of March	20 %
Academic overnight field trip report (based on Longo Mai and FUDEBIOL visits). Submission deadline: Two weeks after Longo Mai participation (On Friday)	30 %
Final Home Exam: Week 16: Wednesday (May, 3 rd) from 09:00 am until Thursday (Mai, 4 th) at 16:00 pm.	40 %

3. Course reader and reading list schedule

Course book: Fletcher, R., Dowd-Uribe, B., & Aistara, G. A. (Eds.). (2020). *The Ecolaboratory: Environmental Governance and Economic Development in Costa Rica*. University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvxw3pvp>

Available as an e-book at [this link](#)

The reading list schedule and calendar with all lectures, submissions and activities can be found [at this link](#).

4. Guidance on how to read and write academic texts

Guidance to read an academic paper

Academic reading is a skill which only improves with practice. Every skilful academic reader has expended hundreds (or thousands) of hours to achieve this level. Evidently, the content of a book about Sustainability is very theoretical because it combines topics on history, economics, sociology, anthropology, and ecology. Therefore, it is not unusual that students who are in their first or second year at university experience that it is quite challenging to understand all the ideas and information. It is important to do your best effort and consider as normal the fact that you probably have to read the chapters of the Ecolaboratory three, four, or more times before you fully understand it. The lectures in Costa Rica will be very pedagogical and the professor will take in consideration that many of these topics and theories are completely new for you. At the end of the course you will notice that you are mastering academic reading much better and that will help you in the next years of your studies. It will be very helpful to search for general information about the recent history of Costa Rica on the internet or other sources to get some necessary background knowledge. [This website](#) provides good advice about academic reading.

Guidance to write an academic paper

There are two writing stages throughout this course. First, you will write one 1200-word reflection during your self-study period. Reading the assigned material will certainly help you dive into this issue at more depth. Second, you will present two reports and a written exam at the end of the course. Together with the oral in-class work, these written assignments shall serve to stimulate and document your:

- a. reading and understanding of the course literature and other relevant information,
- b. critical reflection upon the topics in question, and
- c. familiarity with the standards of academic writing.

We encourage you to be pro-active both during the lectures, seminars, and also outside class. We will gladly discuss any concerns/ ideas/ thoughts/ confusions you might have either via mail or in person. Show initiative! Our teachers are available and more than happy to engage with you.

Some guidelines concerning your short essays:

Although you are not expected to deliver original contributions to research, there are some basic guidelines that you ought to follow when writing your academic assignments. These guidelines are in accordance with usual standards for University/College assignments and will, in combination with the overall purpose defined above, serve as our criteria for assessment. They are as follows:

1. Define your topic, intention and structure in the introduction – and stick to them

Whether writing a short paper, a group paper or a home exam essay, you must have an introduction. Here you first present your topic/s. Then you formulate what question/s related to the topic/s that you intend to look into. These question/s and your intention must be clearly formulated and realistic. Finally, you outline the structure of your paper/essay, that is, how you will proceed in the following pages to

critically reflect and explore your question/s. This structure must be simple and logical, normally resting on three building blocks:

- d. an introductory part as already described,
- e. a main part (normally consisting of various sub-chapters/sections) where you present your material, and discuss your results in relation to the overall topic/s and question/s raised in the introduction, and
- f. a concluding part where you summarise your study and draw some conclusions.

Once you have defined your topic/s, intention and structure in the introduction, it is important that you stick to them throughout the paper.

You have the right to guidance during the writing periods. We advise you to make use of this opportunity, since writing consists in large part of re-writing, and it is often through the constructive and critical feedback of another person that we develop our ideas further.

2. Systematize your material

It is essential for the quality - and readability - of the text that you present and discuss your material in a systematic manner. By “your material” we mean the different views/theoretical approaches and empirical examples you use to study the topic/s in question. There is no standard way of doing this. What is important is that you give reasons in the text for why you choose to put the various elements of the material together the way you do. Each time you introduce a new idea or example, remember to ask yourself: Is it clear to the reader (and yourself) why this idea/example is being introduced here? If your answer is not a clear “yes”, the text needs revising.

3. Discuss and conclude your results

What is equally vital for the quality of the paper, but often forgotten, is that you *discuss* the material (the views/theoretical approaches and empirical examples) in relation to the topic and questions raised in the introduction. Actually, it is this element of discussion that makes the paper an academic study. We encourage you to use these papers as opportunities to further develop your own, critical voice.

Finally, in the end, you must summarize your study and draw some tentative conclusions on the basis of the above discussion.

4. Write clearly and smoothly

While academic writing demands a formal style, this does not mean using intricate formulations. On the contrary, you should search for phrasings that communicate your ideas as clearly and precisely as possible. In addition, and this is equally important, you should put effort in establishing good flow between the elements of the text. This implies that there must be a meaningful connection between the various phrases of a section, between the various sections of a chapter, and between the various chapters of the paper/essay. To obtain this, it is often helpful to begin papers by briefly stating what you are about to do, and how it relates to where you come from.

5. Get the technicalities right

The official referencing style for the program UISIL-Kulturstudier is APA 7th. It is obligatory to use this style. During week 2 in our program, there will be a seminar about academic writing. Please consult the following website: <https://kildekompasset.no/en/referencing-styles/apa-7th/>.

If you have any questions related to academic writing, please contact costarica@kulturstudier.no