

Geography 295 / 520 Geography of Coffee

James Hayes-Bohanan, Ph.D.
Professor of Geography & Coffee Maven
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This syllabus is long and detailed. You need to know everything in it.

This is a field course with mandatory meetings before and after the Costa Rica field experience.

This course does not meet any Core Curriculum Requirements. This course can be counted as an elective course within the geography major or minor and counts toward the minor in Latin American & Caribbean Studies. With permission, it can also count toward the minor in Sustainability Studies.



Costa Rica is the world leader in sustainable ecotourism. Our visit will include home stays with the Bribri indigenous communities of Talamanca.

Description (from the BSU catalog)

Geography of Coffee is a travel course that examines the human, physical, and environmental geography of coffee production and trade. Course readings focus on the economic geography of the coffee trade. Pre-departure lectures provide an overview of the global patterns of coffee production and its agronomy and processing. The two-week travel portion includes carefully chosen activities in coffeelands and elsewhere in a coffee-producing country, providing comprehensive exposure to the landscape and cultural environment from which coffee emerges. Activities include hikes in coffee plantations and related environments; detailed presentations by coffee producers, processors, traders, and labor organizers; and visits to non-governmental and academic institutions in the coffee-growing regions. The tour includes direct involvement with coffee-growing communities, including meals and overnight stays with farm families. Group meetings and student writing are used to integrate the lessons about geography that arise from readings and the travel experience.

The course usually takes place in Nicaragua during the winter break (nearly every year since 2006) and may be repeated for credit when offered in a different country.

NOTE: The January 2020 offering of the course will take place in Costa Rica.

Purpose: What is the Geography of Coffee, Anyway?

Geography is an integrative discipline that defies the traditional categories of human or physical science. Almost any subject may be studied by geographers, with the unifying theme being an approach that emphasizes the importance of spatial relationships. Whatever the topic, geographers approach it with three questions in mind:

Where is it?

Why is it there?

So what?

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The purpose of this course is to ask these questions as they relate to the spatial arrangement of the global coffee industry. This geography involves an understanding of local factors such as climate, soil, and topography as well as global factors such as the configuration of the post-colonial world space-economy.

Students will learn to identify and describe the factors that influence the spatial distribution of coffee growing, processing, transportation, and consumption, and of the environmental and social consequences of these activities. These factors include geology, climate (which is changing rapidly in coffeeands), biogeography, international monetary and trade regimes, and the persistent importance of colonial-era patterns of resource extraction and wealth accumulation.

The course provides many opportunities to develop reading, writing, speaking, research, and computer-related skills. Finally, because most of this course will be held in Central America, students will have an opportunity to develop skills in cross-cultural learning and communication.

How to Communicate with Me

I make myself available to students in a variety of ways, so that you may discuss any questions or concerns you may have about this course, the discipline of geography, or [careers](#) in geography. I encourage you to visit me in Room 215 during my posted office hours or by appointment. Current hours and more contact information are on the [semester schedule](#) on my web page.

Phones: (508) 531-2118 (office) -- (508) 279-0914 (home)
(508) 521-4889 (cell – it is very helpful for me to have student cell-phone numbers during travel)

E-mail: jhayesboh@bridgew.edu

When using e-mail, please include GEOG 295 in the subject line. Please use your **free and easy** Bridgewater e-mail account, so that I can tell who you are.

Web: <http://webhost.bridgew.edu/jhayesboh> or <http://www.doctor.coffee>

Blog: <http://EnvironmentalGeography.blogspot.com> (explore or search on “coffee”)

Quick alternative: <https://www.facebook.com/jhayesboh>

If you have any special circumstances - such as physical disabilities or dietary restrictions that may affect your ability to travel or participate in course activities – please let me know as soon as you have been accepted into the course, so that appropriate accommodations can be made. Both the professor and the Costa Rica-based tour operator are eager and well prepared to include all participants.

All students are required to read the "essential" documents on my Not-the-13th-Grade web site. These documents address such questions as "How will I be graded?" "How should I study?" "How should papers be formatted?" and "What does this professor expect from students?"

Class Resources

Although instruction will be in English, students who are not fluent in Spanish should consider obtaining a pocket-sized **Spanish/English dictionary** or a hand-held electronic translating device.

Students are required to read and discuss *Where the Wild Coffee Grows: The Untold Story of Coffee from the Cloud Forests of Ethiopia to Your Cup* by Jeff Koehler. The book begins at coffee's origins in Ethiopia but is focused on the development of specialized varieties we will see – and taste – in Costa Rica.

Other readings will be assigned and posted on Blackboard, in order to provide orientation to the country of Costa Rica and the business and science of coffee.

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Pre-departure meetings are required, as is one post-tour meeting. One will be organized by the Office of Study Abroad, and the rest by the instructor. Participation in these meetings is the basis for the “Participation – in the U.S.” portion of the grading structure described below.

Class Requirements

Travel to Costa Rica. An intensive, two-week tour of Costa Rica during the winter session is the core experience of this course. The tour will include coffee farms of various sizes and configurations, cultural and historic sites, cooperatives related to handicrafts and agriculture, indigenous communities, and natural areas including cloud forests.

This is an opportunity to learn about the successes and challenges of ecotourism. Now an ideal that is pursued as a strategy for sustainable development throughout the world, ecotourism was first popularized in Costa Rica. It seeks to protect natural resources by providing local employment in tourism for people whose alternative might include destructive practices such as deforestation. It is an elegant theory but difficult in practice, because it requires a very careful balance in every aspect of the tourism business. Students in this course will be participants in this model and will have the opportunity to learn directly from some of its most experienced practitioners.

Students must meet all of the conditions for travel abroad that are required by the [Office of Study Abroad](#). Every participant is expected to travel with an open mind, curiosity, and flexibility. Extensive orientation will be provided, and reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate individual wants and needs during travel. Participants are expected, however, to *adjust cheerfully* to a variety of circumstances that might arise from group travel that may include cultural differences, linguistic challenges, unfamiliar plumbing, or intermittent electricity.

The itinerary of travel is presented at the end of this syllabus.

Physical activity. The itinerary includes visits to locations that require significant walking or hiking. Persons with all abilities can and have been included.

Spanish Language. Instruction will be in English, with a translator present for all formal presentations given during the field visit to Central America. Students will benefit, however, from any ability to speak and read Spanish, and this course will provide opportunities to improve the fluency of those who are trying to learn Spanish. Students will learn the art of communicating in another culture, both with and without translators present.

Journal. Students will write daily about the field portion of the class, including both personal and academic observations. In order to encourage frank journal-writing, students will not be required to submit their journals, but daily writing is an excellent habit for geographers in the field, and it will contribute greatly to a successful final paper (see below).

Final paper. The final paper will be at a post-trip meeting to be held in February. It will be a substantial (6 to 8 pages) paper drawing on the field experience and outside readings as necessary, to explain what the trip revealed about the nature of the coffee trade.

Students are expected to follow the style and formatting guidelines found on my [writing](#) web page.

Class participation is integral to this course. My [standards](#) page includes criteria for assessing participation. In a field course such as this, class participation is even more important, and is even more broadly defined. It includes manifest **curiosity, flexibility, maturity, and cheerfulness** in a wide variety of circumstances.

Graduate credit: Students taking this course for graduate credit will have an additional meeting with the professor soon after the first group meeting, to establish additional outcomes and work product related to their areas of interest and study. This could include research papers, lesson plans, or other projects.

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Grading

IMPORTANT: Grading policies and expectations are fully described on the [standards](#) and [assumptions](#) pages available on my web site. Failure to complete all course requirements may result in a grade of "F," regardless of the percentage grade calculation. **Note: the lower cutoff for a passing grade in this course is 65, not 60.** Other expectations are detailed on my "[Not the 13th Grade](#)" web site.

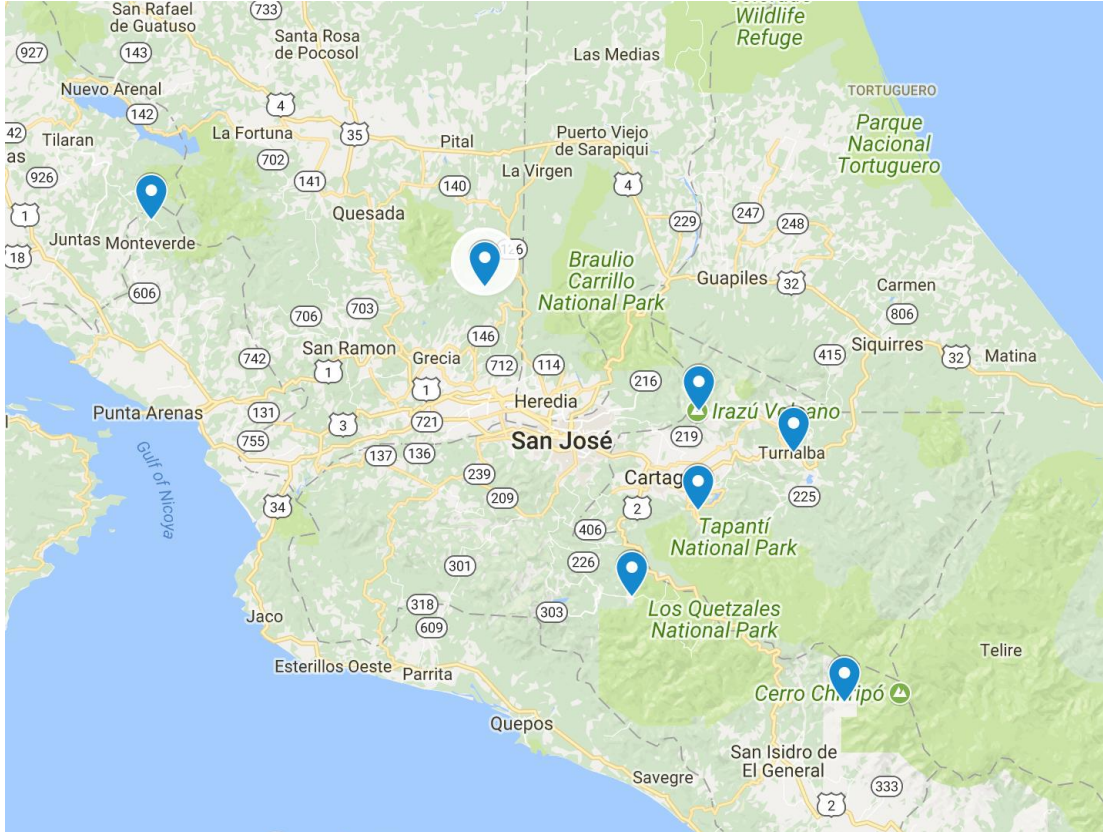
A course grade is determined on the basis of the course requirements, using an accumulation of points as detailed below. This allows students to estimate their current standing at any point in the semester by using Moodle to compare total points earned with total points possible.

Participation – in U.S.	100 points
Participation – in Costa Rica	200 points
Final Paper (based on journal)	200 points
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TOTAL	500 points

Diversity: A college education in which one's previously-held assumptions are never challenged is not worthwhile. In this course, students are welcome and encouraged to participate regardless of race or ethnic background, age, religion, political persuasion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, learning disability or physical handicap. This means that although open and vigorous class discussion is expected, I will insist that all comments are respectful of people of various backgrounds. See the BSU Student Handbook for more information. Please contact me with any concerns or needed accommodation.

Academic Honesty: The expectation of academic honesty extends to all assignments and exams in this course, including on-line work. Infractions are subject to disciplinary action, as described in the Student Handbook. At a minimum, a grade of zero may be assigned to any work that is found to be the result of plagiarism or cheating, including copying from online sources without proper attribution.

Itinerary: Geography of Coffee in Costa Rica
January 2020 Travel Course, James Hayes-Bohanan
with **Matagalpa Tours**
Version of April 16, 2019



For latest version of the course map, go to <https://goo.gl/tcPFbJ>

Thursday to Friday, Jan 3-4 (Overnight in San Jose)

Arrive in capital city of San Jose

Visit 8,885-foot Poás Volcano on Friday morning



Saturday to Tuesday, Jan 5-8 (Overnight in Santa Maria)

Santa María de Dota: Diving into the world of Costa Rican coffee in Santa María de Dota, situated between the best coffee regions of Costa Rica (Tarrazu and Dota)

In this region we will visit the independent farms and farmer-owned facilities of two renowned cooperatives COOPEDOTA and COOPETARRAZU. (<http://www.coopedota.com/> and <http://coopetarrazu.com/>)



Photo: Café Britt. The Tarrazu region includes volcanic soils and very high-elevation microclimates that are ideal for desirable acidic flavor profiles in its coffees.

COOPEDOTA was the first cooperative in the world to produce carbon-neutral coffee, using agroforestry to mitigate climate change.

COOPETARRAZU includes La Pira de Dota and other winners of the worldwide Cup of Excellence. We will learn how a combination of ecological cultivation and special “honey” processing yielded the record \$300/pound Geisha Honey coffee.

Wednesday to Friday (Jan 9-10) Overnight in Turrialba-Orosí area.

We will drive to the top of the Irazu Volcano to see its famous green caldera lake – at 11,260 feet, it is over two miles high, and visible from the capital city.

Costa Rica has been a leader in sustainable specialty coffee for several decades. We will visit the headquarters of CATIE, an agricultural research and education center that supports ecological farming throughout Central America.



<https://www.catie.ac.cr>

Saturday to Monday (Jan 11 – 13) Overnight in Talamanca Area

Explore the Caribbean coast and inland rivers and mountains
Homestays with Bribri indigenous communities in Yorkin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBnbW9Wriu4>



Photo: Remezcla. Transport to our homestay in Yorkin will be by motorized but traditional Bribri boats

Tuesday (Jan 14) Overnight in San Jose

Return flight Wed Jan 15