I. COURSE RATIONALE:

This study abroad program focuses on the social welfare service and policies that have developed in Costa Rica. The program is offered in conjunction with The University of Costa Rica in San Jose, Costa Rica. Formal class session will be held in Lawrence, Kansas at the University of Kansas (two sessions) and at the University of Costa Rica in San Jose (two Weeks). The pre-travel lecture will provide background information on Costa Rican History, language, culture, and customs. In Costa Rica the lectures and field placement visits will provide an overview of the Costa Rican social service system. The impact of history, global economics, religion, and culture on social policy and practice in Costa Rica will also be presented. In Costa Rica, lectures will be taught in English (or translated when necessary) by University of Kansas and University of Costa Rica faculty. Field visits to Costa Rican Practicum sites or agencies will be arranged in San Jose and outlying areas.

More specifically, this course is intended to accomplish the following.

1. To provide a systematic overview of the theories and approaches to community, individual, family, and group practice from an international perspective (theoretical base).

2. To examine the methods, strategies, and principles of the multiple ways of intervening within the Latin American socio-political context (knowledge base).

3. To develop an understanding of the skills necessary to apply theory and knowledge to the needs of disadvantaged/minority populations from an international perspective (children, women, ethnic minorities, people who are poor, experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, etc.) (skill base).
4. To allow students to explore a personal philosophy, beliefs about community, family and culture that is consistent with social work philosophy, ethnic/gender perspectives, values, and ethics (professional base).

II. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe Costa Rican social policies and social work practices in the following key areas: a) child and family services, b) Health and Mental heal, and c) Community Practice.

2. Analyze the impact of a changing economic climate on social welfare institutions and the services they provide to individuals, families and communities.

3. Discuss the historical and cultural context in which social services are provided in Costa Rica, including the role of religion and culture in social welfare policy;

4. Compare social work in Costa Rica and the U.S. in terms of the strategies used to help individuals, families, groups, and communities adapt to changing economic and social conditions. This includes analyzing the similarities and differences in values, ethics, ideologies, diagnosis, assessment and interventions used in social work practice.

5. Assess the ways in which Costa Rican social policy and practice have been influenced by global social policies and practices.

III. CURRICULUM THEMES:

1. Practice Centeredness

The overarching themes that guide the total curriculum of the School of Social Welfare are integrated throughout the practice-oriented curriculum. This course provides a venue for students to learn about social work practice through a cultural lens. Participants will have the opportunity to observe and apply social work practice in actual field place settings in Costa Rica.

2. Strengths

The strengths perspective is a humanistic, empowerment approach to social work practice that operates on the assumption that all persons have untapped mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional resources. Students are encouraged to extend their understanding of assessment, conceptualization of
barriers, selection of interventions, and client collaboration to assist in working with client systems. Specific cultural and historical experiences of Costa Rican people will be investigated as capacity enhancing areas for social work practice.

3. Social Justice
Social justice is a key component in this social work practice course. Social justice influences student's definition of barriers, client systems and client strengths. Students will learn to integrate the experiences of vulnerable people to create and evaluate interventions that expand opportunities for oppressed, stigmatized and marginalized populations. This course will highlight an international perspective on social justice including ways to successfully negotiate needed environmental resources, and that promote a more just, humane and responsive environment.

4. Diversity
Diversity includes the skills that show respect, sensitivity and appreciation for the contributions of diverse populations. In this course students will cultivate and appreciation for clients and colleagues who are differentiated by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, spirituality, class, sexual orientation, age, gender, and ability.

5. Critical Perspective
Consistent with a critical perspective, students in SW560 and SW 855 raise questions about, reflect upon, and systematically evaluate and apply the divergent theories and knowledge claims upon which social work is based.

IV. LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE:
The course draws on the liberal arts as one vast and rich source of learning. As a practice course, the effort is to apply relevant knowledge and values from all sources that could illumine and guide actions to achieve the profession’s social purpose. Thus students are supported and challenged to use their knowledge from courses on history, literature, social sciences and fine arts along with the knowledge gained from life experiences and the accumulating body of professional knowledge.

V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSE AND VALUES:
A clear sense of professional purpose and the values embodied in its value system and code of ethics provide a necessary focus for selecting and using knowledge and perspectives from a rich array of learning resources, not least
from the diverse client populations served by the profession. This clarity is at the heart of the course’s fundamental task of translating broad statements of professional purpose and values as reflected in the school’s mission statement and curriculum themes into specific purposeful practice acts.

VI. TOPICS:

- *History, Culture, and National Reality of Costa Rica*
- *Social work Costa Rican style*
  - Social-education prevention
  - Social management and administration
  - Poverty and social exclusion
  - Human Rights
- *Understanding Costa Rican social services*
  - Health
  - Mental Health
  - Children and Adolescents
  - Women’s Issues
  - Violence
  - HIV/AIDS
- *Skills, Tactics & Techniques of Community Practice*

VIII. READINGS:

Required Text


Suggested Texts


IX. ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Annotated bibliography and topic questions (35%)

Students are expected to prepare for the trip by selecting and reading articles or books pertaining to a particular social work topic of interest. Students will define their own topic areas however, it should relate to the focus of the course. Students will submit an annotated bibliography of their selected articles and books. At the conclusion of the annotated bibliography the student will list 10 questions that they are interested in exploring during the lectures and practicum visits.

The annotated bibliography is due May 10th.

B. Journal (15%)

Students are expected to keep a journal during their time in Costa Rica. The journal will be used in conjunction with (but not limited to) guiding questions provided by instructors about topics of interest.

C. Integrative Outline (35%)

After returning from Costa Rica, students will develop an integrative outline comparing and contrasting social policy and practice in your identified topic area. This outline should include points about Costa Rican policies and practices using information from readings, lectures, and field visits. The outline should also include the ways that Costa Rican cultural norms, values, ethics, social structures, and economic development impact the social problem you are studying.
The integrative outline is due: June 21st

D. Class Participation (15%)  
Students will be evaluated on the extent that they actively contribute toward making the class a “learning community.” This means that students will be evaluated on the extent that they contribute to class discussions with questions and comments based on their understanding of the material, treat the comments of fellow students with respect and interest and are open to perspectives different than your own. Attendance and timeliness are also very important. You are expected to attend the Study Abroad Orientation, and two Lawrence Campus meetings. The meetings for the Lawrence Campus will be May 10th and June 21st.

X. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

If any member of the class feels that he or she has a disability, please advise the instructor of such disability and desired accommodation as soon as you have written documentation. The instructor will work with you and the Services for Students with Disabilities Office to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that you have a fair opportunity to perform in the class.

XI. INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY:

You may contact me by appointment or via email at deborao@ku.edu

XII. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY:

For example, “In the event of inclement weather students should call the University (864-SNOW) to determine if classes are called off. If the University is operating, I am expected to hold class, however, accommodation will be made for students who are unable to attend. Students should contact the instructor if weather or driving conditions make it impossible for them to get to class.”