

COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN MEXICO

Nicholas School Field Course Spring 2013

ENV 975 (2 credits)
Mondays (Jan 12-Mar 2), 8-9:15pm
Instructor: Elizabeth Shapiro-Garza

Information Session: 8-9pm EST, Tuesday, November 4
Application Deadline: Thursday, November 6

The state of Oaxaca in southwestern Mexico is an ideal place to observe community-based environmental management in action. Mexico's system of common lands ownership and management (*ejidos*) provides a strong, legally recognized and politically viable framework for communal management of the environment. This combined with Oaxaca's rich natural resource base, even richer traditions of indigenous governance practices, and a history of political organizing against government and corporate resource exploitation has meant that this region is a leader in innovative community-based management initiatives. From highly functional and vertically integrated community-based forest management ventures, to community-run ecotourism initiatives, to the communal production and sale of forest-based carbon offset credits, to cooperative management and marketing of shade grown, organic coffee, Oaxaca allows us to observe communal management of the environment under relatively "ideal" conditions, and to understand the many challenges that must still be overcome.

Course Organization

The field trip for the course will be held over Duke's spring break (**March 8-14, 2015**). We will be based in the colonial city of Oaxaca de Juarez, the state capital, and will be travelling to visit communities in the surrounding countryside for day and some overnight trips. We will be meeting directly with the community leaders and councils responsible for making decisions and organizing their communities to collectively manage their own environment and also with the non-profit and government organizations that work with and support them. Students will be assigned to a group that will focus on a particular topic (e.g. communal forestry, ecotourism, etc.). Each group will be responsible for delivering a presentation during the first half of the class, designing questions for related speakers during the field trip, and writing and presenting a final report at the end of the course.

Classes for the course will be held during the first half of the spring semester (6 weeks, plus 1 week required fieldtrip) plus one follow-up class the week after the field trip. We will meet virtually once a week in the evenings using the web conferencing software Adobe Connect. These classes will be focused on introducing students to the general history of rural common property governance and resource politics and management in Mexico and to the specific history and current context of community environmental management in Oaxaca. Classes will be based on assigned readings and will include a combination of lectures, guest speakers and student presentations.

Requirements

Admission is open to ***on-campus and DEL MEM students***, but is by application only. To be selected, students must demonstrate a deep and continued interest in the topic. Spanish fluency is not required, though some facility with the language is a plus. We will be visiting remote communities under sometimes less than comfortable conditions and, as much as we plan ahead, will likely need to make alterations to our schedule as we respond to unforeseen obstacles. Therefore, it is a requirement that students be reasonably physically healthy, culturally sensitive, able to deal with some physical discomfort without complaint, and be very flexible in adapting to changes in plans or schedules.

Information Session

An on-line information session will be held from **8-9pm EST on Tuesday, November 4** at:

<http://nicholas.adobeconnect.com/env975/>

Dr. Shapiro-Garza will be providing a short presentation about the course and answering any questions.

To join the info session, go to <http://nicholas.adobeconnect.com/env975/>. (It's a good idea to join a few minutes before 8:00 p.m. so you can ensure your audio is working.) Log in as a guest with your first and last name. Once you've entered the meeting (downloading all necessary plug-ins, if applicable), click on "Meeting", then "Audio Setup Wizard..." to set up your microphone and speakers. You will also be able to ask questions via the chat box if your computer does not have a microphone.

To Apply

To apply for this field course, please send the following as a max 1pg Word doc to Liz Shapiro-Garza (elizabeth.shapiro@duke.edu) by **Thursday, November 6**:

1. Your name, MEM concentration and year, and email address
2. A short description of how this field course fits in with your course of study at the Nicholas School and your longer term professional goals.
3. A short description of previous experiences you have had with international travel and community-based work.
4. Spanish written and verbal proficiency