

REC 315, SAB 329/529 Ecotourism: Hawai'i Spring 2027

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Course Description: Students will engage in applied learning, field observations, and reflective processing to explore and understand the contextual impacts and opportunities associated with ecotourism in Hawaii and more broadly the cultural, economic, and environmental resources that intersect within the region.

Through cultural immersion and hands-on experiential learning students will address principles and practices in ecotourism operations and responsible travel.

About This Course: Ecotourism 329/529 provides opportunities for experiential learning across a variety of majors and disciplines. Content is delivered via a hybrid course that has an online component and an immersion component through partnerships with Hawai'iian non-profit organizations. Students will address: 1). Environmental practices such as traditional regenerative agriculture. 2). Cultural impacts and opportunities associated with ecotourism approaches as opposed to mass tourism. 3), The potential for equitable economic opportunities via responsible travel and natural capital.

Instructional Style: This is a hybrid course with online assignments pre and post excursion. The online component will be delivered via Blackboard. A pin number for accessing the Blackboard course site will be provided once the student is registered and no later than two weeks prior to departure. Internet access is required for the online component. The location-based component of the course is structured on an experiential learning model where students will participate in "hands-on" activities in partnership with local guides and instructors. In addition to hands-on learning, students will participate in structured processing and reflection activities throughout the trip.

Together the students, instructor, guides, and local community members co-generate learning.

Course Rational: This course is based on a transformative service-learning pedagogy that delivers a precise sequence of activities (contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, reflection, and integration). The design is generated to elevate the student's personal experience while enriching it academically.

Learning opportunities are embedded in activities throughout the program's itinerary and enhanced through methods typically associated with service-learning: cross-cultural engagement, field notes, dialogue, reflective journaling, and a cumulative analysis of how the experience will be integrated into the students' personal, academic, and professional aspirations.

Course Objectives:

1. Identify ecotourism sustainability issues and opportunities in relation to cultural, environmental, and economic frameworks.
2. Analyze and evaluate impacts associated with ecotourism projects in the context of the destination communities.
3. Synthesize how ecotourism operations may minimize impacts, maximize resources, promote equity and generate collaborative approaches to create positive relations and shared economic prosperity at a regional level.
4. Describe the impacts of the course on the student's personal, professional and academic goals and aspirations.

Ecotourism Resources to Explore:

Global Sustainable Tourism Council (go to "for travelers" link): <https://www.gstcouncil.org/>

International Ecotourism Society: <http://www.ecotourism.org/>

Sustainable Tourism Association of Hawaii: <https://www.sustainabletourismhawaii.org/about/>

Note: the primary pillars of ecotourism are CULTURE, ECONOMY, and the ENVIRONMENT. Another way of framing these primary relationships is People, Planet and Profit. Explore how these three pillars of sustainability are presented on these sites.

Listen:

Listen to the podcast "Offshore" starting with Season 2. It's available on Apple and other podcast platforms. Explore the many topics on the site and listen to those that you find of interest...there is much to learn here: <https://www.offshorepodcast.org/>

Culturised with Makani Tabura. Select interviews of interest. Pay close attention to the questions he asks his guests as part of the introduction of each episode. <https://www.culturised.com/> <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/culturised-with-makani-tabura/id1545807254>

Watch:

<https://youtu.be/C2bjjwv4134?si=isILB025rykMTEWK>

<https://hawaiiankingdom.org/blog/latest-dark-history-podcast-how-the-us-stole-hawaii/>

Research:

Research issues and facts from the 2024 State of Hawai'i Data Book Explore this site and identify facts related to the population, economy, and environment you find most relevant. For example, population characteristics, water use by industry, and climate change <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/db2024/>

Read:

Sea Grant: https://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/HTA-climatechange-visitorindustry_0.pdf

Changes in Marketing and Controversy:

<https://civilbeat.org/2022/01/hawaii-tourism-officials-are-seeking-mindful-respectful-and-high-value-travelers/>

Tourism Development and the Environment: Beyond Sustainability? (Tourism, Environment and Development Series) 1st Edition by Richard Sharpley (2009).

PDF copy at: <http://istta.ir/upload/file/sustainableTourismBook2.pdf>

Read the following prior to departure:

Intro

Chap 1

Chap 3 p.70 (sustainable development goals)

Chap 4 p.103-110

Chap 5 p. 129 and p. 140-141

Chap 6 p. 159-167

Recommended Reading:

Silva, N.K. (2004). *Aloha betrayed: Native Hawaiian resistance to American colonialism*. Duke University Press.

Sides, H. (2024). *The wide wide sea: Imperial ambition, first contact and the fateful voyage of Captain James Cook*. Doubleday.

Daws, G. (1974). *Shoal of time: A history of the Hawaiian Islands*. University Press of Hawai'i.

For Graduate Students to Explore:

Sustainable Tourism Hawaii Certification: https://www.sustainabletourismhawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Fillable-2018_Sustainable-Tourism-Certification-Checklist-v11.2018-1.pdf

Required materials:

You will need two notebooks. One notebook is for your field notes. The ideal notebook for this purpose is a 6 in. x 9 in. center ruled Steno Book. These can be found in most college bookstores. The centerline assists in putting your observations on one side and your corresponding interpretation of your observation on the other. You'll also need a notebook or some type of writing journal for your reflective journal. A ziplock bag may be useful in protecting your notebooks from the elements. Bring several pens as they can be difficult to find in our host communities.

Assignments:

Assignments are described in the course outline and evaluation section of this syllabus. One principle of ecotourism is quality over quantity. Likewise, I am more concerned about the quality of your assignments as opposed to the quantity. Therefore, while assignments may be brief in length they require genuine depth of thought. All pre-departure assignments are due three days prior to departure (you can submit well in advance of that) and post-excursion assignments are due no later than seven days after returning from the trip.

Course Outline:

The dates and activities for the experiential portion of this course are subject to change. In fact, while traveling one should be receptive to change as it is often unavoidable. During the immersive portion, the modules' assignment section provides prompts for your dialogue circles, field notes, and reflective journaling. The reflective journal assignment (extracting themes and exemplar quotes) isn't due until after your return.

Date	Topic	Assignment
Prior to departure	Welcome, course overview, cultural awareness and responsible travel. A Webex session will be scheduled to welcome everyone to the course. READ the syllabus and begin exploring resources. You'll be watching, listening and reading multiple resources to give you the knowledge necessary to be a responsible traveler. Self-assessment assignment (submit on Brightspace)	Submit self-assessment survey via Brightspace <i>All pre-departure assignments are due no later than three days prior to departure</i>
Prior to departure	Principles of ecotourism and sustainable development (submit on Brightspace)	Per the ecotourism resources, identify two key principles of ecotourism that you find most significant. Describe these principles and why, based on your academic or personal interests, you find these principles most relevant. Submit on Brightspace. Approx. 2 pages (APA).
Prior to departure	Context building for the three imperatives of ecotourism and sustainable development (submit on Blackboard): 1. Cultural/historical (provide example) 2. Economic (provide example) 3. Environmental (provide example)	Having read, listened, and watched multiple resources, identify and explain one issue you found most interesting for each of the three imperatives. For instance, for the cultural historical imperative you could discuss what you learned about population change. You'd then identify another issue for each of the remaining two imperatives. Site the source for each of the issues you identified and explained. Submit on Brightspace.

Module 1	Travel day and orientation	Program overview and expectations Welcome to the class. Introductions. Overview of field notes, dialogue circles, and reflective journaling.
Module 2-3	Pillars and principles of ecotourism. Geopolitical history: Context of place The Three Ethics	Dialogue circle Key observations and interpretations from your field notes (<i>your observations and interpretations will be shared at the beginning of every dialogue circle. A dialogue circle student leader will be appointed and provided with instructions for leading the conversation</i>). Reflective writing --- how are you experiencing the transition from your cultural comfort zone to your new setting?
Module 4	Culture	Dialogue circle – how do the local projects relate to the principles of sustainable development you identified prior to arriving? Hawaiian shirts and Tiki Bars Issues and challenges. What would it look like if it “worked”? Reflective writing: how does your academic experience connect to your experience on the ground? What are you looking forward to?
Module 5	Regenerative Agriculture	Dialogue circle --- culture and the environment Reflective writing: what innovative sustainable ideas have impressed you? Any thoughts on how some of these principles could be implemented in your community?

Module 6	Economics, issues of equity, and social justice. Considering the cultural context of development: responsible travel. Geopolitics and responsible travel	Dialogue circle --- what are some of the economic factors you identified prior to arrival? How have you experienced those issues thus far on the ground? How are you, through your participation in this course, addressing some of these issues? Reflective writing: How is culture shaping you? How is this experience challenging you? Dialogue circle --- what is to be preserved and who decides; indigenous issues.
Module 7	Transformative travel	Dialogue circle --- discovering your agency in complex systems Reflective writing: what is the role of the individual in addressing systemic change?
Module 8	Expanding the ecotourism dialogue.	Closing Circle Reflective writing: What themes have begun to emerge from your experience? How will you keep and share these themes?
Post trip Reflective journal	Processing Extracting key content from reflective journal.	Reflective journal assignment You will submit a summary of your reflective journal by identifying and sharing the key emergent themes from your journal. These themes are the distillation of the moments, experiences, observations, issues, impacts, and insights that you found most significant or meaningful. Do so by finding quotes and excerpts from your journal that best reflect these critical experiences.
Post trip online portfolio assignment	Integration Generate a multi-media presentation (annotated presentation (Canva/ PowerPoint, photos and/or video) on how this experience impacted you professionally, personally, and academically. Share the story of your journey and its impact.	Portfolio The portfolio presentation is designed to be shared with groups of interest. Students will identify three opportunities to share their presentation with these groups. Portfolio is due within 10 days after your return (if you have an add-on or additional travels, submit the portfolio within one week of your return from your extended stay).

Evaluation: There are 100 points available for this class. Letter grades will be assigned based on the following point system:

- 1) Pre-departure on-line assignments --- 25 points
 - a) Self-assessment survey to frame preconceptions of the upcoming experience and your intentions for being a responsible traveler (5 pts).
 - b) Principles of ecotourism. Identify two principles, i.e. pillars, which drive ecotourism activities and give an example of how these principles are being addressed (5 pts).
 - c) Context building: Navigate the resources and discover information pertaining to cultural/historical, economic, and environmental issues. Select topics within each of the three dimensions and identify and explain the issues and their relevancy (15 pts).
- 2) Participation --- 25 points

Experiential learning requires a commitment to fully participate in all programs, projects, and activities. Participation will be evaluated with the on-site lead guides. A positive, attentive, and respectful disposition is essential.
- 3) Processing and Reflective Journal --- 25 points

Students shall keep a double entry field journal noting key observations and their interpretation of those observations. These notes will be shared as part of regularly scheduled group dialogues. The notes and group discussions will enhance the students' ability to process and reflect on their experience. Each student will generate a reflective journal. Reflection is a critical dimension of experiential learning. Excerpts and emergent themes from the journal will be shared with the instructor.
- 4) Final Project --- 25 points

The culminating project synthesizes the experiences and assignments above into a presentation that communicates the impact of the course personally, academically, and professionally. The students may select from a variety of mediums (video, annotated Powerpoint) to convey their findings. Students will identify three groups for sharing their presentation. This may include presenting the portfolio in a class, to a club, or at a conference.

Graduate students will have one additional assignment. The assignment will be cogenerated with the students on-site based on individual academic interests.

Letter grades will be assigned based on the total points earned out of the 100 available points.

Instructor Policies:

The instructor reserves the right to add or delete assignments. The course outline is a tentative schedule and may be modified to meet class needs.

A note regarding immersive experiential learning:

Experiential learning in another setting is demanding physically, emotionally, and intellectually. To ensure a more positive experience for all involved, please consider the following:

- Be prepared. As the itinerary outlines, you will be in challenging, sometimes remote environments. A positive attitude is essential to a positive experience.
- Be ready to work physically and intellectually: we will be applying lessons with hands-on experiences. You'll get dirty. Dig in.
- Not only complete your online assignments prior to departure but capture the meaning so you can share your findings with the group.
- The course is designed to generate opportunities for observation, engagement, and personal reflection. These objectives can be enhanced through positive group dynamics. Your willingness to participate, work as a member of a team, and be respectful of one another and all those we encounter is essential to a positive learning experience.
- When traveling, there are many variables that can influence a trip; transportation delays, weather, distance from services and facilities, etc. It is essential that we remain adaptive to changing circumstances and be patient with ourselves and those around us.
- Your attention, engagement, participation, and intellectual contributions are essential. You will be in a beautiful and sometimes challenging environment. Don't lose sight of your commitment to the course and the corresponding respect for those guides and guests who are facilitating your learning experience.
- Communicate. Communicate with your instructor, communicate with your guides. Be proactive and timely in conveying any information that may impact your performance in the course.
- We are responsible for co-generating learning. Ultimately, the quality of your experience largely depends on your willingness to invest yourself in the learning process.

This syllabus has been created as a guide to this course and is as accurate as possible. However, all information is subjected to modification to meet the needs of the class.

Tentative Itinerary:

Please note: Experiential learning in another setting is demanding physically, emotionally, and intellectually. As the itinerary outlines, participants will be in challenging, sometimes remote environments. When traveling, there are many variables that can influence a trip, including transportation delays, weather, distance from services and facilities, etc. At least a moderate level of fitness will be required for participation in many of the activities, and remaining adaptive to changing circumstances will be essential.

Day One

Depart New York for Kona, Hawaii. Meet your guides and fellow students at the Kona International Airport. 1.5-hour-drive along the Hāmākua Coast, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, to our accommodations at Big Island Farms at Honokoa'a.

That evening, students will participate in a comprehensive orientation including SUNY Cortland policies, course details, roles and expectations, safety and risk guidelines, group dynamics, and cultural context. Students will be instructed in the "hand-prints" approach to responsible travel.

Day Two

Beginning on day 2, each morning will begin with an overview of the day, framing the academic theme, highlighting opportunities for field journal entries, and a Hawai'ian phrase of the day. Each evening will conclude with a dialogue circle to explore and discuss the theme, observations and interpretations, and reflections. Students will be provided with space and time to make entries into their reflective journal.

Spend the day volunteering at Hāmākua Harvest, a local nonprofit working to promote and advance Hāmākua agriculture by supporting local farmers, enriching the region's social fabric, and promoting healthy rural lifestyles for the benefit of Hāmākua's communities, economy, and environment. Service-learning activity includes harvesting produce, digging invasive species, and planting companion plants throughout the demonstration orchard while learning about agroforestry and other tropical agriculture techniques. After project work, we'll hike through Kalōpā Forest Reserve and learn about indigenous plants from our local guides. That evening we'll participate in a farm-to-table cooking class, collecting fresh organic produce from the farm to prepare for dinner.

Note: Throughout the trip, we will incorporate guest lectures from Hawaiian cultural practitioners and engage in discussions on Hawaiian history, responsible travel, conservation, and the "hand-print" approach to ecotourism.

Day Three

Volunteer at the Waikoloa Dry Forest Initiative, where ancient Wiliwili trees persist in some of the most rugged terrain in Hawai'i. Here, students will learn about the diverse forest that once covered the driest regions of the islands, while helping build trails, clear weeds, plant trees, collect native seeds, and propagate the plants that will grow into future forests. After completing the project work, we'll embark on a snorkeling charter off the Kohala Coast with Kohala Divers to observe green sea turtles, tropical fish, and vibrant coral reefs. During the excursion, we'll learn about the critical importance of protecting and preserving these reef ecosystems from on-board naturalists.

Day Four

Hike into the Waipi'o Valley to take part in two days of volunteer projects and educational programs designed to revitalize and advance indigenous Kānaka Maoli cultural knowledge and land stewardship. We will learn the historical and cultural significance of this sacred valley, while helping to preserve the 'āina (land) by clearing invasive species and planting native plants. After project work, we'll learn how to cook traditional Hawaiian dishes with our local guides.

Day Five

We'll check out of our accommodations in Honoka'a and drive along the Hāmākua coast to the Kumuola Marine Science Center, where we'll participate in loko i'a (native fishpond) restoration and learn about indigenous fishpond techniques. Afterwards, we will journey up the Wailuku River with a guide who will interpret the culturally significant waterfalls and lava tubes. In the evening, we will check into our new accommodations at the Pahala Plantation Cottages along the Ka'u coast.

Prior to the dialogue circle, students will share their reflective journaling process to date with the instructor.

Days Six and Seven

On days 6-7, we'll take part in a variety of sustainable volunteer projects with the Hawai'i Wildlife Fund - removing marine debris from some of the most plastic-polluted places on the planet, helping to restore native fishponds and Hawaiian archeological sites, working on rainforest restoration projects, and learning about responsible tourism protocols in fragile habitats.

After project work, we'll explore sights along the southern coastlines, including hiking across solidified lava lakes at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, observing green sea turtles at Punalu'u Black Sand Beach, and stargazing at South Point - the southernmost point of the US.

On our final night, we will gather to prepare a traditional Hawaiian meal and participate in a closing ceremony.

Day Eight

Comprehensive course summary, how to prepare for the online post-excursion portion of the course, and a discussion on how to sustain the experience, become advocates, and promote sustainable practices upon returning home. May include coffee tour at Miranda's Farm and Kona town exploration.

Trip End: Guides will drop you off at Kona International Airport.

CLASS POLICIES:

Contacting the instructor: Email will be used as the primary means of contact: amy.direnzo@cortland.edu. My office phone is 607-753-4968 should you need to contact me directly.

Assignment Requirements: All assignments must be typewritten. Work done in this class is to be original, done exclusively for this class, and in compliance with departmental standards for written work. Please proofread carefully for spelling, grammatical errors, and paragraph organization.

Participation: Students are expected to participate in all course activities. Failure to participate may result in a failing grade. Disruptive, inappropriate or dangerous behavior that interferes with the instructor's ability to deliver the course or other students' ability to participate safely and effectively in the course may result in the student being removed from the course per SUNY Cortland's International Program policies.

SUNY Cortland Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** The College is an academic community that values academic integrity and takes seriously its responsibility for upholding academic honesty. All members of the academic community have an obligation to uphold high intellectual and ethical standards. All students are expected to uphold academic integrity standards. Plagiarism is defined as taking the ideas of others and using them as one's own without due credit. Students who cheat in examinations, course assignments, or plagiarize in this course may be disciplined in accordance with university rules and regulations. (College Handbook, Chapter 340)
- **Diversity:** SUNY Cortland is dedicated to the premise that every individual is important in a unique way and contributes to the overall quality of the institution. We define diversity broadly to include all aspects of human difference. The College is committed to inclusion, equity, and access and thus committed to creating and sustaining a climate that is equitable, respectful and free from prejudice for students, faculty and staff. We value diversity in the learning environment and know that it enhances our ability to inspire students to learn, lead and serve in a changing world. We are committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive campus through the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students. As a community, we hold important the democracy of ideas, tempered by a commitment to free speech and the standards of

inquiry and debate. To this end, we are dedicated to developing and sustaining a learning environment where it is safe to explore our differences and celebrate the richness inherent in our pluralistic society. (College Handbook, Chapter 130)

- **Requests for Accommodations for Disabilities:** As part of SUNY Cortland's commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment, we strive to provide students with equal access to all courses. If you believe you will require accommodations in this course, please place a request with the Disability Resources Office at disability.resources@cortland.edu or call 607-753-2967. Please note that accommodations are generally not provided retroactively so timely contact with the Disability Resources Office is important. All students should consider meeting with their course instructor who may be helpful in other ways. (College Handbook, Chapter 745)
- **Title IX:** Title IX, when combined with New York Human Rights Law and the New York Education Law 129-B, prohibits discrimination, harassment and violence based on sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation in the education setting. The federal Clery Act and NY Education Law 129-B provide certain rights and responsibilities after an incident of sexual or interpersonal violence. When a violation occurs, victims and survivors are eligible for campus and community resources. Where the College has jurisdiction, it may investigate and take action in accordance with College policy. If you or someone you know wishes to report discrimination based in sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation, or wishes to report sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking or relationship violence, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at 607-753-4550, or visit cortland.edu/titleix to learn about all reporting options and resources. (Updated by SUNY Legal Feb. 1, 2018)." (Title IX <http://www2.cortland.edu/titleix>)
- **Inclusive Learning Environment:** SUNY Cortland is committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment. The course instructor honors this commitment and respects and values differences. All students enrolled in this course are expected to be considerate of others, promote a collaborative and supportive educational environment, and demonstrate respect for individuals with regard to ability or disability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other aspects of identity. In an environment that fosters inclusion, students have the opportunity to bring their various identities into conversation as they find helpful, but are not expected to represent or speak for an entire group of people who share aspects of an identity. If you have any questions or concerns about this statement, contact the Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office at 607-753-2263. (IEIO <http://www2.cortland.edu/about/diversity/>)
- **Communication and Language:** Knowing how to communicate effectively with all members of a community is a crucial skill for those in recreation and leisure studies. The use of certain words or phrases can express gender, ethnic, or racial bias, either intentionally or unintentionally. The same is true of language referring to persons with disabilities, which in many instances can perpetuate negative stereotypes and disparaging attitudes. The Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies Department's commitment to cultural competence supports the removal of bias in language against persons on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, or age within written classroom assignments, presentations, lectures, and everyday interactions. The Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies Department chooses to convey respect through language that is accurate, positive, and inclusive. This practice is consistent with the American Psychological Association Publication Manual's guidelines for reducing bias in language.
- **Use of Electronic Communication Devices in RPLS Classes:** As a member of the college community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the classroom community. Because of their disruptive nature, the Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies Department prohibits the use by students of cell phones, PDAs, or similar communication devices during scheduled classes. **All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent mode and should not be taken out during class.** Variations and exceptions to this policy may be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Use of cell phones, similar communication devices, or any unauthorized electronic data storage device in testing situations, other than to receive College emergency notifications, may constitute a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy and lead to sanctions under the 340.02 Violation of Academic Integrity Policy.
- **Sustainability:** In the Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies Department, we believe in the necessity of environmental responsibility. Respect and care for the natural environment is embedded in our department's history. As best as possible, we promote and practice sustainability for the world as we use resources for teaching, scholarship, service, and personal use. As we model and advocate for environmental stewardship, our goal is to move students to internalize stewardship of community and global resources and carry it into their own professional and personal lives.

STUDY ABROAD POLICIES

I agree to participate fully in all portions of the program. I have read, understand and agree to SUNY Cortland's Study Abroad Academic Policies.

I agree that I will abide by the SUNY Cortland Code of Student Conduct while abroad. The Code of Conduct can be accessed at <http://www2.cortland.edu/judaffairs/> I further agree to adhere to all recommendations made during pre-departure and on-site orientations with regard to health, safety, and general advice.

I understand that SUNY Cortland's International Programs Office reserves the right to dismiss any individual who, in the judgment of the director, field director, faculty leader and/or a delegate of the host university, fails to meet his/her academic obligations and whose conduct is detrimental to the program. Participants agree to abide by the rules of the program/host institution and the laws of the host country.

Health and Safety: review the policies and procedures on this link: <https://www2.cortland.edu/offices/international-programs/study-abroad/health-and-safety/staying-safe>
Contact Information for the School of Professional Studies:

School of Professional Studies Dean's Office

Dr. Katherine Polasek, Dean

Dr. Susan Wilson, Associate Dean

Studio West, Room B-1,

Phone: 607-753-2701