BIO 2620: Tropical Biology Seminar - Spring 2015
Professors Bob Ratterman and Jan Bowman

General Information:
This three-credit hour, transfer-level biology course provides an amazing and, for many, a life-changing, once-in-a-lifetime experience designed to introduce students to the beauty, biology, ecology, and culture of representative habitats in the Central American tropics. Our trip will occur March 25 – April 4, 2015. Participants will experience some of the most threatened and magnificent ecosystems on Earth, and will better understand their incredible biological significance. Students will become involved in identification and collection of numerous plant and animal species, and will visit research stations to which scientists come from all over the world. The study potential for botany, zoology, entomology, ornithology, herpetology, and other natural sciences is nothing short of phenomenal. Emphasis in Costa Rica will be placed on tropical ecology, and terrestrial botany, and zoology, while marine habitats (coral reefs, mangrove forests, turtle-grass beds, estuaries, and rocky shores) will be explored at Bocas del Toro, Panama. A conservation ethic and appreciation for the biodiversity of an ecosystem will be stressed throughout the course.

Our plans for this year's class will include study at four major field sites:

- La Selva Biological Station, an Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) site of international ecological rainforest research, with opportunities to explore old-growth primary rainforests and the creatures they sustain (iguanas, hummingbirds, sloths, butterflies, ants, parrots, monkeys, and incredible numbers of insects and other invertebrates), as well as to learn about scientific research projects underway there.

- Tortuguero National Park, which can be reached only by boat or plane, is world-renown for the endangered sea turtles that come to nest on its beaches and for the estuarine gallery forests that teem with jungle river wildlife such as caiman, heron, egret, howler and spider monkeys, snakes,
lizards, tree frogs, parrots, orchids, ferns, tropical river otters and so much more.

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the Caribbean lowland rainforests of the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge, where we’ll stay at Almonds and Corals tent lodge, and awake to the call of howler monkeys at sunrise and fall asleep to the night-time lullabies of tree frogs and cicadas. We’ll also explore local seashores, tide pools, and forests, and touch the tree-top world of toucans, monkeys, butterflies, and parrots through a harness-cabled canopy tour.

Bocas del Toro in Panama, where we’ll snorkel and explore breathtaking Caribbean coral reefs and red mangrove shores by day, and enjoy the eclectic multi-ethnic culture of Bocas Town by night.

WOW!!! Are you excited yet??

HONORS Designation: Please note that for qualifying students, this course may be taken as a 3 hour HONORS Biology course. Honors students will be held to a higher standard of expectation and rigor for all regular assignments, and will be assigned additional special projects as well. Honors students will also be expected to show leadership by assisting instructors in aiding and supervising other students throughout the course. Please see your professors for additional details.

When:

The course will be conducted prior to and during the 2015 Spring Recess. Students will attend five mandatory instructional/preparation classes in SCCE 120 (Jamestown Campus) to be held on five consecutive Friday afternoons immediately preceding departure and one additional Friday class on May 8. All classes will run 1-4 pm with the exception of the March 20 class which will go 1-5 pm. Class dates are February 20, February 27, March 6, March 13, March 20 and May 8. ALL students are required to participate in a snorkeling session in the JCC pool on March 20 and successfully demonstrate the ability to swim/snorkel to their instructors. The travel portion of the course will begin with departure by mini-coach in the early morning hours of Wednesday, March 25th from the Jamestown
Campus, with our flight (Delta) out from Buffalo International Airport at 6:25 am and arrival in San Jose, Costa Rica around noon that same day. We'll arrive home from our awesome adventure, exhausted but astounded by what we learned, in the early morning hours of Sunday, April 5th!

Field Trip Facilities:
We'll be staying at field stations, lodges, a bed & breakfast, and nice tropical resorts. Accommodations will range in quality and comfort from fairly rustic lodges and platform tent-camps to very nice tropical inn type facilities. The food will be very healthy and very tasty, rich in rice and beans, lots of fresh, local fruits and veggies, fantastic Costa Rican coffee and fresh-squeezed juices, and traditional sweet desserts. We'll do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, such as vegetarianism, of course! Professional naturalists, guides, and drivers will be available at all times to facilitate our travels. Knowledge of Spanish is helpful, but not necessary since most Costa Ricans and Panamanians are minimally bilingual and can speak English when needed.

2015 Tentative Class Schedule (SCCE 120):
(Note: Attendance at all classes is mandatory)
Friday, February 20, 2015 -- 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Friday, February 27, 2015 -- 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Friday, March 6, 2015 -- 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Friday, March 13, 2015 -- 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Friday, March 20, 2015 -- 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Friday, May 8, 2015 -- 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Cost Estimate (final amounts depend on number of students travelling):
$1529 room and board (eleven days, ten nights) --- does not include snacks, meals associated with flight days/airports!
$1353 airline fare (round trip!), checked luggage fee, and airline seat deposit (includes fare, deposit, and luggage fees)
$  55 mini-coach to and from Buffalo airport
$  150 gratuities for naturalists/guides/drivers in CR and Panama
$  50 exit tax from CR
$ 150  entrance fees/emergency fund/misc. class expenses

**$3287

** estimated cost based on 22 participants

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*** IMPORTANT NOTES ***

1) any student money not actually used for the trip will be refunded to the students;
2) students should plan to bring at least $200 additional personal spending money for extras en route, including snacks, souvenirs, and other personal items;
3) BE AWARE THAT A PASSPORT, VACCINATIONS AND SNORKELING EQUIPMENT WILL ALSO BE REQUIRED, THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THESE ITEMS ARE NOT COVERED BY THE OVERALL COST OF THE TRIP AND ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO OBTAIN.

Registration Information:
The Seminar in Tropical Biology has room for only 20 students. Students may only enroll by “Permission of Instructor.” If more than 20 people desire to go, students will be selected from the list based on prior academic performance, number of related courses taken (such as Principles of Biology I, Principles of Biology II, Botany, Zoology, Environmental Issues and Ethics, Conservation Bio, Microbiology, etc.), quality of the essay, attitude and emotional maturity. Those not chosen for the original travel roster will be placed on a waiting list. A $821.75 deposit must be paid to ensure a student’s place in the course and is due on or before November 6th, 2014. The balance of the payment will be due in installments late this semester and early in the spring, as most costs must be paid in advance. Payment checks should be made out to “Jamestown Community College,” with “Tropical Biology Course” written in the subject line and paid at the business office on either the Jamestown or Olean campus.
Passport and Vaccinations:

A passport is absolutely necessary in order to travel to Central America. Begin the paperwork (through AAA or the U.S. Post Office Passport Office) as soon as possible, since a passport may take several weeks or months to acquire. Also, if you already have a passport, make sure that your current passport will not expire within 3 months of our trip --- if it does you must renew it ahead of time!

Vaccinations against typhoid, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT), measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and hepatitis A and B are not required but strongly encouraged, along with taking the anti-malarial chloroquine before and during our travels. Check with your physician, Chautauqua County or Cattaraugus County Health Department Travel Nurse, and/or the Centers for Disease Control (cdc.gov/travel/) travel guidelines for more information and current recommendations.

Payment Schedule for Travel Costs:

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<tr>
<th>Payment Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>First payment (travel deposit) due</td>
<td>November 6, 2014</td>
<td>$821.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second payment</td>
<td>November 28, 2014</td>
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<td>Third payment</td>
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<td>Fourth payment</td>
<td>February 6, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$3287.00</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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**PLEASE NOTE:** All payments MUST be received on time. In the event of needing to withdraw from the course, money previously deposited may or may not be refundable depending upon the timing of deposits paid in advance to the tour company in Costa Rica, to the air carriers and quoted rates guaranteed based on a specific number of travelers. Your cooperation is essential and greatly appreciated.

We hope you can join us on this marvelous adventure!!
For further information, please contact Bob Ratterman (Olean) at (716) 376-7557 or Jan Bowman (Jamestown) at (716) 338-1347

¡Pura’ vida!