

# NRES 492 /AGRI 310 Puerto Rico

## Tropical Ecosystems

A study tour course open to all students by application.

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Teaching Assist: Robert Vavala, [rvavala@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:rvavala@huskers.unl.edu) Office 371 Keim / 472-4933

### Learning Experiences & Objectives:

- Understand and define the concepts, components and interactions of Puerto Rico's ecosystems (natural and agricultural).
- Experience the rain forests, dry forests, plantations, underground caves and rivers, and sweeping coast lines of Puerto Rico.
- Emphasis on conservation problem solving, land usage – conservation interactions and ecosystem exploration.
- Visit research stations and interact with the people of Puerto Rico.
- Students will become aware of Puerto Rico's social, cultural, political, agricultural and conservation issues/policies and will gain in a broad and substantive understanding of the goals, objectives, and challenges facing Puerto Rico
- Communication and interpretation of contemporary writings concerning tropical ecosystem issues to a variety of audiences in written and oral forms.
- Knowledge of the principles of tropical ecosystem sustainability, conservation and biodiversity.
- An appreciation of a tropical island as a unique dynamic integrated earth system.

**TEXT:** There is no official text however each student is expected to purchase a guide and map for the island. Additionally, I will furnish some hand-outs (electronically via "Blackboard") that you will be required to read, review and discuss.

**Class:** We will meet at 5:00 pm on Mondays. Regular meetings will be held in 228 Hardin Hall. Attendance at all class meetings, presentations and discussions is extremely important. I will post a pdf of all 'Powerpoints' on 'Blackboard'. In addition I would like every student to participate in discussions. Professionalism at UNL requires students to attend lectures and act accordingly in those lecture sessions.

**Trip:** We will meet and leave East campus at 5:00 AM on Friday March 18<sup>th</sup> and return to East campus the evening of Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup> 2011

### Grading:

Based on a percentage of total possible points (350 or 500) achieved from required assignments:

- ◆ Puerto Rican characteristic group presentation & summary outline = 50 pts
- ◆ Quiz (3cr. students only) = 50 pts
- ◆ Trip Journal = 100 pts
- ◆ Trip assignments & exercises = 100 pts total
- ◆ Ecological Issues group presentations and Discussion = 100 pts.
- ◆ Exam (3 cr. students only) = 100 pts

### Academic Dishonesty:

Please read Section 4 of UNL's Student Code of Conduct for definitions and warnings against cheating and plagiarism. UNL's policy on Academic Dishonesty states that a student may receive a sanction as severe as removal from a course with a failing grade for any type of Academic Dishonesty. Plagiarism not only includes copying someone else's work "word-for-word" but includes using statements, studies or principles without proper citation. You must acknowledge the ideas of others including your classmates in all of your written work and reports. Failing to properly cite ideas is as critical as copying off the internet.

