UGA Studies Abroad in the South Pacific and the Caribbean
International Business 5100:
“Pacific Excursions in Economic Anthropology”
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Course Description
Caveat Emptor: This is not a full-fledged introduction to Economic Anthropology, and for good reasons. First, a course of two weeks duration, and with many distractions to boot, is far too short for a proper introduction to that (or any other) well-trodden field of study. Second, your instructor is not qualified to offer such an introduction. Indeed, he is not an economic anthropologist at all (his field is monetary economics), and as such is almost as unfamiliar with that subject’s content as most of his students will (presumably) be. Finally, program and travel requirements my necessitate deviations from this syllabus.

So what sort of course is this? It consists, as its title suggest, of a series of “excursions” into economic anthropologists’ territory—side trips from students’ principle voyage towards their economics degrees, and also (as it were) from their (literal) voyage to the South Pacific. In these excursions I will serve as your guide, but only in the sense that William Bligh “guided” his faithful crewmembers to the then-unknown island of Fiji. My qualifications—not comparable to Bligh’s, alas (but I don’t employ the lash, either)—consist of my general knowledge of economics along with some familiarity (and here I have Bligh’s advantage) with the sub-discipline’s landmarks.

Our excursions are “Pacific” in two senses: first, and most obviously, because they mainly concern the economic anthropology of Pacific (that is, South Pacific) peoples; and, second, because they are meant to be peaceful excursions. They are aimed at gaining an appreciation of how traditional societies far different from our own confront or have confronted fundamental economic challenges, and not at holding up such societies for critical assault from a Western standpoint. They are likewise aimed at gaining an appreciation of the usefulness of economics to anthropological research that eschews “economics imperialism” by also striving for an appreciation of what anthropology can teach economists.

Course Procedure

The course is built around class discussions, each devoted to discussion of one or more readings, along with occasional field trips and lectures by on-site faculty. Students will be asked to volunteer to serve as discussion leaders, by preparing a set of questions for discussion, to be supplied at the beginning of the session, and by moderating the discussion as it proceeds. (I may make these team assignments.) Other students are also expected to prepare one or more questions to raise during the discussions. The course grade will be based largely on the quality of students’ leadership and general
participation in class discussions. (I may also include a written assignment, to be handed in and graded after our return from the South Pacific.)

The Module Approach

The module approach is probably unlike most other approaches to teaching and learning that you have experienced on campus. In most campus classes, you are taught and you learn through lectures in a somewhat linear fashion with one class building upon another. The module approach is more like doing a mosaic in which the complete picture only gradually comes into focus as more and more pieces of the mosaic are put into place. When the last piece of the mosaic is in place, the picture is complete, and you can see the complex and multifaceted nature of what you have created. To push this analogy a little further, the pieces of the mosaic are like pieces of information, and the complete mosaic is the knowledge that you have gained of the subject.

You will likely find this approach confusing and even frustrating early on. Where do I find the pieces of information? Where does this piece fit? Does this piece fit? How does this piece relate to the overall topic? These are all legitimate questions, and questions that you will have to keep asking yourself and discussing among classmates. Despite some initial confusion (perhaps like the confusion when confronted with a jumble of mosaic pieces), we believe that the module approach has numerous advantages, especially for teaching and learning within the context of a field-oriented study abroad program. Perhaps the single greatest advantage of this approach is that it is an active approach. You are actively engaged in finding the pieces of information from multiple sources. True, one of these sources is the traditional classroom lecture, but there are also mini field-lectures, class discussions on the road, informal conversations with field faculty, meetings with specialists and professionals, and direct experience and observation, as well as the related readings. The module approach obliges you to be an active learner, an active participant in the learning process. In practice, this means listening and looking, taking good notes, asking good questions, and generally taking advantage of all of the resources and opportunities you encounter. It is a way of learning that is far removed from the taking and regurgitating of lecture notes.

The module approach will be novel and challenging for most students. However, if you embrace it, you will also find it a highly satisfying way of learning. Indeed, you may even find that it influences the way in which you look at the world around you and learn beyond this particular study abroad experience.

Prerequisites

All students in good academic standing are eligible to take the course. There are no pre-requisites.
**Attendance**

Punctual attendance at all scheduled, program-related activities is required, including group meetings, discussions, field excursions, as well as lectures and any other scheduled activities. Participation in field activities (such as hiking, snorkeling, swimming, kayaking, etc) is voluntary and at the discretion of the student; however, should you wish not to participate you must inform the instructor and an alternate activity will be assigned. An excused absence or decision not to participate in one or any of these field activities will not affect your grade for the course. During the field studies, no student is to leave the group without the consent of the faculty supervisor. Unless an absence is approved by one of the instructors or the program directors, students will lose 10% of their final grade for each day or part-day they fail to participate. Any unexcused absences or continued/excessive late arrival to program activities may, at the discretion of the Program Director, be grounds for dismissal from the program.

**Academic Honesty**

All academic work must meet the standards contained in the University's academic honesty policy (see "A Culture of Honesty"; [www.uga.edu/ovpi](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi)). All students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The penalties for academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to): award of a failing grade for the course, suspension, notification placed on the student’s transcript of their having been found guilty of cheating, and expulsion from the university (see "Sanctions for Dishonesty"; [www.uga.edu/ovpi](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi)), and ignorance is not an acceptable defense. Any cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the University Academic Policy Panel.

**Special Accommodations**

Any student(s) who require special accommodation(s) or other requirements in this course must see the instructor before or at the UGA campus orientation meeting and register with UGA Disability Services ([http://www.dissvcs.uga.edu](http://www.dissvcs.uga.edu)). Some activities include moderate exercise, such as hiking and snorkeling.

**Readings**

Readings must be read in advance of meetings devoted to discussing them; those for the class “Introduction” must be read prior to arrival in Fiji.)

1) Introduction: Economics and Alternative Cultures

Raymond Firth, "The Study of Economic Anthropology," in idem., Economics of the New Zealand Maori

2) Two Classics of Pacific-Island Economic Anthropology
   Raymond Firth, “The Maori and his Economic Resources,” from Economics of the New Zealand Maori

3) Money
   George Dalton, "Primitive Money"
   Jacques Melitz, selection from "Primitive Money"
   Michael Bryan, "Island Money," Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland Review (February 1, 2004):

4) Ceremonial Exchange
   Raymond Firth, "The Exchange of Gifts," from Economics of the New Zealand Maori, pp.

5) Cargo Cults
   , “The Tuka Movement of Fiji,” from The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of ‘Cargo’ Cults in Melanesia

6) Turning the Telescope on Ourselves

Grades

1. Participation (10%). Students are encouraged to actively participate in class discussions. Participation means that students will ask informed questions and make statements based on the readings, lectures, guest lectures and their own observations they make while in New Zealand and Fiji. The grade is based not on frequency but on the quality of questions and statements and their relevance to the course.
2. Three writing assignments that correspond to the three modules (25 % each)
3. Final exam covering concepts and terms: (15 %).

Schedule of Lectures, Discussion Sessions, and Field Trips: To Be Announced