

La Ceiba

Prerequisites and Expectations

I. Prerequisites:

1. You must have already completed Principles of Micro and Macroeconomics (at UMW that would be Econ 201 and Econ 202).
2. You must be a junior or senior.
3. You must be willing and able to travel to Honduras over winter break.
4. You must be willing and able to pay for the study abroad component of the class - will most likely fall within \$1300 - \$1500. We will apply for external grants to help pay this expense. And, for UMW students enrolled in the course, we will apply for an undergraduate research grant. Please note that with respect to grants there is no guarantee of funding.
5. You must be willing and able to wait on your grade – you will get an incomplete for your fall semester grade and receive your grade in the spring (see Syllabus for further explanation).
6. You must review and sign this *Statement of Prerequisites and Expectations* document.

II. Expectations:

1. Supply Effort Above and Beyond any other Class:

A. In the classroom, you must be prepared to supply effort above and beyond what you have supplied for any other research project in any other previous course. Being passionate about poverty, Honduras, even the people of Siete de Abril/Villa Soledada is not enough for us to realize success. You must be equally (may be even more) passionate about doing research and doing it well. There will be no road-map or text-book to tell us how to do what we will be doing. This is a true partnership between professor and student. Consequently, this class will require complete dedication, self-motivation, and self-discipline. You must be willing and able to take the initiative. You will be expected to continue to remain involved over the winter break before arriving in Honduras and upon our return until the final project is handed in as well.

2. Accept Losing Control:

A. In years past, initiatives and policies were researched, formulated, articulated, and nicely worded within the clean, precise confines of the classroom. Then we got on the ground. Some of those policies simply did not meet the needs of our customers. They desired a revision. And, if we wanted to succeed, it was our responsibility, regardless of the amount of time and effort sunk into their original formulation, to re-frame certain policies. It is worth reiterating that our objective is to supply services that our customers find valuable. At the end of the day it is our customers who are in control. Their willingness to participate in our programs will determine our success. Indeed, this loss of control is part of the educational experience. This class is meant to bridge the gap between theory and practice – bridge the gap between the abstract customers of the classroom and actual customers. Our projects will be a success; however, they may not unfold and/or resemble our original plan.

3. Recognize that you are not the only Stakeholder:

A. Our work is not just about making our initiatives successful. It is about SHH and its attempts to address some of the most important issues facing developing societies. It is about the community that SHH partners with. In other words, besides our class, there are other stakeholders and interests to consider. Indeed, that is what is so unique about this course – this is not just another research project that you turn in, get a grade, and then go on break. People are counting on us to make a difference. Quite simply, the work you are doing is at a different level. It is research that has real consequences. Necessarily, expectations are higher and so is the level of accountability.

4. Accept Ambiguity:

A. A class like La Ceiba is difficult because we are operating in the real world. The real world is chaotic. Consequently, imposing too much structure would only handicap our ability to do things and do them right. This lack of structure allows us to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. However, this comes at a potential cost. Your other classes have relatively more structure and have more definite standards regarding what constitutes an A, B, C, D, or F on assignments (for example, multiple choice exams, short papers – which themselves are relatively more straightforward). We do not have that luxury. My past experience informs me that some students have the tendency to put off their work for La Ceiba and spend more time and effort on classes that have clearer assignments and standards. These daily choices result in poor quality work for La Ceiba in the long-run. All that I am asking is for you to be aware of this tendency.

5. Team Player:

A. This class is also unique in the fact that different students may lead at different times. For example, in the classroom, some students may take the lead on academic research. However, when we are in Honduras, different students may take the lead in interacting with SHH and our customers. Some of you may find it unusual not to be a leader at all times. Indeed, some of you may find it difficult to be asked to take the lead. However, everyone in the class has a role and we will call on these different strengths at different times.

6. Feel Comfortable Questioning my Decisions:

A. Economic development is an extremely complex process. I would be foolish to assume that I am an expert in knowing how it unfolds. Indeed, our customers are the experts on their poverty. Necessarily, this class and the projects we pursue require successful cooperation between me and you. You must feel comfortable critically evaluating the direction I set and the conclusions I arrive at. Indeed, if the occasion requires it you may need to voice an alternative vision, direction, and/or conclusion.

7. In the Community:

A. You must be prepared to be both emotionally and physically resilient. We will be working with a community that lives in abject poverty - poverty that this country has not dealt with for at least a century or more. We will be in the community most of the day every day we are there. The conditions will be hot, humid, dusty, and mosquito ridden. If it rains, you can add a type of mud that is unimaginable. In other words, you will be expected to do the highest quality work under less than ideal conditions.

B. You must be ready to work hard. We will be working all day every day and all night every night. We will be waking up early (around 7 am) and going to bed late (around 11 pm). There is too

much to do and not enough time to do it. There will be times when you will be expected to work and eat while traveling between destinations. We will be opportunistic when it comes to downtime (for example, shopping for souvenirs). By week's end, you will experience some of the deepest and most rewarding intellectual and physical exhaustion in your life.

C. You will be expected to act professional at all times in your interactions with the community and your classmates. You will be expected to be an ambassador not only for yourself and La Ceiba but also for SHH, UMW and the United States. Acting professionally includes being modest in your dress, respectful (use appropriate language), polite (request permission before entering someone's home), and unending patience when it comes to delays and other inconveniences.

D. You need to be ready to take the initiative. Things on the ground can get chaotic. You will need to take responsibility for realizing the objectives associated with your project. That may entail reminding me of things we need to do. For the non-Spanish speakers, there will be moments (quite a few) where all you will do is stand around and listen to a conversation you cannot understand. In these instances, think about your project. Is there anything that can be done at that moment? If yes do it. If no, then look around the community and see if there is anything you can do to assist someone. If a bus needs to be pushed out of the mud, then push. If a trench is being dug, help dig it. If a kid needs to be swung around in a circle, then swing.

E. You need to be careful about making promises. You will make emotional bonds with our clients quickly. This is a wonderful aspect of this class. However, when we are saying our good-byes you will be asked when you are coming back. You will be asked whether or not you will call and follow up. You will be asked by Ana whether or not you will continue to work with her upon your return. These are hard questions. In that moment most of us cannot imagine doing anything else other than continuing our work together. However, once back in the states the demands of our lives start asking for attention (graduation, getting a job, fulfilling your major, hanging out with friends). I am not going to tell you how to respond. I just want you begin preparing yourself to answer the questions.

Signature _____ *Date* _____