COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will examine key issues affecting the well-being of children and youth in Central America. The interface of cultural values with dominant areas of social concern will be considered within the contexts of family, school, and community. Students will examine the major agents and processes of socialization and explore the theme of tradition versus change. Challenges and opportunities for children and youth in an era of rapid global change will be addressed, particularly as related to education and workforce preparation. Particular attention will be given to gender issues, rural/urban differences, socio-economic factors, and ethnic variations within specific countries visited. Models of effective intervention for at-risk children and youth will be explored and critiqued, and factors promoting healthy psycho-social development will be identified. Research on risk and resilience will be integrated with content throughout the course. Students will have opportunities to observe and interact directly with children and youth from diverse cultures during field experiences.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
1. To learn about complex global issues affecting children, youth, and families in Central America.
2. To examine the process of socialization and explore variations by culture.
3. To become familiar with theoretical perspectives and methodological challenges related to studying risk and resilience across cultures and contexts.
4. To identify and deepen understanding about current challenges and opportunities facing children and youth world-wide.
5. To examine current issues and trends in education from a developmental and cross-cultural perspective.
6. To review data on gender differences as related to topics covered and to explore the differences and similarities in the lives of boys and girls.
7. To learn about the unique needs of children living in challenging situations and explore programs designed to address these needs.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK
AUTHOR: Wendy V. Cunningham, Linda McGinnis, Rodrigo Garcia Verdu, Cornelia Tesliuc, and Dorte Verner
TITLE: Youth at Risk in Latin America and the Caribbean: Understanding the Causes, Realizing the Potential
PUBLISHER: The World Bank: Washington, DC
TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Class 1 (May 22) – Introduction to the Course

- Review of syllabus and course assignments
- The rights of children and youth: Historical and current perspectives
- Children as active participants in future building

Readings:
Textbook: Overview: Why do youth require special attention?
Textbook: Chapter 1 – Introduction

Class 2 (May 23) – Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities for Children in Central America

- Review of progress on Millennium Goal 1 (Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty), Goal 2 (Achieve universal primary education), Goal 3 (Promote gender equity)
- Central American youth: Emerging trends and issues

Readings:

Class 3 (May 24) - Identifying Risks and Promoting Resilience

- Risk and resilience research and theory
- The concept of protective factors
- The role of family and community

FILM: The Mayor’s Dream

Readings:
Textbook: Chapter 4 – Identifying at-risk youth for better programming and targeting
Textbook: Chapter 5 – Understanding the nature and magnitude of risky behavior
Textbook: Chapter 6 – Identifying the factors that put youth at risk

Adolescence, 42(166), 287-310.

PORT: Callao, Peru (May 25-27)

Class 4 (May 28) – Poverty and Implications for the Well-Being of Children and Youth

- Indicators of well-being
- What can children tell us about their well-being?
- Implications of poverty for educational achievement, psychosocial competence, and physical and emotional well-being

FILM: Which Way Home

Readings:
Textbook: Chapter 7 – Principles for Building an Effective Portfolio for Youth at Risk

Class 5 (May 29) – Evidence-Based Practice

- Using research to inform interventions
- The benefits of early intervention for children
- Examples of effective prevention and intervention programs

Readings:
Textbook: Chapter 8 – Prioritizing what works
Textbook: Chapter 9 – Moving from a wish list to action
Textbook: Chapter 10 – Investing in LAC: Key messages and conclusions

MID-TERM EXAM (May 29)

PORT: Manta, Ecuador (May 30-June 2)

Class 6 (June 3) – Principles of Effective Service Learning

- The $100 Solution Model
- Identifying needs: Learning to listen
- Building capacity and strengthening communities
- Finding solutions to problems through partnerships
- Addressing sustainability and unintended consequences
- Assessing outcomes

Readings:
Background information will be provided on the $100 Solution service learning site for the class.
Class 7 (June 4) – Substance Abuse Among Central American Youth: Risks and Protective Factors

- Incidence of substance abuse and recent trends in Central America
- Risk factors and their assessment
- Promotion of protective factors

Readings:


PORT: Fuerte Amador (Panama City), Panama (June 5 and 6)

Class 8 (June 7) – The Influence of the Physical Environment on the Well-Being of Children and Youth

- Findings from the “Children in Cities” Project
- Planning a world fit for children
- The role of nature in promoting resilience

Readings:

PORT: Puerto Limon, Costa Rica (June 8-9)

Class 9 (June 10) – Evaluating Programs Targeting Children and Youth at Risk

- Program evaluation: Implications for policy decisions
- Key components of program evaluation
- Measuring impact and outcomes

Readings:
Class 10 (June 11) - The Role of Education in Promoting Resilience

- Education as a socialization agent
- The role of non-formal education
- Information access: The impact of technology
- Issues of educational equity

Readings:

PORT: Belize City, Belize (June 12-13)

Class 11 (June 14) FINAL EXAM

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS
The field component of the course gives students the opportunity to directly observe and/or interact with children, youth, and/or parents from a Central American country. The two assignments related to this important aspect of the course will count toward 20 percent of the final grade.

Observation Assignment:
During the voyage, you will have opportunities to visit a variety of programs/facilities for children and youth (orphanages, schools, etc.) as well as observe children in public places such as parks and shops. In Peru, Ecuador, Panama, or Costa Rica, conduct systematic observations of children and/or youth in a specific context. Prepare a 5-7 page (double-spaced) paper summarizing your observations and linking them to the course content. Include a discussion of the connection with larger global issues and trends, and comment on the unique cultural aspects of your observations. Also, read material from at least two scholarly sources to assist in interpretation of your observations. DUE DATE: two class days after returning from the port visit.

Field Lab/Service Learning Project:
Students are required to participate in a service learning project focusing on children and youth in Belize using the $100 Solution approach. Your instructor has organized this experience in advance of the voyage and will provide the details on the first day of class. The service learning project will respond to the stated needs of the community visited and focus on finding effective and sustainable solutions to problems through local partnerships. Upon completion of the service learning project, write a reflection paper discussing your own personal reactions to the experience (What were your thoughts and feelings before, during, and after the experience?), evaluating the process and procedures used (Were the principles of the $100 Solution approach followed? What factors helped or hindered the process? What would you suggest doing differently next time?), and
identifying additional questions you would like to ask the host community, your classmates, or your instructor? DUE DATE: June 14.

**GROUP PROJECTS**
Each student will participate in a group project designed to deepen knowledge about a particular area discussed in class; gain coordination and teamwork skills; develop and demonstrate leadership skills; and improve research, writing, and presentation skills. Project options will be presented the first day of class. Groups consisting of 3-5 students will be organized early in the voyage. During different class sessions, groups will give a 30 minute class presentation followed by a question and answer period. Examples of group projects include: comparing and contrasting two youth programs in one or more countries visited on the voyage, researching background information related to the $100 Solution field lab (service learning project), and developing an evaluation plan for the $100 Solution field lab. DUE DATE: will vary according to the specific project chosen.

**METHODS OF EVALUATION**
Course grades will be based on the following components:

- Class Participation: 10%
- Observation Assignment: 10%
- Service Learning Reflection Paper: 10%
- Group Project: 20%
- Mid-term Exam: 25%
- Final Exam: 25%

Evaluation criteria are detailed below:

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis, complete assigned readings, and actively participate in class discussions. Evaluation will be based on the quality of contributions of each student (10% of grade).

**Exams:** Two exams (a mid-term and a final exam) will be given during the voyage to assess understanding, integration, and application of material from readings and lectures. Both exams will include multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. The mid-term exam (May 29) is 25% of your grade, and the final exam (June 14) is also 25% of your grade.

**Field Component:** The field component will be evaluated by one observation assignment (10%) and a service learning reflection paper (10%). The observation assignments will be graded on quality of observations, discussion and interpretations of observations, integration with course content, and integration of material from additional readings. The service learning reflection paper will be graded on depth of self-reflections, analysis of the process and approach used, and quality of questions raised.

**Group Project:** Group projects will be graded on quality of content, organization of material, individual contribution to the group, and quality of class presentation. (20% of grade)
RESERVE LIBRARY LIST
AUTHOR: Alberto Minujin and Shailen Nandy (Eds.)
TITLE: Global Child Poverty and Well-Being: Measurements, Concepts, Policy, and Action
PUBLISHER: Bristol, UK: The Policy Press
ISBN #: 9781847424815
DATE/EDITION: 2012
COST: $42.00

AUTHOR: Michael Ungar (Ed.)
TITLE: Handbook for Working with Children and Youth: Pathways to Resilience Across Cultures and Contexts
ISBN #: 9781412904056
DATE/EDITION: 2005
COST: $93.00

AUTHOR: Alberto Chong (Ed.)
TITLE: Development Connections
PUBLISHER: New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan
ISBN #: 9780230111943
DATE/EDITION: 2011
COST: $33.00

AUTHOR: Rob Salkowitz
TITLE: Youth World Rising
PUBLISHER: Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons
ISBN #: 9780470417805
DATE/EDITION: 2010
COST: $30.00

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS
AUTHOR: Welti, C.
CHAPTER TITLE: Adolescents in Latin America: Facing the future with skepticism
BOOK TITLE: The world’s youth
PUBLISHER: Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
DATE: 2002
PAGES: 276-306

AUTHOR: Besthorn, F. H.
CHAPTER TITLE: Beetles, bullfrogs, and butterflies: Contributions of the natural environment to child development and resilience
BOOK TITLE: Handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts
DATE: 2005
AUTHOR: Mapp, S. C.
CHAPTER TITLE: Chapter 7 – Educational issues
BOOK TITLE: Global child welfare and well-being
PUBLISHER: New York: Oxford University Press
DATE: 2011
PAGES: 133-152

AUTHOR: Ungar, M., Brown, B., Liebenberg, L, Othman, R., Kwong, W. M., Armstrong, M., and Gilgun, J.
ARTICLE TITLE: Unique pathways to resilience across cultures
JOURNAL: Adolescence
VOLUME: 42
DATE: 2007
PAGES: 287-310

AUTHOR: Kliewer, W., & Murrelle, L.
ARTICLE TITLE: Risk and protective factors for adolescence substance abuse: Findings from a study in selected Central American countries
JOURNAL: Journal of Adolescent Health
VOLUME: 40
DATE: 2007
PAGES: 448-455

AUTHOR: Kliewer, W., & Murrelle, L., Prom, E., Ramirez, M., Obando, P., & del Carmen Karenkeris, M.
ARTICLE TITLE: Violence exposure and drug use in Central American youth: Family cohesion and parental monitoring as protective factors
JOURNAL: Journal of Research in Adolescence
VOLUME: 16
DATE: 2006
PAGES: 455-478