Ecotourism and Social Change in Southwest China and Tibet  
RM 188/NR 185  

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Course Objectives:  
In this course we will travel to the Diquin Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture located in the Yunnan Province of Southwest China to study how tourism, as a force of globalization, is bringing change to this remote region of China. During the class, we will take a critical look at the social, economic, and environmental impacts that recently developed nature-based tourism is having on small indigenous towns and villages. We will explore the concepts of nature and tourism as cultural constructs, while looking at the development of Western style nature preserves as tourist destinations. Through home stays and community developed eco-lodge visits, we will interact with local villagers and learn about their experiences with tourism development and the specific changes it has brought to their communities.  

Specifically, the course is designed to:  

1) Analyze the role that tourism plays in rural community change in Southwest China.  

2) Gain insight into the role that international environmental NGO’s play as agents of tourism development.  

3) Explore the differences between Western and Eastern views of tourism and recreation.  

4) Learn about efforts by Chinese based NGO’s to protect biodiversity and indigenous ways of life.  

5) Take a critical look at the clash of values that tourism and globalization are producing in this region of China.
6) Learn about the political and cultural geography of modern Tibet and China.

**Prerequisites:**

Background in Recreation Management, Environmental Studies, Natural Resources, Community Development, International Development, (e.g., RM 50, RM 230, NR 1, CDAE 2, ANTH 101, or equivalent experience).

**Class Format:**

Like all travel study courses, this course has a strong emphasis on learning through direct experiences. Because of the nature of the course, active participation is essential and expected. Sharing your knowledge, feelings, and skills with others in the class will enrich the course immeasurably.

You will also need to bring a strong sense of flexibility and adventure to this class. The Tibetan region of China has only recently been open to Western tourism. And while the Chinese are eager to welcome visitors, the amenities and travel services are quite different from what the Western traveler expects.

**Readings:**

The required readings for this course are drawn from:


**Course Reader:** A course reading packet with a variety of reprints will be available prior to departure, which will include some of the following examples:


Assignments:

Because this course seeks to provide you with an opportunity to experience directly the work of ecotourism, and community development and change, assignments are a significant part of the course. You should think of these exercises as a chance to field test what you read in your reading assignments and what we discuss in class, and as a case study by which you gain a better understanding of these fields.

1. **Journal/Field Notes**: A journal is a place to practice personal or expressive writing; an individual record of educational experience that allows for a written track of a writer’s growth; a record of a trip through time. Journals are equally as valid for assessing learning as objective exams or quizzes,...but convey a much friendlier approach.

The journal that you keep will be an important part of this course. Your journal will enable you to do a good deal of personal or expressive writing. Expressive writing is the form of writing that is closest to thought. The process of writing in your journal will stimulate your imagination and help you generate ideas about your course. The entries that you make in your journal will be of special interest because you will write them in your own way. In your journal you can give full range to your ideas, and freedom to your writing style. Expressive writing of this type serves to focus what you already know, as well as to provide new points of view. Entries in your journal should allow you to enjoy writing, and to put yourself more actively into the subjects of our course.

There will be different kinds of journal entries for this course:

We will use the journals in class to start discussions, to focus attention upon topics, to draw connections between readings and class discussions, to summarize discussions, and to respond to field trips or guest speakers. Some specific examples include:

- Guest-host relationships at each site visited
- Three examples of globalization pressures you have seen that day
- Your answer to the “Question of the Day” posed by the instructors
- Comparison of the day’s activities to a course reading
- Your experiences of “culture shock”
- Your observations of change, and your speculation about the future

Longer entries of a reflective or comparative nature, reflecting upon what you have written or done, or comparing some aspect of the class with some other aspect of your life. Think of how the class relates to other classes you have taken, books you have read, and places you have visited. For these longer, reflective pieces give full range to your ideas and impressions.

2. **Ecotourism and globalization paper**: In 3 double-spaced typewritten pages or less, provide a working definition of ecotourism and operationalize the concept by providing concrete examples. Draw on the course readings as well as other sources you discover. Then, make connections between Western style tourism development and the pressures of
globalization that it may exert on Eastern ways of life.

3. **Tourist interview**: Interview three Western tourists while in China. Find out the places they visited or plan to visit, their reasons for visiting, and trace the flow of all money they spent while traveling through in China.

4. **Abstract/brief/precis of selected readings in course packet**: After you have completed readings in the course packet, write an abstract for that article and a question--related to the course objectives--that it raised for you.

5. **Research paper or project on China**: Identify a topic related to this course (China, ecotourism, globalization, change, etc.) that you are especially interested in. Research it in depth and write a research paper, properly documented. Be sure to have the instructor approve your topic as soon as you have decided on it. The final draft of the paper is due no later than one month from the last day in China, or July 15, 2004 (in Walt’s office: 357 Aiken Center.)

You will draw on your own experiences in China to frame a research question. You will then use content from, travel information you collected, books and journals in the library, interviews with knowledgeable people, the internet, etc.

**Grading and Expectations**: Each class participant is expected to participate and become actively involved in all class sessions, contributing to the growth of other class members as well; to read all class handouts and reading assignments; to complete required assignments, journal entries, etc. on time.

- Class participation: 10
- Journal: 20
- Ecotourism and Globalization Paper: 15
- Tourist interview: 10
- Abstract/brief/precis of selected readings in course packet: 15
- Research paper: 30

**TOTAL**: 100

Note: This course will require 3 pre trip meetings. During these meetings we will discuss background information about China, international travel in the Tibetan region, what to expect, and how to prepare.

**Tentative Itinerary:**

**Day 1**: **Kunming; Yunnan, China** (capital and largest city in Yunnan.)

Arrive at hotel. Settle in. Adjust to the “culture shock.”
Take a walking tour of Green Jade Dragon Park.

Visit the “Yunnan Ethnic Village” a cultural heritage park built for the Yunnan-Kunming World Expo 1999

**Day 2: Kunming, Yunnan, China**

Meet with representative from The Nature Conservancy at the TNC headquarters in Yunnan, China. Learn about TNC projects, sites, and policies in Yunnan.

**Day 3: Kunming to Lijang**

Lijang is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will stay in the old part of the city and explore the labyrinth like structure of an old world Naxi (a minority group of Yunnan) city.

**Day 4: Lijang** (a Naxi town)

Meet with representatives of Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge. (CBIK) (an ngo that works to protect cultural and natural resources of Yunnan.) We will learn about their work in the Yunnan province and their views of the Chinese Government, the TNC and the Nature Reserves.

**Day 5: Wenhai** (Naxi Village)

From Lijang we will meet with a representative of the Wenhai Eco-Lodge. We will take a 5 hour hike to a Naxi village that is the site of the lodge (there are no roads.) This eco-lodge was built in conjunction with the TNC. We will stay one night.

**Day 6: Dali via Tiger Leaping Gorge**

On our way through the mountains to Dali we will stop for half a day to visit Tiger Leaping Gorge. One of the earliest developed tourist sites in rural Yunnan this is a massive gorge located between two mountains as we start our ascent into the Himalayas.

**Day 7: Dali** (a 600 year old Han built fortress that has become a town.)

Here we will stay in a hostel in the fort and visit Cangshan Mountain, an established Chinese tourist destination. We will take a tram up the mountain to an ancient road that is now home to an interesting collection of “rural outdoor” Chinese recreation activities.

**Day 8: Dali to Jisha** (Tibetan Village)

This day is mostly on the bus. We will travel higher up into the Tibetan Plateau through amazing steep valleys along the Yangtizi River. We will stop in several villages along the way for meals.
**Day 9: Jisha** (Tibetan Village located in Yunnan)

Jisha is a village that was off the road two years ago but is now located beneath one of the TNC nature reserves. We will stay in a CBIK sponsored, community owned, Eco-Lodge.

**Day 10: Jisha and 1,000 Lakes Nature Reserve**

From Jisha we will hike into the Nature Reserve and learn see first hand what brought The Nature Conservancy and all the international attention to Yunnan.

**Day 11: Jisha to Zhongdian** (Border town between China and “Tibet”.)

Called Gyelthang by the Tibetans and Zhongdian by the Chinese this town is now refered to as “Shangri-La” due to the Shangri-la Nature Reserve established here.

We will visit a Large Yellow-Hat (Gelupa) Monastery (the Dali Lamas sect).

**Day 12: Napa-Hai Nature Reserve**

We will keep our rooms in Zhongdian and visit this Nature Reserve for a day.

**Day 13: Zhongdian to Dequin** (Tibetan Town located in Tibet)

Only opened to foreigners in 2001 this town is being bombarded with development for tourism. We will stay in a hotel here and visit the Baima Snow Mountain and Habaxueshan Nature Reserves. These Reserves are protecting an area that the UN designated as a bio-diversity hotspot.

We will visit with local Reserve Rangers.

Stay at a village lodge within the Baima Snow Mountain Reserve.

Visit a bio-gas project that is supposed to provide animal generated fuel to villagers.

**Day 14: Baima Snow Mountain**

The Tibetans consider this a holy site, but it has been developed by the Chinese as a tourist destination and they are developing infrastructure to accommodate visitors, while the Tibetans make pilgrimages around them.

**Day 15: Take bus back to Zhonogdian**

We will visit the only Tibetan Orphanage in China. It is operated by a Tibetan refugee from Switzerland, she has a unique status that allows her to work in China. This meeting
will provide the class with a unique perspective on the Chinese Tibetan relationship from a refugee view.

**Day 16: Zhongdian to Kunming**

Return to Kunming.

**Day 17: Kunming**

Relax in Kunming. Free time to explore.

Catch plane home.