

**GEOGRAPHIES OF CULTURE, RIGHTS, & POWER  
FIELD SCHOOL**

**The Global Order, Injustice, and Resistance in Guatemala**



October 2013

Greetings from UNBC Geography and Rights Action\*,

This academic year the Geography Program and Rights Action are co-organizing a Geography field school to Guatemala for the Spring 2014 semester. Below you will find an initial program outline and estimate of costs. Our tentative dates are late April/early May (on-campus) and May 2014 (Guatemala portion) – **tentatively May 12-25, 2014**.

I hope you will consider participating in this Field school and, perhaps, inform other students who may be interested as well.

The first week of the course takes place at the UNBC campus in Prince George. Students will prepare for this intense week of classes by reading material made available one month before the course commences -- tentatively planned for the end of April into early days of May 2014. During the UNBC-based seminars we will discuss both theoretical issues of power and human rights as well as specific historical and contemporary aspects of Guatemala's violent past and present. Pre-reading and course work will help to prepare you for an intense Field School experience in Guatemala.

Weeks two and three take place in Guatemala. Grahame Russell of Rights Action will facilitate all aspects of our time in Guatemala including set-up, guiding, translation, transportation, and so forth. All students will return to Antigua for a final day of reflection, discussion, and analysis of our various experiences. The final form and content of the Field school will be worked out in consultation with Rights Action, participating students, and Dr. Nolin.

Catherine Nolin, Field School organizer/facilitator

**Dr. Catherine Nolin,  
Geography Program**

3333 University Way, Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9

Tel: (250) 960-5875

email: [nolin@unbc.ca](mailto:nolin@unbc.ca)

**Grahame Russell, Co-Director**

**Rights Action, [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)**

509 St. Clair Ave W, #73527, Toronto, ON M6C 1C0

Tel: (416)-654-2074

email: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

\*Rights Action is a tax-charitable organization that funds, supports and works with community based development and human rights organizations in Latin America, and educates about global development and human rights issues.

# **GEOGRAPHIES OF CULTURE, RIGHTS, & POWER FIELD SCHOOL**

## **The Global Order, Injustice, and Resistance in Guatemala**

---

**WHERE:** UNBC – Prince George Campus & Guatemala (Central America)

**WHEN:** Tentatively scheduled for May 12 – 25, 2014 (in Guatemala)

**HOW LONG:**

8-day intensive course at UNBC.

Depart Prince George for Guatemala approx. May 12<sup>th</sup> for approx. 14 days

**REQUIRED COURSES:**

GEOGRAPHY 333 – GEOGRAPHY Field School

GEOGRAPHY 426/626 – GEOGRAPHIES of Culture, Rights & Power

**OPTIONAL COURSE:**

INDEPENDENT Study (arranged with your home program taken concurrently or immediately after the field school)

**FOR WHOM:**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year Geography, Anthropology, First Nations Studies, International Studies, Women's Studies, and Political Science students (among others) interested in indigenous issues, gender & development, human rights, solidarity and activism
- Graduate students in Geography, Interdisciplinary Studies, First Nations Studies, and related disciplines

**IMPORTANT DATE: DECEMBER 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 (Application Due) & JANUARY 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Deposit Due)**

- If accepted, a \$200 non-refundable deposit is required by January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 to confirm your participation

**LANGUAGE OF COURSE:**

- English
- Grahame Russell will provide Spanish-English translation for all meetings during the first week in Guatemala after which basic Spanish would be beneficial for ordering meals and moving about the city of Antigua for the remainder of the field school.

**COURSE REGISTRATION DETAILS:**

- All undergraduate students will register in both GEOG 333 (Field School) and GEOG 426 (Geographies of Culture, Rights, & Power). Those who already have credit for GEOG 426, may register for GEOG 499 (Independent Study) in consultation with Dr. Nolin. Graduate students will register in IDIS 791 (Field School) and GEOG 626.
- Note: Student loan requirements stipulate that students must register for 9 course credits during the Spring/Summer semester. If you anticipate the need to apply for a student loan, please ensure that you register for one additional course during the Spring/Summer semesters.

### **EXPERIENCE OF FACILITATORS:**

Dr. Catherine Nolin has long-standing interests in issues of Maya refugee movement, Guatemalan migration and refugee experiences in Canada, and solidarity organizing among Canadians in support of Guatemala's returned refugee communities and popular movement. Catherine has organized and facilitated four field schools to Guatemala in 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 (plus a graduate student delegation in August 2010), and 2012. Rights Action funds and supports projects and has strong working relations with individuals and community organizations in all the regions and communities where visits will take place.

### **WHAT**

- Examine issues of culture, rights, and power in the context of past and present experiences of political violence in Guatemala – in the classroom and in the field
- Explore the complexity of Guatemala's histories of indigenous Maya settlement, Spanish "invasion," coffee production, oil exploration, guerrilla insurgency, state counterinsurgency (state-directed violence), and the responses of local populations – all of which played a role in molding Guatemala's contemporary physical and cultural landscapes.
- Investigate actual cases of human rights & indigenous rights violations
- Learn about popular education, community and indigenous organizing and political and legal actions to address and remedy the violations
- Learn about gendered experiences of political violence and women's roles in the development process of building a "new" Guatemala
- Investigate the direct and indirect responsibilities of "global actors" (governments, global companies, investors and banks, development institutions such as the WB, IDB and IMF, etc.) for violations of human rights and indigenous rights
- Examine the ways in which Guatemala's survivors are holding global actors legally and politically accountable for their policies and actions, using a wide range of legal, quasi-legal and political strategies
- Learn about and build upon growing South-North learning experiences and global-justice alliances

### **EXAMPLES OF ISSUES TO BE EXAMINED**

The following list is general and broad. The actual issues to be focused on will be worked out over the course of the next few months.

- Canadian mining in Central America
- The negative impact of international development projects [ex: dam constructions, Plan Puebla Panama, mining activity] on the indigenous rights/human rights of individuals and communities
- Gendered experiences of political violence and women's new roles as leaders and organizers in the development process of indigenous communities and popular organizations
- Struggles for land and labour reform for *campesinos/as*, including the work of the landless movements

- Reparations for human rights violations of the past, including precedent setting genocide cases in Guatemala; reparations as part of historical and on-going legal and indigenous struggles
- Efforts to apply Covenant 169 of the ILO to defend and guarantee land and cultural rights of indigenous communities
- The potential for "Free" Trade Agreements [ex: NAFTA, the pending FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), the pending CAFTA (Central America Free Trade Area)] to perpetuate or worsen poverty (poverty being a violation of numerous over-lapping human rights)
- The negative impact of global companies (mining, food production for export, "maquiladoras," tourism) on indigenous and human rights

### **APPROACH TO LEARNING**

This seminar-field school is conceived of as modules of both theoretical and applied research learning that enable participants to learn first-hand about issues of culture, rights, and power through an exploration of political violence in Guatemala and current indigenous and human rights struggles and organizing. Additionally, students will learn about and possibly be involved with human rights education and activism to address and remedy the rights situations examined in the course. Therefore, our learning approach is grounded in experiential and transformative learning in which we recognize the value of knowledge grounded in the communities & organizations that we meet with.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

There are two major types of learning objectives that this seminar proposes to facilitate. Course requirements include:

- Active participation in the UNBC-based seminar week which includes: (1) small and large group discussions based on reading material and documentary films viewed in class; and (2) organization of discussion/critical reflection groups to be activated each evening during the field school in Guatemala; and
- The completion of a field journal, a critical reflection on various aspects of our transformative learning, and a major research project due before the end of the Summer semester, for which the field course could provide a forum for in-country interviews and gathering of material and data.

The field school facilitators encourage participants to employ their experience and learning objects in efforts to have justice done for the indigenous rights and human rights issues investigated and discussed. Examples of follow-up action include giving public presentations; consider writing newspaper articles; participation in solidarity and activist activities, and so forth.

## **FIELD SCHOOL TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (based on 2012 itinerary)**

---

The following plan is a TENTATIVE scenario. The actual program – form and content – will be worked out over the next few months.

### **Late April / Early May – CULTURE, RIGHTS, AND POWER SEMINAR – UNBC CAMPUS**

- ⊕ Students will receive reading material and reading list approx. one month before the start date. We begin our seminar with the expectation that students have read the course material in advance.

### **May 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> – PRE-DEPARTURE MEETING – UNBC CAMPUS**

- ⊕ Dr. Nolin and students will meet to discuss final logistics.

### **Approx. May 12<sup>th</sup> – ALL PARTICIPANTS DEPART FROM PRINCE GEORGE AND/OR VANCOUVER TOGETHER**

#### **FIRST WEEK:**

- **ARRIVAL IN GUATEMALA, MEET WITH GRAHAME RUSSELL**
- **ORIENTATION IN GUATEMALA CITY**
- **OVERNIGHT VISITS TO RURAL AREAS**
  - ⊕ Participatory visits, discussions and interviews concerning the situations of the people and communities living in situations of violations of their indigenous rights & human rights as well as women leaders in issues of community development

**MID-WAY BREAK:** In the old colonial capital of Antigua (1 or 2 nights)

#### **SECOND WEEK:**

- **THROUGHOUT RURAL AREAS**
- **MEET WITH EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES (POTENTIALLY CANADIAN AMBASSADOR)**

#### **LAST DAY: RETURN TO ANTIGUA**

- FINAL MEETING WITH GRAHAME RUSSELL IN ANTIGUA
- Final meeting to de-brief, offer critical reflections of field trip experiences, and plan future directions for major term papers and follow-up advocacy

**APPROX. May 24<sup>th</sup> – DEPART GUATEMALA AND RETURN TO CANADA [or continue travel on your own]**

#### **RISKS**

Pre-departure meetings will involve frank discussions with students about potential risks related to participation in this seminar: militarized countries; gender issues; dangers of front-line activism; crime; health; and so forth. Participants will be required to sign a waiver, accepting responsibility for what might happen during the field school.

**COSTS:**

- Students are expected to pay UNBC tuition fees separately from field school fees.
- Group travel arrangements will be made for transportation from Prince George to Guatemala. We will explore the options for best prices and routings.
- Costs will depend in part upon the number of participants. A smaller number of participants mean that relative costs of “shared expenses” [translation, transportation] increase.
- The following is a summary of general costs. Over-all costs would vary depending on the numbers of participants and the amount of traveling involved.

**PARTICIPANT APPROXIMATE COSTS BASED ON 10 PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Expense</b>
Weeks One & Two: food, accommodation, translation, guiding, and honorariums for local community-based groups – based on approx. 14 days in-country	\$1400 (approx.)
<b>Total excluding:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Airfare</li><li>• meals in Antigua</li><li>• spending money</li><li>• UNBC tuition fees &amp; reading material</li></ul>	\$900-\$1000 \$60 \$150 (?) \$1000
<b>Rough Guide to Total Costs</b>	<b>\$3600</b>