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**Course Syllabus Spring 2026**

**IDS 297 – International Culture and Study Abroad**

**IDS 297 (International Culture & Study Abroad**) satisfies a General Education requirement in the Public Affairs category, under Cultural Competence, for students who follow the General Education requirements that began in the fall of 2014. IDS 397 fulfills an upper division elective credit only. It does not apply to MSU’s general education requirement in Public Affairs.3 (S)

# INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION:

**Instructor Name:** Dr. Melanie Carden-Jessen

**Email:** MCardenJessen@missouristate.edu

**Phone:** 417-224-5219

**Office Hours:** 9:30 am – 12:00 pm, Tuesday - Thursday

**Office Location:** Blunt Hall 367 and prearranged on Zoom link via Brightspace

# COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS:

Please use ONLY your MSU email when emailing me in this course. Many emails are regarding items that impact your lab as well. Please include your lab section so I can better serve you when communicating. Not including this information could delay my response to you. If you send an email during the week (Monday – Friday), I will respond to your email within 24 hours. Emails sent over the weekend or during breaks/holidays will receive a response within 48 hours.  If you prefer to speak to me on the phone, I can be reached during office hours (except when the university is closed). If you leave a message, I will return your call within 24 hours during the week. If you leave a message after 5:00 p.m. on Friday or the weekend, it will be the following Monday before I can return your call.

# **STUDENT SUCCESS AND** INCLUSIVITY:

At Missouri State University, we are committed to your success and creating an environment welcoming all students. As a community of learners, we acknowledge the value in engaging and exchanging ideas with individuals whose backgrounds may differ from ours.

A key element to your success as a student is to actively engage in the course activities with your peers and me - your instructor. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers during the course, contact me immediately to discuss options for addressing those barriers. Missouri State University (as an institution) and I (as a human being and instructor of this course) are committed to full inclusion in education for all persons. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to persons with temporary and permanent disabilities, students facing mental health or other personal challenges, and students with other learning challenges. Please let me know if circumstances affect your ability to participate in class. Some resources that might be of use include:

* [Disability Resource Center](https://www.missouristate.edu/disability/)
* [Counseling Center](https://counselingcenter.missouristate.edu/)
* [Multicultural Center](https://multicultural.missouristate.edu/)
* [Academic Advising & Transfer Center](https://www.missouristate.edu/advising/)

COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Activities: Students will engage in fieldwork activities, including surveys, interviews, mapping, sampling, and analysis, to evaluate the human impacts on natural resources resulting from climate change and land use. The specific projects for the March 2026 program will be tailored to align with the interests of the participating students. Possible topics include the economic impact of ecotourism, water quality, the physical condition of local streams, changes along the coastline, coral reef health, and soil management practices.

Under the guidance of faculty mentors, students will formulate a research proposal, collect and analyze data, and produce their findings. They will share the results both verbally and in written reports with the local community and other interested groups. Necessary supplies and equipment will be provided, although students may need to assist in transporting them to Jamaica. Community service during the program will include installing water catchment systems for two residents of Bluefields Bay, conducting educational programming in three local schools for ages 3-12, and installing a new Hawksbill turtle exhibit at the Treasure Beach Turtle Group Museum.

Research projects will be developed in collaboration with faculty advisors prior to the commencement of the program. A report detailing background information and research objectives will be presented to the class before departure. Additionally, students will be required to maintain a daily journal documenting their experiences in Jamaica.

Each student will submit a portfolio addressing points 1 - 3, which will be assessed by the MSU faculty member leading the study away experience:

1. Student demonstrates and articulates an increased understanding of and respect for multiple cultural perspectives, submitting a journal with daily observations
2. Student articulates how the experience shaped his/her perspective about their own and the host culture in a reflective essay.
3. Grammar reflects an educated person

# **Prerequisites**: None

Course Format: Pre-trip seated, Education Abroad travels over Spring break March 13-21, 2026

Classroom Location: Blunt Hall 117

Meeting Days and Times: 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm, Wednesdays

# LEARNING OUTCOMES:

##### As part of the Public Affairs – Cultural Competence section of the General Education Program, IDS 297 seeks to help students prepare for their roles as world citizens by cultivating civic virtues and understanding the bonds that unite people.

**Public Affairs:**

**a. Community Engagement**

**General Goal (12):** Students will be able to recognize the importance of contributing their knowledge and experiences to their own communities and the broader society.

**3.** Utilize knowledge from academic fields, making relevant connections to civic and political participation.

**4.** Recognize the needs of the communities to which they belong and understand how to address those needs.

**b. Cultural Competency**

**General Goal (13):** Students will be able to recognize and consider multiple perspectives and cultures.

**1.** Examine and articulate perspectives and behaviors they acquire in their homes, schools, and

communities.

**2.** Understand, critically examine, and articulate key similarities and differences between their own cultural practices and perspectives and those of other cultures, past and present.

**3.** Identify the importance and best practices of developing skills for working/interacting with others.

**This course seeks to meet the following course goals common to all IDS 297 courses; the General Education goals to which the course goals correspond are indicated.**

1. To identify historical, social, and cultural events that shapedJamaica’s national identity and culture, as well as distinctive regional or minority identities and cultures. **(13.2)**
2. To utilize knowledge from a variety of fields to become an educated participant in society. **(12.3 + 13.1)**
3. To obtain an understanding of current events and key issues and concerns facing society in Jamaica and one’s own to become a better citizen. **(12.4; 13.2)**
4. To reflect on similarities and/or differences from their own culture’s perspectives on similar issues. **(12.4 ; 13.1; 13.2)**
5. To reflect on their interactions with individuals and institutions in the host culture. **(13.3)**

# REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

Textbook: None

**Additional Materials:** You will need a current passport and/or travel visa.

Technology**:**

Technology is a part of our everyday lives at the university, and there is important information you should know about your computer’s capabilities, Internet access, Brightspace, and other technology tools, whether you are participating in a classroom on campus or taking an online class. We will have several classes delivered via video, and campus closures will switch to online delivery as well. We may have opportunities to visit with our Jamaica partners via Zoom before our travels. Make sure your computer is updated and can join via Zoom.

### Computer Requirements:

For information on the basic computer requirements to be successful in class visit the [Knowledge Base for Computer Requirements](https://missouristate.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/1931/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=107376) on the Missouri State University website.

Brightspace:

Brightspace will be used for our course. I will use the announcements tool to post information about the course as the semester progresses. All course assessments will be submitted through Brightspace (this includes any written assignments, quizzes, tests, etc.). You will also have access to view your grades through the Grades link so you can stay up to date on how you are doing in the course. If you are unfamiliar with how to use Brightspace, I recommend reviewing the [Brightspace Basics for Students](https://missouristate.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/1931/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=146951) on the Computer Services Knowledge Base.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

All students are expected to participate in the culture and sustainability activities fully. The students are expected to assist in installing water catchment systems (25%), participate in all activities in Jamaica (35%), journal (20%), and write a reflection essay (20%).

As part of the MSU education abroad experience and general education learning outcomes, students’ journals will be reviewed by MSU faculty to help us understand what students are gaining from the program. The assessment will be the extent to which:

1. Student demonstrates and articulates an increased understanding of and respect for multiple cultural perspectives; submit a minimum of 4 observations.
2. Student articulates how the experience shaped their perspective about their own and host culture.
3. Grammar reflects an educated person.

# COURSE SPECIFIC POLICIES:

**Classes During Campus Closures**

Classes will move to remote learning when the university is closed due to an emergency or inclement weather. What this means for our class is that we will meet via Zoom during our regularly scheduled class time, which will be recorded and made available in Brightspace for students unable to attend synchronously, and you will complete and submit an online assignment by the specified due date. Alternatively, alternative materials will be posted to Brightspace for you to watch/read/review. I will communicate by posting announcements on Brightspace and notify you by email of any changes to scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments that may be impacted. If you cannot participate in the remote learning activities described (for example, due to a power outage), you should contact me as soon as possible so alternative arrangements can be made.

# HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS COURSE:

To be successful in this course, I ask that you focus on these key things:

* Be prepared. This course asks that you prepare for class by reading and reviewing content on a weekly basis. As your instructor, I will guide your learning and facilitate discussion.
* Be an active participant. To be successful in this class, you must be involved and participate in the learning process.
* Take steps to avoid distractions while you are working on homework.
* Be respectful. In this course, we will be exposed to various backgrounds and opinions that may differ from our own. Everyone in this class should feel comfortable expressing their viewpoints and concerns. We are each an important part of creating the atmosphere that makes this possible.
* Act with integrity. As a part of a learning community, you are expected to act with integrity in all your classes, including this one. To clarify academic integrity and avoid unintentionally violating it, read the Academic Integrity policy listed on the [University Policy website](https://www.missouristate.edu/provost/bbsyllabus.htm). If you have any questions about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity or any other issues related to academic integrity, please ask me.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

The purpose of the [University Syllabus Policy Statements](https://www.missouristate.edu/provost/bbsyllabus.htm) is to support teaching and learning on the Missouri State campus. The established policies are in place to ensure that students, faculty, and staff may pursue academic endeavors with as few obstacles as possible.

As a student at Missouri State University, you are a part of the university community therefore, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the [University Syllabus Policy Statements](https://www.missouristate.edu/provost/bbsyllabus.htm). These policies cover topics such as nondiscrimination, disability accommodation, academic integrity, among many others. For program and course specific policies please refer to the individual course syllabus provided by your instructor.

# CULTURAL COMPETENCE:

**Cultural Competence**, as one of the pillars of the Public Affairs Mission at Missouri State University (MSU), is the capacity to empathize with and ability to effectively and appropriately interact with people who have different backgrounds. These individuals and groups include, but are not limited to, differences in nationality, culture, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, and socio-economic status. Cultural consciousness involves understanding how these differences impact access to higher education and inclusion in the broader community. Cultural competence requires humility and a lifelong pursuit of knowledge and awareness of differences relative to one's worldview (Statement jointly developed by the Provost Diversity Council and The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, May 2021).

# COPYRIGHT & FAIR USE STATEMENT:

This course may contain copyrighted material, the use of which may not have been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. This material is available in an effort to explain issues relevant to the course or to illustrate the use and benefits of an educational tool. The material contained in this course is distributed without profit for research and educational purposes. Only small portions of the original work are being used and those could not be used easily to duplicate the original work. This should constitute a ‘fair use’ of any such copyrighted material (referenced and provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law).

If you wish to use any copyrighted material from this course for purposes of your own that go beyond ‘fair use’, you must obtain expressed permission from the copyright owner.

STATEMENT OF FLEXIBILITY:

Please note that the course calendar, my office hours, etc. are subject to change due to inclement weather, student needs, instructional delays, etc. I will communicate any changes that may occur in class (when possible) and through the course announcements on Brightspace.