Course Outline & Syllabus:
Sustainable livelihood and reconstruction in Nepal

UNIV 301: Special Topics in Global Issues
(A Global Issues Capstone)
CECS 497: Directed Studies

I. General Information

- Faculty: Dr. Birgit Penzenstadler
- Email: birgit.penzenstadler@csulb.edu
- Office & Hours: ECS-536, Tue/Thu 5:30-6:30 and individual appointments
- Units: 3 units for UNIV 301, 3 units for CECS 497
- Date prepared/revised: March 15, 2016

II. Description

This short-term, study abroad course is about sustainable living and resilience, and about rebuilding infrastructure after major impacts like natural catastrophes. Nepal was hit by a major earthquake earlier this year and therefore serves as a perfect example of how to rebuild infrastructure relying on local, renewable resources, and advancing the technological infrastructure by means of well-conducted community interaction. Students will learn how to reconstruct and build new infrastructure in a sustainable way and then work in a local project for building a school and a community center.

The abroad part of the course is conducted in collaboration with Conscious Impact, a volunteer organization founded by US citizens in Nepal, and YUWA Unity Nepal. The trip will take place December 26 – January 6. The work is performed in Takhure, a village in central Sindhupalchok at the heart of the earthquake damage. Takhure is a very remote village. We will sleep in tents, in sleeping bags we bring with us, and there is little electricity. We will be provided with food.

Students pay the Conscious Impact volunteer organization directly for the local transport (transfer from the airport) and accommodation (lodging and food) via the online platform empowered.org when they enroll for the course. More details are available on http://web.csulb.edu/~bpenzens/nepal

Prerequisites for UNIV 301: Completion of GE Foundation requirements and upper-division standing. Students must have scored 11 or higher on the GWAR Placement Examination or completed the necessary portfolio course that is a prerequisite for a GWAR Writing Intensive Capstone.

Prerequisites for CES 497: Consent of Instructor.

Academic Honesty: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Any individual caught cheating on quizzes, homework, lab projects, or the final exam will be punished to the full extent allowed under University regulations. Plagiarism on papers or assignments is not acceptable and work that is plagiarized will not receive credit. Plagiarism is considered cheating.

Note: any time another person’s work is used without giving them proper credit, it is considered
plagiarism and cheating. At a minimum, any student caught cheating will receive no credit for the work concerned, and will receive a reduction of one letter grade from their final course grade. The official CSULB Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism can be found here: http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/current/academic_information/cheating_plagiarism.html

III. Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Each individual course might have subject-specific learning outcomes but common learning outcomes for the course will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal related to course content</th>
<th>Assessment / measurement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing country setting and nature catastrophe context</td>
<td>Student will develop a thorough understanding of the setting in a developing country, life in Nepalese rural communities, the impact of the 2015 earthquakes, and sustainable building techniques with local, renewable resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ad-hoc organization in international teams</td>
<td>Students will learn to interact with the local community in Nepal and organize their daily activities in teams with the locals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable Building Techniques</td>
<td>Students will learn about sustainable building techniques with clay, bamboo and other renewable resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness as citizens of a highly developed country in a global community</td>
<td>Student will develop analysis skills for assessing infrastructural contexts in case of nature catastrophes, for disaster response and development support; for the example of Nepal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Differences between the US and Nepal</td>
<td>Students will develop a deep understanding of two contrasting worldviews (US and Nepal), and gain experience in meaningful interaction with the Nepalese culture. Experiencing the stark contrast between society and socio-cultural context in the US and Nepal will improve the students’ sensitivity for cultural diversity around the globe.</td>
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**Understanding Volunteer Organizations and Global Action**

Students will develop an understanding of how global volunteer organizations work and how they can achieve sustainable impact. This prepares them for developing and advocating for informed, appropriate action to solve complex problems in the human and natural worlds on a global level.

Students will experience the day-to-day work in an international volunteer organization during the stay abroad and evidence their reflections in the journal and the final essay.

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**IV. Course Outline**

Subject matter and sequence of topics will vary depending on the instructor and the topics under investigation. In some cases the study abroad course follows on a semester-long campus-based course. Where not, there are typically at least two to three class sessions at CSULB prior to departure for the study abroad location.

**Pre-Departure Course Sessions at CSULB:**

**Session #1: Introduction to Course and Overview of Study Abroad trip logistics**

This session will introduce the rebuild project, the organization Conscious Impact, the travel details (including transfer, accommodation, safety, insurance, etc.), and an overview of Nepalese culture.

**Session #2: Introduction to sustainability and long-term development support**

This session will introduce students to the concepts of 1) sustainability, 2) resilience, 3) global disaster response and 4) long-term development support. This includes an exploration of how the availability and use of information and communication technology is shaping each of those concepts.

**Session #3 : Introduction to sustainable building practices and design plans**

Topics will be provided for students according to their background. Examples include:

- Sustainable building practices in Nepal
- Information and Communication Technology for development in Nepal
- Supporting resilient community building in Nepal

*Preparation paper:* The students will prepare a short paper of 1000 words on their (1) preparation and (2) expectations and concerns before the departure. This will provide them with the possibility to compare their knowledge before the trip and their expectations with their status of knowledge when they return.

*Revision:* The students will receive feedback on the preparation paper and then have the opportunity to submit a revised version before leaving for the abroad part of the course.

**Study Abroad Course Sessions (10 consecutive days with 9h work/day plus travel):**

**Sessions #4-15:**

We will begin by building two primary schools in collaboration with the community, and ultimately help to create a training center for alternative building technologies and organic agriculture to help the region rebuild for years to come. They will gain experience in building
with brick, cob, bamboo, stone, wood, rammed earth and many more alternative building methods. Furthermore, specifically CS students will work with Conscious Impact on planning IT infrastructure based on donated technology and with the constraint of limited, unreliable energy supply as present in the village.

*Daily participation* in the work tasks of this building project is essential to CSULB’s contribution to the Conscious Impact project.

*Journal of observations:* Students will journal on their experiences and summarize for each day (1) what their work tasks were and how they organized the work, (2) what they learned in terms of physical skills, communication, and social interaction, and (3) what other observations they made with regard to the country, culture, nature, and people surrounding them.

*Final Essay:* Students will write a final 2500 word essay after their return.  
*Revision:* The students will receive feedback on the final essay within a week and then have the opportunity to submit a revised version.

### Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content &amp; Location</th>
<th>Assignments / Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 weeks before departure</td>
<td>Session 1, CSULB: Introduction to Course and Overview of Study Abroad trip logistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 weeks before departure</td>
<td>Session 2: Introduction to sustainability and long-term development support</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 weeks before departure</td>
<td>Session 3: Introduction to sustainable building practices and design plans</td>
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<td>3 weeks before departure</td>
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<td>Preparation paper</td>
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<td>2 weeks before departure</td>
<td>Feedback on preparation paper via Beachboard</td>
<td>Revision preparation paper</td>
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<td>1 week before departure</td>
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<td>January 2</td>
<td>Departure from the US</td>
<td>Self-organization</td>
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<td>January 4</td>
<td>Arrival in Kathmandu, Transfer to Village, team introduction and work organization</td>
<td>Journal of observations</td>
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<td>January 5 – January 14</td>
<td>Work tasks, community engagement and development, support in establishing a training center, optional engagement in children’s education or language classes or similar voluntary activities</td>
<td>Journal of observations</td>
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<td>January 15</td>
<td>Wrap-up meeting, feedback round, transfer to airport, departure from Nepal</td>
<td>Journal of observations</td>
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<td>January 16</td>
<td>Arrival in the US</td>
<td>Journal of observations</td>
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<td>January 22 (tbd!)</td>
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<td>Final essay</td>
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<td>January 31 (tbd!)</td>
<td>Feedback on final essay via Beachboard</td>
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<td>February 8 (tbd!)</td>
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<td>Revision final essay</td>
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V. Methods of Instruction
The pre-departure sessions will consist of lectures, self-study of background literature and online videos. Abroad, the instruction consists of hands-on tutorials on the used building techniques and guidance in their application in the project.

VI. Extent and Nature of Use of Technology
Beachboard will be used to communicate with students in the class, as well as to provide assignment sheets and other instructionally related materials to students. Film, video, and music will be used in the classroom. For the stay abroad, the students will bring paper notebooks and pens and, optionally, small photo or video cameras, but no laptops because the village does not have sufficient electricity for charging these devices.

VII. Reading list
It is recommended to read the following resources:
• How to Write a Lot - Paul J Sylvia
• Thinking in systems: A primer – Donella Meadows
• Sustainability: Principles and Practice – Margaret Robertson
• The story of stuff – Annie Lennard
• The end of poverty – Jeffrey Sachs
• A beard in Nepal – Fiona Roberts

VIII. Instructional Policies Requirements
Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will lead to a non-passing grade. Absence from the pre-departure sessions will only be tolerated in case of a concurrent course that the student has to attend and will have to be made up by watching a recording of the class session and more extensive journal writing.

IX. Student-Level Assessment
- Preparation paper: 10%
- Preparation paper Revise: 10%
- Journal of observations: 25%
- Final Essay: 15%
- Final Essay Revise: 15%
- Daily Participation: 25%