Course Overview

After Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico in 2017, the island’s energy infrastructure was destroyed. The lack of electricity in rural areas for months following the storm contributed to thousands of post-hurricane deaths. As the island rebuilds, there are calls for replacing the fossil-fuel based centralized grid with renewable microgrids, making use of abundant solar, wind, and water resources. This course will explore the complications of such a seemingly simple solution. Any community attempting to reduce its carbon footprint must deal not only with technological challenges, but also consider the economic, political, historical, and ethical issues unique to each location.

*Laudato Si* is well known in Catholic circles as Pope Francis’ call to “care for our common home.” In fact, the Church has been advocating for “energy ethics” at least as early as a statement from the US Catholic bishops in 1981. Concepts such as moral globalization and intergenerational justice have moved front and center with the looming climate crisis. We are at the cusp of an age when clean, reliable energy could become affordable for all as a human right, or fossil fuels will continue to be a dominant path to short-term profits. Puerto Rico reflects this very reality- teetering between becoming either an island of renewable microgrids or a natural gas distribution hub for the Caribbean.

**During a required weeklong immersion in Puerto Rico over fall break,** participants will have time to listen and learn about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The week will be split between San Juan and the mountain town of Adjuntas. The main goal will be to gain insights from those caught in the struggle of rebuilding; the hard choices they must make and the complicated, sometimes messy path they are trying to forge. In Adjuntas, students will engage with the staff of an award winning community center, Casa Pueblo. This organization, led by Arturo Massol Deyá and his father Alexis Massol Gonzalez, has united much of the community around environmental stewardship. Other learning opportunities will include visits to historical and cultural sites, interaction with college students, and conversations with community leaders in San Juan. **There is no charge to participants.**

In weekly classes before the trip, participants will meet with members of the Puerto Rican diaspora; review a non-technical survey of energy options and the social and economic ramifications of each; and most importantly examine their own life styles and enter into frank discussions about choices made on a daily basis that affect the environment.

Puerto Rico’s story is being played out in thousands of villages and towns around the world, as we all struggle with the balance between personal comfort and convenience vs. our responsibility as Christians to our common home and the future of the planet. Post-trip, participants will choose a project that will engage them as active citizens, sharing what they have learned and encouraging others to pay closer attention to energy choices being made in their own lives.

**The goals of this course are that each participant shall…**

1. Gain an appreciation of the history, economics, politics, and cultural heritage of Puerto Rico.
2. Understand the energy options for the island and the economic/social/political implications of each.
3. Observe how a community can be united around a common cause and the characteristics of effective leadership.
4. Learn to listen with an open and informed mind, respecting each person’s right to speak honestly based on his personal history and aspirations.
5. Examine her personal lifestyle and attitudes in regards to consumption in light of the immersion experience and Catholic Social Teaching.
6. Take steps to become an active citizen, considering ways to take a leadership role and advocate for those whose voices are muted.

Course Requirements

The seminar, *Puerto Rico: Road Map to a Renewable Future* is a one credit course, graded “S” or “U.” It may be used for the capstone credit for the Energy Studies Minor. In order to receive an “S” for the course, the following requirements must be met:

- Active participation in all on-campus classes
- Completion of assignments and final project
- Enthusiastic engagement in activities during mandatory week in Puerto Rico.

Class Expectations

In order to learn effectively as a group, each participant must be willing to share and listen. Living conditions in Puerto Rico will not be equivalent to dorm life and may require some tolerance and resiliency. To maximize the learning experience, students should be willing to…

- Complete required background readings and be prepared to discuss the materials.
- Be active listeners, absorbing what the speaker is saying rather than thinking about their responses.
- Show respect for informed opinions and disagree intelligently.
- Be willing to try new foods and experiences, showing appreciation for efforts put forth on behalf of the group.
- Step outside of personal comfort zones and allow the course to be life changing.

Grading

- Satisfactory:
  - All written assignments are on time, contain accurate insights into each topic, and are professionally composed.
  - There is active participation in each meeting, listening as well as speaking.
  - Behavior during the immersion experience shows respect for the host and fellow participants.
  - The final project is completed on time and reflects a strong connection between the activities in the course and a future commitment to civic engagement.

- Unsatisfactory:
  - This course is primarily designed to be a learning experience. Students who do not complete assignments, do not participate actively, or detract from the learning of others in the group will be warned and given an unsatisfactory grade if improvement is not made. The week in Puerto Rico is required for a satisfactory grade.

**Academic Code of Honor and Dulac**

All participants are expected to uphold the Academic Code of Honor pledge, “As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.” See the complete Student...
Guide at http://honorcode.nd.edu. Violation of any portion of DuLac, including while in Puerto Rico, may result in a referral to the Office of Community Standards and may affect the course grade.

Note about Health and Accessibility Concerns

It is our hope that this seminar will be accessible to all who are chosen to participate. However, while in Puerto Rico, time will be spent outside in a hilly environment that some may find challenging. Please contact Anne Pillai, apillai@nd.edu, if you anticipate problems so that we can try to make appropriate accommodations. In addition, the CDC recommends some vaccinations and precautions that each participant should discuss with his health care provider in a timely manner. All participants must have their own health insurance policies.

Course Calendar (order is tentative at this time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT DUE*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>-Introductions</td>
<td>Assignment #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Syllabus review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Catholic Social Tradition as the foundation of the course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Energy consumption in our lives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest: Fr. Terry Ehrman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>-Puerto Rico: energy, economics, politics, and Hurricane Maria</td>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Watch the documentary, Blackout from PBS Frontline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>-Casa Pueblo: Building a community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Watch presentation by Arturo Massol Deyá from Casa Pueblo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>-Puerto Rico: energy, history, politics, and culture</td>
<td>Assignment #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Guest: Yamil Colon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>-Trip preparation</td>
<td>Assignment #4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Guest: NDI representative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Puerto Rican students/faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>-Puerto Rico current events</td>
<td>Assignment #5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Student presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19 afternoon to 10/25 afternoon</td>
<td>IMMERSION IN SAN JUAN AND ADJUNTAS (Required)</td>
<td>Daily Journaling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>-Debriefing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What next- Active citizenship project planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>-Presentation of final project</td>
<td>Assignment #5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assignment #1:

Read:

- Laudato Si: On Care of Our Common Home by Pope Francis
  - Read at least these sections: 13-26; 49;53-61;93-95;102-105;172; 217

Write:

- Write a 500-word reflection about new thoughts or insights that you have garnered in relationship to the themes of this seminar. Do NOT summarize what you have read. This paper is due before class begins.

Assignment #2:

Read:

- ND Energy’s page summarizing its involvement with Puerto Rico. Select at least three links from each of the three main sections (About Puerto Rico; Puerto Rico’s energy grid and Hurricane Maria; and Future options) to gain a broad understanding of Puerto Rico before and after Hurricane Maria.

Write:

- List five new insights that you gained from the readings you chose. This list is due before class begins.

Assignment #3:

Read:

- Casa Pueblo, Cultivating Hope, by Alexis Massol González; English PDF provided

Write:

- Write a 500-word reflection about new thoughts or insights that you have garnered in relationship to the themes of this seminar. Do NOT summarize what you have read. This paper is due before class begins.

Assignment #4:

- Each student will find an article from a major news source about Puerto Rico published within the past month that brings the group up-to-date on relevant issues such as energy projects, new laws relevant to energy, community initiatives, etc. These must be pre-approved to avoid replication. Prepare and present a 5-10 minute PowerPoint presentation and be ready to offer a point for discussion if it does not happen organically.

Assignment #5:

- Final presentation

It is the goal of this course to take students beyond “thoughts and prayers” and into the realm of active citizenship. As a Notre Dame student, you are called not to “hide your light under a bushel basket” but rather to be a leader and serve those on the margins. While in Puerto Rico, we will form groups and plan how to share what we’ve learned with the broader community. These projects might include such things as a letter writing campaign to Congress, an event on campus or in dorms, interaction with the Puerto Rican community on campus or in the South Bend community, or updating ND Energy’s webpage on Puerto Rico.
Journaling:
Participants will take time each evening to reflect on the days’ events and participate in a group conversation as time allows.

Schedule in Puerto Rico (tentative)

1. Saturday, October 19, San Juan
   a. Arrive by Saturday evening
   b. Group meeting and orientation

2. Sunday, October 20, San Juan
   a. Tour historic San Juan
   b. Conversation/Mass/meal with students at Universidad del Sagrado Corazón

3. Monday/Tuesday, October 21 and 22
   a. Meet with groups in San Juan who are working on energy projects and rebuilding
   b. Main contact- Ricardo Alvarez
      i. IBD Energy- contracted to build largest microgrid in PR
      ii. Other members of the Resilient Puerto Rico Advisory Commission
   c. Meet with member of the Center of the New Economy

4. Tuesday evening- Friday morning, October 22-25: Casa Pueblo, Adjuntas
   a. Learn about Casa Pueblo from the founding family
      i. History
      ii. How they built community
      iii. Tour radio station, movie theater, forest school
   b. Meet with members of the community regarding future of solar microgrids
   c. Meet with solar technical professionals to learn about issues with installation and maintenance
   d. Service Project
   e. Begin group planning for final project

5. Friday morning, October 25
   a. Return to San Juan
   b. Free time

Attendance Policy

It is very important to attend every session pre/post immersion as well as participate each day in Puerto Rico. Only University approved absences will be excused and appropriate documentation should be provided. Notification of absences should be sent to the seminar directors as soon as possible. Make-up assignments cannot replace the team building that we hope to achieve. If you are part of interhall or club sports that will not allow you the flexibility to attend each class, you should not apply for this seminar.