

Overview

Name: Anita Carrasco & Beth Lynch

Institution: Luther College

Department: Anthropology & Biology

Email Address: carran02@luther.edu

Activity Title: Social Impacts of Tourism in San Pedro de Atacama

Activity Summary:

First students will watch the documentary film ‘Cannibal Tours’ by Dennis O’Rourke (available free on Youtube). Documentary filmmaker Dennis O’Rourke is convinced that humans are not interested in reality or truth. He argues that we seek truth, which is our fantasy of it (just listen to the discourses of the tourists and the natives in “Cannibal Tours”). If we really want to understand the world in which we live, we must transcend simplicity and slogans and seek meaning in chaos and complexity. Students will have to write an essay responding to the following interconnected issues:

(1) How do we move past our own fantasies and emotions to understand the realities of people and places we visit? How do we see past appearances to understand the social problems that tourism brings to the community?

(2) How does the inequality between you, the tourist, and the native people of San Pedro affect your interactions with them? Film-maker Dennis O’Rourke argued that: “The promoted idea of tourism as ‘a dialogue between cultures’ is a myth; because there exists such an economic and cultural disparity between the protagonists, that all human encounter is inevitably distorted”. Read the attached anecdote O’Rourke shares about the process of making his documentary “Cannibal Tours” and reflect whether you think what O’Rourke describes for the case of Papua New Guinea (inequality between the observer and the observed distorting all interactions) is to some extent also happening (or not) in the relationship between natives and tourists interactions in San Pedro de Atacama.

Course Context and Learning Goals

Context:

(1) This activity will be used in the study abroad course: ‘The impacts of Mining and Tourism on Indigenous Peoples and the Environment in Northern Chile’. One of the goals of this course is to ask students to problematize the role of tourism and how it impacts native cultures and the environment.

(2) Students will have already started or completed an assignment to study the ecological impacts of tourism.

(3) To complete the activity students will have had to watch the documentary film “Cannibal Tours” by Dennis O’Rourke and it will be recommended that they read the essay “On the making of Cannibal Tours” by the same author. In addition, they will have spent several days in the village of San Pedro de Atacama conducting participant observation by visiting at least two or three tourist attractions in the village and keeping daily fieldnotes. Students must engage in at least three informal conversations with other tourists and if Spanish skill allows, they should also speak with a couple of natives. Students will also make detailed notes of a visit places like the artisanal market, the archaeological museum and examine two or three restaurant menus and to see if they fit the ‘stereotype’ they had of ‘Andean Culture’ before their visit to the village.

Learning Goals:

- (a) Students will understand that there is a stereotype about native peoples and places that influences what we look for as tourists and how the natives and the tourist industry respond to our stereotype.
- (b) Students will understand that the tourist industry creates socio-economic inequalities and serious ecological pressures on scarce resources such as water.

Objectives:

- Students should be able to document in written form the world of appearances (what they think, pre-conceptions and stereotypes).
- Students be able to contrast their first impressions with what they think after they dig beneath the surface.

Multidisciplinary analysis:

- Students will be asked to make connections between their and other tourists’ stereotypes about what it means to be ‘Andean’.
- Students will make connections between the social and ecological consequences that result from the efforts the tourist industry and the natives make to provide for these stereotypes.

Other skills goals:

- Students will learn systematic documentation of field observations.
- Students will learn some basic interviewing skills to talk with other tourists.
- Students will learn to compare and contrast data from a variety of different sources (written, conversational, experiential, observational).

Description and Teaching Materials

Description:

If another faculty member would like to teach or modify this activity, they could do so successfully in the context of a course that is examining the relationship between the transnational tourist industry and native cultures and the environment around the world. Essential materials for this activity are the documentary film available at the url address provided below:

--Cannibal Tours 1988 Documentary available at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQiDufdir_M

Teaching Notes:

This activity has not been tested out yet, however, as soon as it has been used during the January 2015 version of this study abroad course, full notes with tips and what worked and did not work will be included under this heading on teaching notes.

Assessment and Resources**Discussion:**

Students will give 10-15 minute presentation to the group where they address at least two of the following issues:

- What they thought about “Andean culture” before and after this activity.
- Describe their and other tourists’ stereotypes of native peoples and the environment.
- What efforts did they see natives and tourist industry making to meet these fantasies of Andean society and environment.
- How does something that could be taken as ‘anecdotal’ as someone’s private fantasy, affect natural resources like water (ecology).
- How does the commoditization of culture affect authenticity (anthropology).

After each student has presented, we will engage in a group discussion addressing major points.

Writing Assignment:

Students will write a 2-3 page single spaced essay on their understanding of Andean culture, tourism and the environment. They will detail their concerns regarding their needs as tourists and the needs of the natives and the environment. They will ask who pays the cost of tourism and who benefits from this industry. They will discuss their concerns and potential solutions. In sum, they will discuss ethical issues in the tourist industry they are experiencing in Atacama.

More specifically, a successful assignment completion will be assessed based on the following rubric:

- (a) Identifies a social problem;
- (b) Asks a question(s) that can be responded to with evidence;
- (c) Provides evidence from a variety of source types and perspectives;
- (d) Ideas are well organized and clearly written;
- (e) Clearly establishes difference between own opinion and what the evidence says;
- (f) Demonstrates curiosity and initiative in completing the assignment.
- (g) Broadly speaking, we are assessing whether students were successful in describing the ethical complexities of the tourist experience.

Resources:

For faculty interested in replicating this assignment, it is recommended that they read the essay titled, “On The Making of Cannibal Tours” by Dennis D’Rourke available at:

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cameraworklimited.com%2Fget%2F58.pdf&ei=24qTU-D1M9iPqAaZwoG4Ag&usg=AFQjCNGOMvtSO8cx97yaALl2-YaEyvctmw&bvm=bv.68445247,d.b2k>