

University of Iowa
Eco-sensitive Low-cost Housing: The Kerala experience
India Winterim program 2011-12: December 27, 2011-January 15, 2012
Instructor: Jerry Anthony (jerry-anthony@uiowa.edu)
Winterim India Program Coordinator: R. Rajagopal (r-rajagopal@uiowa.edu)

Course description

Good quality housing is a basic human need. However, it is not always available or if available is not priced at reasonable levels. This forces millions of families all over the world to live in bad quality or unaffordable housing, causing significant socio-economic, physical and financial problems. The scope and scale of the housing shortage is markedly greater in developing countries: one, because of the sheer number of people that need such housing, and two, because of the lack of public and private resources to address this crisis. These constraints have forced governments and non-profits in developing countries such as India to devise innovative lower-cost housing construction technologies that feature a high labor component, use many renewable resources, and have low impacts on the environment.

This course will provide an extraordinary opportunity to advanced undergraduate and graduate students and interested persons from Iowa, to travel to India, interact with highly acclaimed housing professionals, learn about many innovative eco-sensitive housing techniques, and conduct independent research on a housing topic of one's choice. All course participants will develop a clearer understanding of the conflicting challenges of economic development and environmental protection, and of culture, politics and the uneven geography of opportunity in a developing country.



The course will be located in the city of Trivandrum (also called Thiruvananthapuram), the capital city of the state of Kerala. Trivandrum is home to two renowned housing agencies -- COSTFORD and the Kerala State Housing Board (KSHB). COSTFORD is a local non-profit that has been developing cutting edge lower-cost construction technology, and building residential and institutional structures with them. Its expertise in this area has led to numerous awards from the government of India and the United Nations. COSTFORD's efforts are guided by the design principles devised by one of its founders – Dr. Laurie Baker – a world renowned architect whose many accolades include the Order of the British Empire (1983), UNO Habitat Award & UN Roll of Honor (1992), Sir Robert

Matthew Prize for Improvement of Human Settlements (1993), and the International Union of Architects Award (1993).

The Kerala State Housing Board (KSHB) is a public agency charged with increasing the supply of low priced housing across the state of Kerala. To fulfill its mission, the KSHB formulates and implements various housing construction and finance schemes that cater to very low-, low- and moderate-income persons. It also does urban revitalization projects. Its efforts have won numerous national awards.

Other highlights of the course

Interspersed with the academic activities would be:

- visits to historical buildings such as Padmanabhapuram Palace – a 500 year old wooden palace and to Sri Padmanabha Swamy Temple – where gold worth \$98 billion was recently discovered),
- visits to places of great natural beauty such as the Periyar Wildlife Reserve (for elephants and tigers) set in a rainforest in the Western Ghats
- trip to the famed backwaters of Kerala and to Allepey (often called the Venice of the East for its numerous urban waterways)
- trip to Kanyakumari – the southernmost point of the Indian subcontinent and the confluence of two major water bodies – the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.
- attending a Indian classical music festival at the palace of the former Prince of Travancore
- to Shanmugham beach (multiple trips to this location because Trivandrum is located on the coast)
- a boat-ride in the backwaters of Kerala
- an elephant ride in Thekkady
- opportunity to sample traditional Kerala meals in traditional settings
- visits with community groups and environment activists
- visits with social reform activists
- and much, much more.

Course instructor

The course instructor is Professor Jerry Anthony. He is an Associate Professor of Urban & Regional Planning at the University of Iowa and Director of the Housing Policy Program at the university's Public Policy Center. He teaches courses on housing policy, land use planning, smart growth and international urbanization. He has a Bachelors degree in Architecture, a Masters degree in Town Planning, and a Ph.D. in Urban & Regional Planning. He has published several papers on housing affordability, land use law and international drinking water policies. He has many years of professional planning experience in the public and private sectors in India and the U.S.

■ Course requirements

Prior to departure

- Attend one orientation meeting with University of Iowa Office of Study Abroad staff (dates and times TBA) -- via webcast for students outside Iowa.
- Attend one orientation meeting with course instructor on a Friday afternoon (3-5pm, date TBA) -- via phone or email for students outside Iowa.
- Complete a two-page reflection piece on the course and India



During stay in India

- Attend all planned activities and trips; these include: meetings with representatives of COSTFORD and KHSB, lectures by Indian housing policy and economic development experts, go on several field trips in and around Trivandrum.
- Participate in cultural activities.
- Work on service learning project with COSTFORD/KSHB. This could be a strategic plan or grant application or help implement a housing project for a local housing agency in India. All work on this project should be completed before returning to the US.

- Present the service learning project to non-profit partner on January 14, 2012.
- Maintain a daily personal journal throughout the trip – this journal should include pictures and videos, and should preferably be created and maintained online as a blog.
- Complete two four-page analysis papers.
- Write an 8-page summary of findings and highlights of learning and present it on January 14, 2012 in India.



Each analysis and reflection paper will have different requirements for undergrads and graduate students. Graduate students are encouraged to do a research paper instead of the service learning project. Depending on the amount of efforts required for this research paper, a different course weight can be negotiated.

Required readings (all provided by the instructor)

- The Brundtland Commission Report. 1987. Our Common future. Available in HTML format at <http://worldinbalance.net/intagreements/1987-brundtland.php>.
- Satterthwaite, David. 2003. The Millennium Development Goals and urban poverty reduction: Great expectations and nonsense statistics. *Environment and Urbanization*, 15 (2): 179-190.
- Ze´rah, Marie Helene. 2006. Conflict between green space preservation and housing needs: The case of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai. *Cities* 24 (2):122–132
- Choguill, Charles. 1996. Towards sustainability of human settlements. *Habitat International*, 20 (3), pp. v-viii.
- Lim, Gill-Chin. 1987. Housing Policies for the Urban Poor in Developing Countries, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 53(2): 176 — 185
- Choguill, Charles. 1996. Towards sustainability of human settlements. *Habitat International*, 20 (3), pp. v-viii.
- Kumar, Rattan, AJ Contractor & Ashalatha Thampuran. 1991. An appraisal of low-cost mass housing in Kerala, *Building and the Environment*, 26(3): 309-312.
- Okpala, Don C I. 1994. Financing Housing in Developing Countries: A Review of the Pitfalls and Potentials in the Development of Formal Housing Finance Systems. *Urban Studies* 31(9): 1571-1586.



Films/Videos (available at most libraries or from the course instructor)

- *Gandhi*, 1982, directed by Richard Attenborough (190 min.). This film won eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor.
- 2009 BBC/PBS series titled the “India Story” (6 episodes, about 360 minutes).

Class size and language

Class size will be limited to 20. Knowledge of Malayalam, the local language in Kerala is not required, since many locals are fluent in English and bi-lingual professionals will be on hand to help.

For more information

- contact Professor Jerry Anthony at jerry-anthony@uiowa.edu or stop by his office (340 Jessup Hall) during his office hours (Monday, Wednesday, 10:30-12:00).
- Trivandrum (also spelt Thiruvananthapuram) is denoted by this:

