

**COURSE NAME:** Applying immersive learning to rural Agro-Food issues: Study Abroad in Southern India

**NUMBER:** 11:400:490 (Food science); 11:776:490 (Plant science); Study Abroad (01:959:XXX)

**SEMESTER:** Winter 2025

**Pre-departure orientation and post-arrival session:** By arrangement

**PLACE:** Amrita University Coimbatore and Amritapuri campus, South India

**Prerequisites:** None

Recommended (*in Print comments in CSS*): General Biology or General Chemistry (minimum one semester).  
Registration by SPN only.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Instructor(s): Nrupali Patel and Chitra Ponnusamy

Office Location: Dr. Patel: Foran 372; Dr. Ponnusamy: FS 203

Phone: 848-932-6392; Dr. Ponnusamy: 848-932-5452

Email: [npatel@sebs.rutgers.edu](mailto:npatel@sebs.rutgers.edu); [cp470@sebs.rutgers.edu](mailto:cp470@sebs.rutgers.edu)

Office Hours: By arrangement

**COURSE WEBSITE, RESOURCES AND MATERIALS:**

- Canvas

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The goal of the course is to expand students' knowledge through a cultural, pedagogical and student group experience in collaboration with Amrita Vishwavidyalaya (Amrita University <https://www.amrita.edu>). Students will have an opportunity to interact with the host institution's faculty and students who specialize in the field of plant natural products, food, and agriculture. In addition to in-classroom learning, students will live and experience life in a pre-selected rural village through the host institution's *Live in Labs*® program. Students will collaborate with Amrita university students to understand traditional practices in these areas and devise sustainable solutions to challenges faced in the community using experiences and knowledge from their academic major. The advantages of this group work will allow students from different cultures to gain knowledge and skills not necessarily incorporated within their academic program. For example, a Rutgers Food/Plant Science major may collaborate with an Amrita University Engineering major, or a Rutgers Business major may collaborate with a student from the agricultural program at Amrita University.

**About the *Live in Labs*® program:** This program associated with Amrita University is a multidisciplinary experiential learning program that exposes students to challenges faced by rural communities within India. The students collaborate to develop sustainable solutions through an inclusive approach method and are encouraged "to think outside the box." The multidisciplinary research and interdisciplinary teamwork foster high impact learning goals. The thematic areas for the *Live in Labs*® program are Agriculture & Risk Management, Water & Sanitation, Energy & Environment and Health & Hygiene.

## COURSE LEARNING GOALS:

- Describe (knowledge level) how agricultural practices and food production in rural India differ from modern agriculture.
- Explain (comprehension level) the use of plant natural products in cultural and medicinal practices in India (Ayurveda).
- Identify (comprehension level) ethnographic and ethnobotanical issues for a rural village in India through community engagement.
- Formulate (synthesis level) through collaboration, possible solutions to those issues by applying pedagogical background and on-site observations and analyses.

## ASSIGNMENTS/RESPONSIBILITIES, GRADING & ASSESSMENT:

Students will be provided with the required reading that will be used to facilitate discussion and address critical thinking questions.

- Participation and involvement in group discussion. (25pts).
- In-class assignments (20pts)
- Student presentation (30pts)
- After return to the U.S. students will be required to submit travel journal addressing five key issue/topics pre-approved by the course instructor. (25pts)

GRADING FOR THE COURSE			
	SUBMISSION		TOTAL POINTS
1	Involvement & Participation		25
2	In-class assignments	Log of daily activities recorded in Canvas	20
3	Presentation	PPT to be submitted in Canvas	30
4	Journal – Key issues/topics	4-5 pages	25
TOTAL POINTS FOR THE COURSE			100

Final Grades will be based on: A (90% or higher), B+ (85-89.9%), B (80-84.9%), C+ (75- 79.9%), C (70-74.9%), D (60-69.9%), F (under 60%).

## ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all the University's educational programs, including study abroad opportunities. To receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodation with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete a registration form available from <https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>.

While we will do whatever possible to accommodate any student who wishes to participate, there may be some practical constraints related to the services and facilities available at Amrita University and at the assigned rural

village. If you have any specific questions, please contact one of the instructors and Megan Francis- Director, SEBS Office of Global Engagement.

### ABSENCE POLICY

Students are required to participate in all detailed activities as outlined in the course schedule.

### COURSE SCHEDULE:

Sample Itinerary	
Day 1	Arrival at Kochi, Kerala
Day 2	<u>Morning:</u> Departure to Amrita Vishwavidyalaya campus, Coimbatore <u>Afternoon:</u> campus tour and meet faculty and students <u>Evening:</u> free
Day 3	<u>Morning:</u> Natural Products Research program (Lecture + facility tour) <u>Afternoon:</u> Visit Amrita Integrated rural nutrition center (functional food and food product development for the rural community) <u>Evening:</u> Group discussion and reflection of the day
Day 4	<u>Morning:</u> Amrita School of Agriculture – Lecture – Sustainable agriculture in South India (Amaranth and Millet) <u>Early afternoon:</u> Visit small scale farms – coconut and banana plantations. <u>Late afternoon/Evening:</u> Workshop Training session I for Amrita Live in Labs® program*
Day 5	<u>Morning:</u> Workshop Training session II for Amrita Live in Labs® program <u>Afternoon:</u> Depart for rural village for Live in Labs® program <u>Evening:</u> Rutgers and Amrita student group discussion
Day 6	Tour: Visit the rural crop and medicinal plant fields. Live in Labs® – Record ethnographic and ethnobotanical information and utilize the strategies to enhance rural community engagement.
Day 7	Live in Labs® – Gain insight into challenges through engagement (insight – plant production, water conservation, food processing, agro-economics etc.) Rutgers and Amrita student interview with rural community members
Day 8	Live in Labs® – Prioritize challenges and decipher constraints. Rutgers and Amrita student discussion with faculty experts. Evening: Culture immersion – Observe/Partake in the traditional village ceremony
Day 9	Live in Labs® – Ideation sessions to propose based on sustainable solutions. Rutgers and Amrita student discussion with faculty experts Tour: Art of foraging with rural village representative
Day 10	Live in Labs® – Elaborate and define the needs and propose sustainable solutions. Rutgers and Amrita student discussion with faculty experts Cultural Immersion: Cook a traditional village meal and understand the ethnobotanical relevance
Day 11	Live in Labs® – Review proposed solutions collectively through student group presentations. Discussion and review of presentations Free time or hiking
Day 12	Depart rural village for Amritapuri campus.
Day 13	<u>Morning:</u> Visit Ayurveda Department, tour of medicinal plant garden and processing facility <u>Afternoon:</u> Biotechnology Department – Food and Medicinal plant research <u>Late afternoon/Evening:</u> Boating at Kollam backwaters (optional)
Day 14	<u>Morning:</u> Meet with the Amrita Center for International program group. Feedback session <u>Afternoon:</u> Depart for Kochi, Kerala

	Evening: free time
Day 15	Departure for USA

## FINAL EXAM/PAPER DATE AND TIME

There is no final exam for this course

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Enter optional text here or delete this box. Below is required

The university's policy on Academic Integrity is available at

<https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/current.pdf>. The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to ensure that

- everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments.
- all student work is fairly evaluated, and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others.
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered.
- the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

## SEBS DEI STATEMENT

The course supports an inclusive learning environment where diversity, individual differences, and identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) are respected and recognized as a source of strength and enhanced learning. Students are expected to respect differences and contribute to a learning environment that allows for a diversity of thought and worldviews. We will not tolerate disrespectful language or behavior against any individual or group. If you feel as though you have been disrespected or treated unfairly by the instructors or any other individual please let us know. You may speak with the instructors in person, over email or report anonymously via the Office of Academic Programs. In addition, you may also report bias to the Rutgers Diversity and Inclusion initiative using this link: <http://inclusion.rutgers.edu/report-bias-incident/>.

## DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Students are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner throughout the trip. In short, there is a zero-tolerance policy for student misbehavior while on this trip. Disciplinary action, including receiving a failing grade in the course and potential for immediate return to the US, will be taken as appropriate. Please work with us to ensure a safe, healthy, and respectful environment for everyone. Let's remember to show our appreciation and consideration for the hardworking staff and faculty at Amrita University, who work hard to accommodate us. Whenever we can, let's offer our assistance to make their jobs a little easier.

## STUDENT WELLNESS SERVICES

### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ [www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)**

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### **Disability Services**

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>.

**DoSomething** button through Rutgers Dean of Students office:

<http://health.rutgers.edu/do-something-to-help/>

**Wellness Coaching** through Rutgers HOPE:

<http://health.rutgers.edu/education/hope/wellness-coaching/>

**Self-Help Apps** found on the Rutgers Student Health website:

<http://health.rutgers.edu/education/self-help/self-help-apps/>

**NJ Hopeline** - (1-855-654-6735) | **National Suicide Hotline** - (1-800-273-8255)

## **BASIC NEEDS RESOURCES**

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, is urged to contact the Rutgers Student Food Pantry and/or the Dean of Students (details below). Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable doing so, as they may be able to provide additional support.

### **Rutgers Student Food Pantry**

848-932-5500 / College Ave Student Center, Room 115 (126 College Ave) /

<http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food/>

Check their website for hours and additional locations. The Rutgers Student Food Pantry is dedicated to helping all Rutgers students in need of food, no questions asked. Students will be provided with groceries that typically last about one week.

### **Dean of Students Office**

848-932-2300 / 88 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / <https://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/>

Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5:00pm

The Dean of Students Office at Rutgers University-New Brunswick provides solutions, services, and support to help students navigate Rutgers University. The Office serves as a student support network by providing advocacy, problem resolution, and critical incident intervention for those times when additional assistance is needed. Please call to schedule an appointment to meet with a representative from the Dean's office.