

Innovation Fund for Global Education

Applying International Development Theories in Agriculture

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Abstract

Texas A&M University can broaden students' perspectives of the agricultural sciences by including their participation in real-world problem-solving situations. *Applying International Development Theories in Agriculture* is a semester course with a 10-day international action research/service-learning component. The primary objective is to increase students' abilities to apply development theories (geographical, economical, community, societal, etc.) to solve real-world community development challenges. At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to: 1) Articulate international development theories; 2) Apply problem solving skills to real-world community development challenges; 3) Assemble a range of intercultural/cultural communication skills to function effectively in a developing country; and 4) Apply critical thinking skills while conducting research.

Prior to the 10-day international experience, course instruction will focus on understanding development theories, action research methods, and service-learning concepts relevant to international development in agriculture. The 10-day action research/service-learning experience with an international non-governmental organization will mutually benefit students and the international host community. Students will partner with host community leaders to answer a community-driven development research problem, such as increasing food security, introducing new agricultural methods, or improving household sanitation. Following the 10-day field experience, course instruction will emphasize critical reflection, discussion, analyses, and communication of the conceptual and practical differences of development theories. Students' research reports and service-learning portfolios (e.g., photo essays, blogs, etc.) will be shared with stakeholders.