

PSY 5770
PRIMATE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
Spring 2013 Study Abroad-Costa Rica
Irwin Bernstein

We will use Karen Strier's textbook, "Primate Behavioral Ecology". Dr. Strier is an expert on the Muriqui, or Woolly Spider Monkey, of Brazil having spent many years studying them in their natural habitat.

We will deal with the following topics: What is a Primate? Why do we study Primates? What is their classification and Distribution and why? How does Natural Selection operate? What are K and r selection? What are Primate Origins? What are the pros and cons of social living? What is a "social unit"? What are "kinship" and inclusive fitness? How does Competition influence Primates? What is Demography and Life History? How does Ecology influence Primates? What are the different patterns of spatial usage? We will consider problems in Communication, Reproduction, Parental Care, Alloparental Care and Infanticide. We will examine Play, Aggression, Dominance, Tool Usage and Intelligence. We will use field opportunities to learn about Censusing, Data collection and the study of Habitat use. We will carefully consider the problems of Conservation.

The problems that we will deal with are not specific to Primates but I will use the Nonhuman Primates as examples as these are the animals that I know best. I have worked in the New World rain forest but have spent more time in Old World Primate Habitats (mostly rain forests) and in captive settings and have personal experience in many of the areas that we will discuss.

Primatology makes for popular media presentations, lends itself to glamorization and sensationalism, but it is also a scientific discipline. We will try to identify the difference and separate facts from myths and speculation. Field work can be hard and even tedious, but if done right it can be very satisfying. It has been my life long passion.