The Nilgiris Field Learning Center, Kotagiri, India

A Collaborative Project of Keystone Foundation and Cornell University

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THE NILGIRI BIOSPHERE RESERVE
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Karnataka

Kerala

Tamil Nadu

Nagarkoil

Udhagamandalam

Combbatore

Silent Valley

Kollengode

Kodagu

Nagarhole

Kabini Reserve

Taliparamba

Kodagu

Vazhachal

Lushington

Ramanadhan

Nallamalai

Periyar

Sathyamangalam

Sivaganga

Nilgiris

Kolluvayal

Nelliyampathy

Polakkad

Bilaspur

Total Area = 5520 Sqkm

Keystone
Our Mission is to enhance the Quality of Life and the Environment with Indigenous Communities using Eco-development Approaches
What is the NFLC?

The NFLC is an interdisciplinary collaborative project of The Keystone Foundation, Tamil Nadu, India, and Cornell University. The NFLC provides transformative learning experiences for all participants -- community members, students, professionals and faculty -- who work alongside each other to engage in, give back, and benefit from the work done at the center. The NFLC brings together Cornell's strength in research and teaching with Keystone Foundation's experience and knowledge base built in two decades of work in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

The cornerstone of the NFLC is a semester-long engaged learning and mentored research program for selected Cornell students and community members.

Highlight Reel from Batch 1, Spring 2015
https://www.facebook.com/KeystoneIndia/videos/353780338483686/
Where Is the NFLC?

The Biosphere

The NFLC is located in Kotagiri, a town in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) that stretches across 3 Indian states and varied climatic zones. The NBR is rich in biodiversity and contains many unique ecosystems. It is home to large mammals such as the tiger, the long-tailed macaque, and the elephant, and includes 4 national parks and 2 wildlife sanctuaries.

Indigenous People

The NBR has a large number of indigenous communities, most of these forest dwellers and hunter-gatherers. These distinct ethnic groups have small populations and live in geographical concentrations. They include the only surviving hunter-gatherers of the Indian subcontinent - the Cholans in the New Marambakkam area. Apart from the Todas, a well known pastoral group in the upper Nilgiris, other groups include the Paniyas, Irulas, Kurumbas, Kurichiyas, Malakantars, Adivasis and Aiyans. Their unique cultural and social characteristics set the indigenous communities apart. The Keystone Foundation has worked with various groups over the last two decades.

Agriculture

There is intensive agriculture in the NBR, which includes traditional cropping systems, coffee and tea plantations, and vegetable farms that supply urban areas.

Villages and Towns

The NBR has many hamlets, villages, and towns, including Kotagiri, where the NFLC is located.
Collaboration in Practice
Across disciplines, organizations, communities, languages, methodologies, and capabilities

in the conceptual context of ‘one health’ and a regional landscape where wild, cultivated and small urban intersect
Who Are the Learners & the Teachers?

You!
- are a junior or sophomore
- have a 3.0 GPA
- have completed the pre-departure seminar

With your sense of adventure, curiosity, and work ethic

Your Cornell Peers

Community Members

The Keystone Team

The Cornell Team

+ Cornell Abroad
The NFLC Classroom

Keystone Campus

Kotagiri town

The Biosphere

Keystone Production and Field Sites

Hamlets
The NFLC Program

- **Pre-Departure Seminar**, 1 credit / Fall 2016 (CRP 3850) and **Jumpstart Tamil**, 1 credit

- **15 Cornell credits**, spring 2017, which will meet language, study abroad, research methods and distribution requirements for several majors (3 classes for 10 credits and independent study for 5 credits)

- **Coursework** to be delivered as an Integrated curriculum structured around 4 research areas

- **Experiential learning** around fieldwork related to research projects, field trips to various areas around NBR and the surrounding region

- **Volunteering** in local schools and community organizations
projects, field trips to various areas around NBR and the surrounding region

- **Volunteering** in local schools and community organizations

**INTEGRATED CURRICULUM**

Biodiversity Conservation/Social Inclusion/Culture and Place/Sustainable Livelihoods and Development

- **Food and Nutrition**
  - Understand changes in diets due to loss of biodiversity and nutritional impacts of such change

- **Traditional Health**
  - Explore how biodiversity loss and development impact traditional health systems practiced by indigenous communities

- **Environmental Governance**
  - Analyze the impacts of the Forest Rights Act of 2006, which acknowledged indigenous community rights to the forest

- **Urban Planning**
  - Consider urban growth in the NBR and impact of garbage and lack of waste management on biodiversity and sustainable development

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**SEMESTER BY WEEK**

<table>
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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Weeks 2-7 (Wk 5: long field trip)</th>
<th>Weeks 8-14 (week 11: Spring break)</th>
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<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Learning the context</td>
<td>Project based fieldwork</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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NFLC Learning Rhythms

The Semester

1 - In classroom work
   First 7 weeks
2 - Project research including field work
   Second 7 weeks
   Break
   - Community Presentation
   - Research Report

Weeks 1-7

1 - Organized by Topic
   Monday, Tuesday
2 - Day long field trips
   Wednesday
3 - Organized by Topic
   Thurs., Fri., 1/2 Sat.
   - Reading Reports
   - Weekly Writing Assignment
   - Weekly Research Methods Exercise

The Day during Weeks 1-7

1 - Crossing Boundaries Exercise
   TEA TIME
2 - Flex + lecture
   LUNCH
3 - Flex + language
   TEA TIME
4 - debrief in large group and/or separate Cornell-KS groups
   Flex + Debrief/Reflection
   - Journaling
   - Language practice

Prezi Crossing Boundaries Exercises
projects, field trips to various areas around NBR and the surrounding region

- **Volunteering** in local schools and community organizations
Rombu Nandri (or Thank you very much in Tamil)