

Borneo Cultural Studies

{Image = Borneo Cultural Studies Pic.jpg}



A unit as unique as the island of Borneo itself! You simply won't find a multi-disciplinary syllabus or set of field trips quite like this anywhere else on earth. We've worked very hard to prepare a taste of this wonderful island that is completely incomparable, while also providing a curriculum that is meaningful and engaging.

Through the passage of two weeks, you'll be forever changed as you come to understand the geography, natural history, wildlife, society and culture of this wild place. Through studying the myriad of peoples, flora and fauna that call Borneo home you'll be able to truly understand the island in all its stunning beauty. Your appreciation is enhanced through field trips to Sarawak's globally acclaimed national parks, including the stunning Miri Sibuti Coastal Reserve and the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Mulu. Come to know and love Borneo in a way that no tourist package or any number of books could ever match. Come study Borneo!

Course Information:

{Accordian Box 1} What will I learn?

As an introductory unit, the focus will predominantly be on culture, social organization and history, supplemented with real life experiences amidst communities and societies of contemporary Borneo. This unit will provide a broad description of the geo-cultural and social make-up of Borneo (Sarawak, Sabah, Brunei and Kalimantan). Significant phases in the historical evolution of Borneo will also be covered, such as the Brooke rule, Japanese Occupation, British Colonialism and the Independence Wave. This unit aims to provide sufficient familiarity with the main social, cultural and historical characteristics of Borneo for the pursuit of more advanced understanding, studies or research of particular aspects of Borneo.

Topic Summary:

Introduction to Sarawak

Sarawak is rich in history and heritage. It is also known as Land of The Hornbills. The population comprises of local ethnic groups namely Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, Melanau and other minor tribes plus the Malays, Chinese and Indians living together in harmony for more than a century. Being the largest state in Malaysia, Sarawak covers a vast area of 124,000 sq-km of land along the northwest coast of Borneo, the third largest island in the world. This module is an introduction to Sarawak and her people.

Austronesian Migration

Austronesian languages are spread across half the globe, from Easter Island to Madagascar. Evidence from linguistics and archaeology indicates that the 'Austronesian expansion,' which began 4,000–5,000 years ago, likely had roots in Taiwan, but the ancestry of present-day Austronesian-speaking populations remains controversial. This module will take a look at Bellwood's and Solheim's theories on the expansion of Austronesian peoples to Island Southeast Asia (ISEA) which includes Borneo.

Intangible Culture-Traditional tattooing:

For Borneo's Dayak peoples, spirits embody everything: animals, plants, and humans. Many groups have drawn on this power by using images from nature in their tattoos, creating a composite of floral motifs using plants with curative or protective powers and powerful animal images.

Tattoos are created by artists who consult spirit guides to reveal a design. Among Borneo's

Start Dates	Duration	Cost	Course Code	Application
Before or After 312658 (Calendar)	2 Days	MYR 990* (Check Rate)	DUP	Apply Now

Kayan people, women are the artists, a hereditary position passed from mother to daughter. Among the Iban, the largest and once the most feared headhunting group in Borneo, men apply the tattoos. This module will focus on the cultural significance of tattooing to the Dayaks and the future of the art in the 21st century.

Sarawak's History: Pre-Rajah Rule, Under Rajah Rule and Independence

The history of modern Sarawak is closely related to the adventures of an Englishman, James Brooke after his advent to Sarawak in 1839. However, Sarawak's history is older than the Brooke Raj. This module will take a look at Sarawak's history from prehistory to the modern era.

Material Cultures of Borneo-Trade Objects: Their Impacts on the Indigenous Cultures of Sarawak

In Sarawak, old ceramic jars, swords, gongs, beads and beadwork are part of familial heirlooms and are part of Sarawak's rich cultural heritage. This module will take a look at the importance of trade objects as heirlooms or "pesaka" to the Dayaks.

Intangible Cultures: Traditional Weaving, Plaitwork and Musical instruments

Intangible Cultural Heritage comprises the living expressions and traditions that communities, groups and individuals around the world receive from their ancestors and pass on their knowledge to their descendants. This module will cover the traditional arts of weaving, plaitwork and musical instruments of the tribes in Sarawak.

Download 312658 Outline (PDF)

Digital Underwater Photography Specialty Add-On

Students have the unique opportunity to add the PADI accredited Digital Underwater Photographer Specialty to this unit. Adding underwater photography to your Borneo experience gives you the opportunity to experience this remarkable island from a completely different perspective. All dives take place within the spectacular, 186 000 hectare Miri-Sibuti Coral Reefs National Park, just 9km from the University.

Those who are not already SCUBA divers will have to complete the PADI Open Water certification over 4 days, or you can take the course as a snorkeler and receive a non-diving certification. Conversely those who have already completed a basic dive qualification (with PADI, BSAC, NAUI, CMAS, SAA, SSI and others) will be able to enrol directly in the Specialty.

Through hands-on training during two scuba dives (over 2 days) and guidance from a PADI Professional, you'll discover:

How to choose the right underwater camera system for you.

The PADI SEA (Shoot, Examine, Adjust) method for getting great shots quickly.

Principles for good composition of underwater images.

Practical techniques to take great photos with your digital camera.

The second dive of this PADI Specialty Diver course may credit as an Adventure Dive toward your Advanced Open Water Diver certification.

{Accordion Box 2} How will I learn?

Teaching and Assessment:

This unit runs over 14 days and learning activities consist of both seminars and field trips. During seminars key concepts and principles will be imparted through interactive teaching and learning activities while, during field trips, these will be clarified through group discussions and practical exercises.

Assessments:

Assignment 1: (Individual) - Research Exercise - Choose one specific Indigenous community in Borneo and establish its main characteristics and evolution in terms of history, geography and culture.

Assignment 2: (Individual) - Field Trip Report - You are required to write a detailed report about one of the field trips undertaken as part of the unit. The report should project your experience of the location visited and of the activities carried out there. It should also establish what you have learnt in the process in relation to the Borneo-related topic concerned.

Assignment 3: (Individual) - Journal - You are required to keep a journal of your readings, discussions, writings and experiences in this unit. The format of the journal is open: it may be a handwritten (but legible!) diary or a typed document; visual materials may also be included in the journal.

Assignment 4: (Group) - Presentation - You will be required to deliver, as part of a group, a short presentation relating to any one of the seven modules set in this unit outline. Presentations will be made by groups of 2 and will be between 15 and 20 minutes long.

Instructor Information:

Travel Writing – Mr. Terry Justin Dit (Unit Coordinator, Curtin University)

Underwater Photography – Mr. Jean-Paul Mouton (PADI Open Water Scuba Instructor)

Eligibility:

For those wishing to take this unit without credit (as offered in partnership with [Curtin Consultancy Services](#)), all that is required is a spirit of adventure and a desire to understand Borneo, her peoples, wildlife and natural environment more fully.

Admission to this unit for credit purposes is a two-step process that involves satisfying English prerequisites and also the university's academic admission requirements.

All Curtin courses are taught in English and applicants must attain a minimum overall IELTS score of 6.5. Additionally, the minimum score for each individual band within IELTS must be 6.0 or higher. Applicants with an IELTS score below 6.5 but at least 5.5, or higher, with no individual band below 5.0, are able to enroll but will be required to take additional Curtin University Fast Track Units. Please send us an email at International Admissions to check if other English language competency tests or school results satisfy our entry requirements.

[This page](#) lists the various qualification and minimum entry requirements by country for foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate studies. This list of countries is not exhaustive. If you need information specific to your home country, please don't hesitate to contact [International Admissions](#).

Computer labs are available throughout the campus, but you may benefit from bringing your own laptop. This unit is presented in English and applicants must be fluent in written and spoken English to complete the assignments.

Credits & Progression Pathways:

Completing 312658 - Borneo Cultural Studies may count for 25 credits within the undergraduate Arts/Media program at Curtin University. Speak to you Unit Coordinator for more information.

312658 - Borneo Cultural Studies is also offered internationally by Curtin Consultancy Services in partnership with Curtin University.

{Accordian Box 3} Logistics

Costs:

RM 5989 is the total cost of this unit. This price excludes the Digital Underwater Photographer Specialty Add-On, but does include all accommodation for the duration of the course, including accommodation while on field trips and in National Parks. All air, boat and land transfers during the duration of the course are included. Airfares to Miri before the commencement of the course and your flights home at the end of the course are not included. Daily breakfast and dinner is included. Some lunches are catered, while others are intentionally left open for participants to savour local delicacies at their leisure. All unit materials and handbooks are included.

Accommodation, Transport & Catering:

All transfers, accommodation and catering are by Curtin University or its partners. Accommodation is in gender segregated dorm style rooms, but students can request to be housed in a limited number of private or shared rooms (at additional cost). All accommodation is air-conditioned and serviced daily. Students are catered for at least 2 meals per day (including water, coffee and fruit juice). Vegetarian, vegan and/or halal meal options are available. Alcoholic beverages are not included. Transfers are by air-conditioned coach. Two local travel guides, fluent in English and at least two other local languages, will accompany students on all field trips and immersive experiences, and will be able to assist with interviewing and research.

Visa & Insurance Requirements:

Every person entering Malaysia must possess a valid Passport or internationally recognized Travel Document. All credit seeking international students must hold a valid student visa to study at Curtin Sarawak. A student visa allows you to study full-time and multiple entry into Malaysia. The process might seem complicated but the [International Division](#) will assist you throughout.

Getting to Miri:

There are a choice of airlines and frequent flights departing from Miri's International Airport. Malaysia Airlines, MASwings and Air Asia connect Miri with Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu, Johor Bahru, and Labuan. From both Kuala Lumpur and Singapore connections to most international destinations are possible.