Course Description
An integrative learning experience, combining an intensive off-campus community service experience in December with academic inquiry and critical reflection about the social, political, cultural and economic issues in which such service is embedded. Admission by permission only. Participants must commit to several seminar sessions during the fall term and will present their work at a mini-symposium during winter term 2018. Service site will be the Gulf Coast in 2017; future sites may vary.

Who is eligible?
- All Union undergraduates. First year students may be accepted pending satisfactory completion of Fall Term.
- You must be on campus for both fall and winter terms and available for pre- and post-trip meetings
- Applicants must fill out an application, must provide references, & will be interviewed prior to selection
- Up to 15 students will be accepted.
- No course prerequisites.

Where will we go & what will we do?
- Current plan is to return to New Orleans and the Louisiana wetlands area by air.
- Recovery work, most likely home building and repair, plus at least one day working on a wetlands restoration project.
- We are likely to stay with Project Homecoming or another volunteer housing group in New Orleans – see http://www.projecthomecoming.net. This past year, we worked with Lower9.org in the Lower 9th Ward. The second week we’ll be in Dulac, LA, at the Dulac Community Center – see http://www.dulaccommunitycenter.org. Both groups have FaceBook pages as well.
- Additional learning activities are being scheduled – meetings with environmental experts, local service & recovery workers, etc.
- Although this is a serious work/study trip, there also will be some time for fun – one night out in the French Quarter, a swamp tour, opportunities to eat local foods and sample local Cajun, Zydeco & jazz music, and other local culture etc.
- Applicants are encouraged to watch the YouTube video “The Big (Ain’t So) Easy: A Volunteer’s Story” at this link: http://youtu.be/B7Oy4etNibk. This film by Shabana Hoosein, UC ’11, will give you an excellent feeling for what this course involves and offers you. The blog site http://unionforlouisiana2016.tumblr.com/ has pictures and info from last year’s class.

What are the course requirements?
- Participation in 4-5 seminars during 2nd half of fall term, including discussion of readings and ‘reaction papers’; seminars will include a volunteer work day with a housing agency here in Schenectady, as well as some training in relevant construction tasks; we will do reading/reflection on the nature and motivations for such service work and will study up on New Orleans, the social, economic and environmental issues related to the disaster and recovery
- Attendance at pre- and post-trip workshops on campus during December
- Active participation in the service activities of the trip in December
Participation in reflection/discussion sessions during the trip
Logging/blogging during the trip
Research for and preparation of 12-15 page project on a specific aspect/issue relating to the service trip
Oral presentation of the project at mini-symposium during winter term

Can I get credit for my major if I’m not a SOC major? Does it count for Common Curriculum [Gen Ed]?
- Satisfactory completion of the course fully satisfies the LCC category of our Common Curriculum requirements.
- To check about getting major credit for this course from other departments & programs, you should consult your advisor in your department.

How will the course be graded? [tentative breakdown]
- 20% Quality of participation in pre- and post-trip sessions, evening meetings during trip – NOT quality of your work on the volunteer projects!
- 30% Final term paper
- 10% Oral mini-symposium presentation
- 20% Journaling
- 20% Small writing assignments

What will it cost?
- The charge to students for this mini-term is significantly reduced and will only be large enough to cover the costs of running the program. Our current estimate is that tuition in 2017 will be about $2400 – we may have to raise this if transportation costs rise over the summer.
- Unlike other mini-terms, tuition covers RT air transportation from Albany, room and board on-site, plus ground transportation on-site – i.e., essentially everything.
- A $350 deposit will be due in May to secure your place after acceptance into the course. The remaining fee must be paid by the end of fall term.
- As with other mini-terms, students who qualify may seek additional loans through the Financial Aid Office.
- We also may have some additional need-based financial aid available. Please fill out the scholarship application form for this course on the IP website, if you wish to be considered.

What is the timetable for all this?
- Information meeting: 1st week of term – watch for flyers/email
- Deadline for online application submission: Friday, April 14th [be sure to complete both the regular IP app and the additional material specifically for this mini-term.]
- Early May – acceptances announced
- Mid May – tuition deposits due
- Week 6-10, fall term – seminar meetings
- 3 weeks in December – on-campus workshops, trip & debriefing. For 2017, the tentative schedule is below. We may adjust the exact dates slightly over the summer.
  - Wednesday, 11/30 – return to campus for last preparations [Thanksgiving is 11/24 this year]
  - Sunday, 12/4 – fly to New Orleans
  - 12/5-12/17 – service work in New Orleans and Dulac
  - Sunday, 12/18 – fly back to Schenectady
  - Monday, 12/19 – debriefing sessions
  - Monday afternoon 12/19 – students return to their homes
- Term project drafts due 2nd week of Winter term
- Winter term, 3rd or 4th week – mini-symposium
- Final term projects due 5th week of Winter term

Who can I contact if I want more information?
- Professor Ellen Foster, in economics, will be teaching the course this year: fostere@union.edu
- Professor Jan Grigsby, sociology, is retiring at the end of this year, but is also available this spring to answer questions: grigsbyj@union.edu