

Community Engagement - Winter Break Mini-Term (Outgoing Program)

Locations: Dulac, United States and New Orleans, United States

Program Terms: Winter Break Fact Sheet:

Minimum 2.5 Cumulative

GPA:

Program Description: This mini-term is an integrative learning experience for up to 18 students that combines an intensive off-campus December community engagement experience with academic inquiry and critical reflection about the social, political, cultural and economic issues in which such engagement is embedded.

While natural disasters do not discriminate recovery efforts do. As such, the current focus is disaster recovery in the Louisiana Gulf coast. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita of 2005 severely damaged the city of New Orleans. In contrast, hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008 spared New Orleans from major damage, but Gustav's winds wreaked havoc on homes in the wetlands, and flooding from Ike a few weeks later was worse there than it had been in 2005. Then, in 2010, the entire region suffered through the Gulf Oil disaster.

Course of Study

Visiting both New Orleans and the Louisiana wetlands, students will complete an academic study of south Louisiana and the sociology of hurricane disaster(s) with reflection on these experiences and events. Activities vary from year to year, but past trips have included: working two weeks in community engagement projects, most likely in home building and repair; meeting with environmental experts, local service and recovery workers; and, doing actual wetlands restoration with BTNEP and/or the Nature Conservancy. Program specifics are always dependent on the outcome of the summer hurricane season.

There will be informational meetings during the second half of fall term. Students are assigned reading and short writing assignments and begin keeping a journal of notes and reflections. Seminars will include a volunteer work day with a housing agency in Schenectady and training in relevant construction tasks.

During December, two weeks in Louisiana are preceded and followed by several days of preparation and debriefing on Union's campus. In January, students complete and present individual projects at a campus symposium. Students write about the project in a 12-15 page final paper.

To get a feeling of this experience, view the 35-minute video, [The Big \(Ain't So\) Easy: A Volunteer's Story](#), made by Shabana Hoosein (2011), who participated in the 2010 mini-term. Reading the [blog](#) created by last year's group will also provide a perspective on the program.

Tuition, Costs & Scholarship Information

The tuition for this mini-term is significantly less than other mini-terms & covers virtually all expenses. Costs for the program are low due to dormitory accommodations and living very simply in Louisiana. We normally also have additional funds available to provide need-based scholarship assistance.

Pre-requisites & Eligibility

No pre-requisites, but as this is an academic course with requirements during both fall and winter terms, students are advised to consider carefully the time commitment and effort required to successfully complete it alongside a normal course load. The Sociology Department's normal pre-requisite of SOC100 for upper-level department courses is waived for the program.

Calendar

Fall term: informational meetings

For More Information

Students may contact Professor Denise Frandino, Lippman 205