

ECS Descriptions for 2015

Sojourn in South East Asia: An exploration of past and present in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Recently recovering from decades of war and isolation, Vietnam today has become a country renowned for its tremendous economic growth, welcoming people, and rich history. We will explore Vietnam's rich and diverse cultures and history from 15th century port villages like Hoi An, to capital city, Hanoi, which recently celebrated its first millennium in 2010. We will delve deeply into the history of the Vietnam War, visiting sites like the Hoa Loa Prison (Hanoi Hilton), the tunnels of Cu Chi, and the War Remnants museum in Saigon. We will also learn about Vietnam's rich environmental wonders as we explore the Mekong Delta and paddle in the world-class kayak destination of Ha Long Bay. Our group will work hands-on with at least one NGO that has worked to combine historic and cultural preservation with the goals of economic development. We will explore the country by car, train, bicycle, boat, and kayak. We wrap up our experience with the powerful comparisons and contrasts of Cambodia, where we will spend 5 days immersing ourselves in local culture: we will live with a local family and participate in a two-day service project. Like Vietnam, Cambodia provides a stunning range of historical experiences.

From the world famous temple at Angkor Wat, dating back to the 9th century to the Killing Fields and Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, students will delve deeply into Cambodia's beautiful and tragic past. The experienced and accredited student travel and gap year program, Pacific Discovery, will guide our group, as they develop a unique program to fit the CSS mission.

The Founding of America: From Soil to the City

This ECS dives into the modern resurgence of interest in food, nutrition, farming, organic produce, and the economics of health. Students visit farms, distribution centers, importers, markets, nutritionists, dieticians, chefs, and doctors to learn what makes sense in a challenging time of life. Students learn to grow food, cook, and craft diets that are best suited to their lifestyles. They consider current cultural questions about sane and productive living, listening equally to pragmatic and theoretical arguments about food and health. Some time is spent studying the effects of food and other substances on the brain.

Wall Street to Main Street

When the housing bubble burst the U.S. entered into extraordinary economic times. Was the public policy response to the crisis correct? Was this great recession avoidable? From the homeowner to financial firms to retirees, this seminar examines those impacted and the web of events that continue to affect us today. This seminar spends one very busy week in the financial center of the United States—New York—and meets with professional economists to hear their perspective on this amazing time in recent American history.

Winter Wilderness

The Colorado outdoors provides a unique recreational and ecological setting for all seasons. This ECS provides information, resources, and skills on how to safely enjoy Colorado's winter environment. Professionals partner with us to provide instruction on avalanche safety, wilderness first aid, nutrition, personal gear, and ecology. Students are exposed to several Colorado winter activities including snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and winter hiking. This course culminates in a multi-day hut trip to Polar Star Hut near Eagle, Colorado. A student is successful in this ECS by active participation, willingness to take appropriate risks, and good expeditionary behavior.

Geology of the West

The American West is one of the richest regions in the world for the study of earth science. This seminar is designed to expose students to the broad, practical side of geology, including the composition of rocks and minerals, the formation of great canyons and mountains, phenomena such as volcanoes and earthquakes, the acquisition of oil and gas, and the origin and meaning of fossils. The study is approached using modern technological tools including electron microprobes, polarizing microscopes, and digitized analytical research tools, but the overarching goal is to make geology accessible to students so that they can "read the landscape" to understand and appreciate why the earth looks the way it does. The seminar travels to Western Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico.

Habitat

This course examines the current conditions of the homeless in America. The participants first research the issue by tracing diachronic changes between the 1980 and 2010 census data. They answer their resulting questions about the complex causes and effects of homelessness in our society through discussions with social service providers with differing perspectives; experience through simulation of the challenges facing the homeless; and direct service contact in a soup kitchen and shelter (and a Habitat project, if the weather allows.) This seminar requires a mature attitude because of direct exposure to difficult human conditions.