Tropical Marine Ecology

This unique course will introduce you to the natural history of coral reef communities and the ocean environment surrounding the Virgin Islands. Students will sail between field sites scattered around the British and US Virgin Islands aboard a catamaran. Our floating classroom will allow you to learn about physical oceanography while helping to collect data alongside scientists working at the University of the Virgin Islands and marine national parks. The catamaran will also allow us to visit, observe and compare a variety of different coral reef communities. In addition to the biological explorations, you will have the opportunity to visit a number of different islands making up the Virgin Island archipelago. This “island hopping” will allow students to compare the cultural, and ecological differences between each island. Before leaving for the field portion of tropical marine ecology, students will begin to learn about coral reef communities, reef fish and creature identification during the on-line component of this course. The on-line component of the course is designed to help students to be prepared to identify the biological communities they will observe and explore while visiting the Virgin Islands. Students will be introduced to coral reef ecology, and the more common fish, vertebrates and invertebrates found around the Virgin Islands through a series of on-line mini-lectures and interactive learning activities at the beginning of the quarter and prior to the trip. We will then build on these skills and knowledge base when we observe and study the ecology and behavior of these animals in the field.

Tentative Itinerary

Sunday, June 1st: Depart for Tortola BVI. Arrive BVI, take taxi van from airport to Sun Sail Hodges Creek Marina. Board catamaran at Tortola. Orientation and catamaran briefing by captain/physical oceanographer Dr. Cherubin. Set sail for Deadman’s Bay, snorkeling and welcome dinner.


Tuesday, June 3rd: Set sail to UVI for mini-workshop. Snorkeling in Brewer’s Bay. Shopping expedition.

Wednesday, June 4th: Set sail to Buck Island National Wildlife Refuge south of St. Thomas. Snorkeling and coral ID activities. Introduction to REEF Fish surveys and practice fish frequency and abundance census. Afternoon, set sail to Coral Bay in St. John. Visit coral reef community and discuss coral reef ecology.

Thursday, June 5th: Coral Bay: oceanography activities or lecture and REEF Fish surveys. Mangrove visit.

Friday, June 6th: Morning: set sail to Gorda Sound in Virgin Gorda. Island biogeography lectures. Compare different coral reef communities -- relating to island location, size and ecology. Conduct REEF Fish surveys. Animal behavior lecture supported with field observations.

Saturday, June 7th: Visit of the islands and different reef ecosystems around Gorda Sound. Reef fish and creature practical ID quiz. Discuss island ecology focused on synthesizing physical oceanography, ecology and animal behavior. Conduct REEF Fish survey. Dinner on land.

Sunday, June 8th: Exploration of the outer islands and reefs north of Eustatia Sound. Afternoon, sail along the shelf edge to the Bath.

Monday, June 9th: Packing and return to the Marina. Taxi to the airport.
Housing and Meals
When not living and working aboard the catamaran, students will stay at the University of the Virgin Islands Saint Thomas campus overlooking Brewers Bay.

Program Costs
The cost information below lists all costs included in the program fee, and estimates for additional expenses. There is no additional tuition charge for this program for SUNY Oswego students.

Program Fee: $1995.00

The program fee includes the following:
- International flight;
- Most meals;
- Tours;
- Repatriation insurance coverage;
- Accommodations; and
- All entrance fees.

The program fee does not include:
- Passport cost- $100.00;
- Spending Money- $100.00;
- Additional Meals- $100.00; and
- Connecting Flight - (cost varies).

The above are estimates and vary per individual spending habits.

Qualifications
Interested students will be registered for Q4 course “BIO 301: Virgin Islands - Tropical Marine Ecology” during course registration by the Office of International Education and Programs.

Payment Dates
December 1, 2007 $250 deposit due
January 15, 2008 Program Balance due

Applications
Submit completed application with $250 deposit by December 1st to the Office of International Education and Programs. Earlier applications strongly encouraged. Refer to http://www.oswego.edu/intled for application and registration instructions.

For more information contact:
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