

Environmental studies summer program debuts

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Laura McKinney, assistant professor of sociology, and Christopher Oliver, professor of practice in sociology and environmental studies, will teach courses in the new summer program in environmental studies. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

An innovative four-week [summer program in environmental studies](#) will give Tulane University students the opportunity to go into New Orleans neighborhoods to get a real-world education on environmental justice issues.

“Students will be in the community doing field research, so they’ll learn first-hand about environmental and social justice,” says Christopher Oliver, professor of practice in sociology and environmental studies, who will teach one of the two

courses in the [School of Liberal Arts](#) summer program.

In his course, students will examine issues of environmental and social justice, in which working-class communities shoulder a disproportionate share of the socio-environmental consequences of economic development.

Students might investigate such New Orleans environmental concerns as lead poisoning or hurricane-impacted housing. They will keep a field journal and learn practical skills of environmental justice assessment that might help them get a job.

Laura McKinney, assistant professor of sociology, will teach a course exploring “the grave consequences” local and international ecological disasters have on human development and the ways “well-being, social equality and economic advance are intimately linked to the environment.”

McKinney's course will feature guest speakers — “local environmental justice warriors whose livelihoods have been and continue to be affected by environmental change and coastal erosion,” says McKinney.

“The course will take an interdisciplinary approach to show how society shapes ecology and how ecology shapes society,” McKinney says.

Both classes must be taken together. The program offers seven credit hours at the 4000 level and fulfills the second-tier service-learning requirement, two environmental studies distribution or elective requirements, and the environmental studies capstone requirement. The program is open to all undergraduates who have completed their first year.

Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Mary Sparacello is a communications specialist in the Office of Development Communications.

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