

"Alligator on a Stick" Captures Students' Imagination

August 24, 2010 11:30 AM Fran Simon
fsimon@tulane.edu

Students looking to get familiar with the local culture ? and participate in service learning ? have enrolled in a TIDES course with a catchy name, "Alligator on a Stick: Critters and Culture of Louisiana."



First-year students meet a baby gator at a swamp tour during NOLA Experience, an orientation event that introduces new students to New Orleans. (Photo by Sally Asher)

[TIDES](#) (Tulane Interdisciplinary Experience Seminars) courses are one-credit classes offered each fall to first-year students. They are designed to introduce students to New Orleans and the Tulane community. The "Alligator on a Stick" class is exploring the connection between landscape and local identity, and how people and place interact in dynamic ways.

This is the second year that instructors Agnieszka Nance and Sarah Andert of the [Center for Public Service](#) have taught the course. Last fall, it was called "Flora and Fauna of Louisiana." With the new name, "there's been a jump in registration," says Andert.

As part of the service-learning aspect of “Alligator on a Stick,” students are partnering with Bayou Keepers to research and compile a database of commercially viable and ecologically significant marine species in the Gulf area. Bayou Keepers is an organization committed to documenting the impact of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster.

“Environmental Literacy” is another TIDES course offered this fall that explores the effects of the oil spill. Liz Davey, environmental coordinator of the Tulane Office of Environmental Affairs, is teaching students how to create a more environmentally sound and sustainable society.

In partnership with the Gulf Restoration Network, students in “Environmental Literacy” are organizing movie screenings to help raise awareness about coastal wetland loss and the oil spill.

“In this TIDES course,” says Davey, “we are exploring environmental issues that will shape the long-term sustainability of New Orleans ? coastal wetland loss and global climate change.”