

A running conversation

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For some, running is something done with a zeal bordering on the religious. For others, it is a torturous undertaking to be avoided at all cost. Some first-year students at Tulane University who trend toward the former as opposed to the latter are taking advantage of a course that allows them to parlay their interest in running into class credit.



First-year students in the TIDES course, Adventure, Discipline, Obsession: A Running Conversation, begin at three miles an outing and work their way up to covering eight to nine miles by the end of the course. (Photo from: Masterfile)

The [TIDES \(Tulane InterDisciplinary Experience Seminars\)](#) class, Adventure, Discipline, Obsession: A Running Conversation, is taught by two professors who know something about running. Sam Landry, a professor of biochemistry, is an ultramarathoner who runs races of 100-plus miles. Political science professor Tom Langston also ran ultramarathons before an illness forced him to dial back the mileage. Langston says the draw to endurance sports has made the course popular enough to require two sections.

“It seems to have grabbed the students' imagination,” Langston says. “It appeals to them and it appeals to us because we teach running as an adventure. We're all

about endurance and having interesting experiences.”

Students need to be able to run three miles at the beginning of the course, and by the end they are covering eight to nine miles, with the goal of preparing to run a half marathon if they want. Many students have gone on to do just that, as well as marathons.

The class is more than just pounding the pavement. Langston says students also read scientific literature about running and stories offering a “humanistic perspective” on the sport. After they complete their weekly runs, the professors lead discussions about the readings.

While running and fitness are the initial draw, Langston believes his students get more out of the experience.

“It's also a way to see the city, and it's a great way for them to see parts of the city they would otherwise not see,” Langston says. “But most importantly, they make friends, they get to know each other. They become running buddies.”