

# the **epic** ADVANTAGE

## **Student/Faculty Collaborative Research Experience**

### **EPIC ADVANTAGE: Advancement of Afro-Descendants in Brazil**

**Dates: May 2018**

**Leader: Cassio Muniz**

**Application Deadline: November 6, 2017**



### **Description of Experience and Research:**

This project aims to immerse students in a research experience about race relations in Brazil. More specifically, students and the leader will conduct a summer research project on the advancement of afro-descendants in Brazil. There are three modules: urban violence, empowerment of quilombos (maroon communities), and affirmative action public policies. In Brazil, the discussion about race has gained considerable track in the last 20 years with studies that challenge the “racial democracy” myth and the late adoption of affirmative action policies to redress the socioeconomic gap along racial lines.

#### **Module I – Urban Violence. Rio de Janeiro, Salvador**

Urban violence has disproportionately affect blacks in Brazil. We will investigate how the targets of institutional violence perceive its effects. To this end we will visit and interview members of “favela” communities in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador with the support of local non-profit organizations.

#### **Module II – Affirmative Action Policies. Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia**

Brazil is a later adopter of affirmative action policies and its implementation has been to subject of controversial discussions. Chief among them is the difficulties in establishing who is black in Brazil, given the effect of the “mulatto escape hatch” phenomenon, which has generated a hierarchical structure with a mulatto population between the white and black. In this sense, we will talk to students in some of the first institution to implement a racial quota policy in Brazil to assess the evolution of this system.

#### **Module III – Empowerment of Quilombos (Maroon Communities), Salvador, Brasília.**

The Brazilian government is responsible to protect and promote quilombos, yet they are subject to same plight of the general black communities, that is, poverty, lack of infrastructure, land disputes with powerful local farmers who try to displace those communities for their land. As a consequence, the quilombos lack a degree of institutionalization that prevent them from articulating a coherent discourse of race and ancestry, beyond the cultural manifestations contained in their religious and folk rites of clear African matrix. We want to look into the obstacle to institutionalization and what prevent public policies from reaching those communities as mandated by the Constitution. To this end we will conduct research within those communities as well as with governmental organizations charged with the design public policies.

### **Location:**

#### **Brasilia, DF 4 days**

Brasília, Federal District, has been Brazil’s capital since 1960. Futuristic in its look, Brasília was designed to project the image of a modern country. With 2.5 million inhabitants, this city is the epicenter of Brazilian politics and home for several governmental agencies that would provide access to crucial data on the subject researched, including the University of Brasilia campus where structured discussion with local scholars and students will be arranged.



### **Salvador, BA (8 days)**

Salvador, Bahia, was Brazil's first capital (1549-1763) and is the most important center of Afro-Brazilian culture in the country. Salvador is an excellent place to observe and learn about racial relations in Brazil. It is a modern city with one of the most well preserved colonial sites, which house important musical groups that create and diffuse Afro-Brazilian culture. Students will have the opportunity to engage non-profit organizations and their projects to advance of the rights of vulnerable communities.

### **Rio de Janeiro, RJ (8 days)**

Rio is the gateway to Brazil and one of its most vibrant cities. It has recently undergone major transformations to host the 2016 Summer Olympics, the first one to be hosted in the tropics, although this accomplishment was met with much criticism. Students will experience the contrasts that bring favelas and upscale neighborhoods together and the social conflicts that result from this coexistence. Students will visit social projects developed by non-governmental institutions and interact with favelas dwellers. Finally, students will interact with local faculty and students in the State University of Rio de Janeiro.

### **Expectations for Students:**

Students are expected to engage in all group activities (research projects, discussions, cultural events, excursions), to commit to demonstrating initiative, and to work and live together showing respect for peers, faculty members, the Brazilian peoples and the environment.

### **Faculty:**

**Cassio Muniz** holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a Master's degree in Political Science from the University of Brasilia, Brazil. Currently, he is a visiting assistant professor of politics at Earlham College, where he teaches international relations and comparative politics classes in Latin American politics, ethnic conflict, Brazilian politics, and race and class in comparative perspective.

### **Dates of Experience: May 2018**

**Application:** Applications can be received from students starting on Oct. 15, 2017. Application window closes on Nov 6, 2017.

**Link to Application:** [Apply in Handshake](#)

**Preparation:** Students will be required to take a 1 credit EPIC Advantage Orientation seminar during the Spring 2018 academic semester. This seminar will provide the necessary background and travel logistics for students to maximize the experience. Class meeting dates/times will be determined in the future.

**Student Eligibility:** Students who have previous working knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese speaking students are encouraged to apply. Rising sophomores, rising juniors, or rising seniors may apply. In preparation for the program students will enroll in a one credit course in the spring semester prior to the summer project. Students will read materials to acquaint them with the Brazilian culture, engage in team building exercises, and prepare for the logistics of the program.

**Cost to Student:** This experience is funded as an EPIC Advantage opportunity. Funding covers passport, visa, travel, room and board, and other expenses required by the program. Additional personal expenses will be covered by the student.

**Program plans subject to change.**