

the **epic** ADVANTAGE

Student/Faculty Collaborative Research Experience

EPIC ADVANTAGE: Field Research on the Ainu in Japan

Dates: May 11 - June 2, 2018

Leaders: Yasumi Kuriya

Application Deadline: November 6, 2017



Description of Experience, Location and Research:

This is a three -week field research experience in which participants will research the past, the present, and the future direction of the Ainu people in Japan.

Japan is often considered a homogenous nation; however, the Ainu people, an indigenous people of Japan, had lived in the northern part of Japan (i.e., Hokkaido and Tohoku) for centuries. Due to the Japanese colonization of Hokkaido in the beginning of the Meiji period (1868~1912), the ethnic identity of the Ainu people has been suppressed. Their land and rights to hunt and fish were confiscated, they were removed from their land, and they were forbidden to speak their language, Ainu. As a result, their culture, traditions, and language were threatened. Ainu is now listed as a “critically endangered” language. The Ainu people have lived with the stigma of being Ainu over a century, and have tried to thin their Ainu blood by intermarrying wajin (the mainland Japanese). Finally, the Japanese Government declared that the Ainu people were the indigenous people of Japan in 2008. Since then, more young descendants have actively participated in the movement against ethnic discrimination and for revitalization of their culture and traditions.

The major research questions are:

Can the Ainu culture, traditions and language survive, and can be revitalized?

What is it like to live as the Ainu in this modern Japanese society?

What are the hopes that the Ainu people have for their future?

In order to provide answers to these questions, participants will develop their own topics and work on them before and during the trip. Through this field research trip, participants will seek to gain clearer visions of their hopes for the future by being physically at those sites, and interact with the people who have been involved in Ainu studies and revitalization.

This is a three week field research experience in which participants will research the past, the present, and the future direction of the Ainu people in Japan. Prior to departure, during the spring semester of 2018, there will be eight sessions in which participants will study and research the history and the conditions of the Ainu people to gain a better understanding of the Ainu, and develop and prepare for individual research topics.

Location in Japan:

Many descendants of the Ainu people live in Hokkaido, northern Japan, and the Tokyo area, and many of them have worked for the revitalization of their culture and language with support from the Japanese and Hokkaido governments. We will be based primarily in four locations (i.e., Akan, Nibutani, Sapporo, and Asahikawa) in Hokkaido where major Ainu museums, research archives, and governmental culture centers are concentrated and offer cultural and traditional activities and Ainu language classes. We will also be in Tokyo where more than 2,500 people identify themselves as Ainu descendants, and many participate in the ethnic movement to appeal against ethnic discrimination and work to have better living conditions outside Hokkaido.

Expectations for Students:

The learning goals based on the general learning and JS outcomes are:

- 1) To develop effective skills to gather and evaluate information from many courses including print, electronic media, and personal contacts
- 2) To develop skills to analyze the relationship between the past and present interactions of groups or cultures within their political, economic, ideological or natural contexts of the Ainu
- 3) To develop a global awareness and solid knowledge of other cultures
- 4) To understand intercultural and one's own cultural construction and constraints
- 5) To learn to work collaboratively in a diverse community of learners
- 6) To develop ability to interpret contemporary events, trends, and issues in Japanese society,
- 7) To develop presentational skills both in the spoken and written languages in English.

On the on-campus orientation (7 sessions), students are expected to study the historical background of the Ainu people, culture and language, and the process of their revitalization movement. On the sites, students will observe and learn about their revitalization movement through meeting Ainu people, visiting museums and culture/research centers, and hands-on experience. Participants also have opportunities to take some classes on the Ainu language, and to interact with young Ainu people who have been engaging in the movement. Through visiting the sites and interacting with the Ainu descendants, participants are expected to have a good understanding of the current actual conditions and hopes for their future and to continue to inquire human rights. They will demonstrate it by their written reports and presentations on their research topics at the end of the trip.

Faculty:

Yasumi Kuriya, Associate Professor of Japanese, teaches Japanese language and linguistics among other topics. Her research interest is language acquisition and foreign language education. Her current interest is in the revitalization of the Ainu language and culture. She spent the spring (her sabbatical) and summer of 2013 studying the Ainu culture in Japan and the Maori culture in New Zealand. She has led several off-campus programs including SICE:Japan (2009 and 2015) and Japan May Terms (2010 and 2015). She also led a Ford/Knight project in 2010.

Dates of Experience:

May 11– June 2, 2018

Travel To and From Site:

Participants will meet at the Narita Airport in Japan on May 11 and travel together to sites. The program will end on the last day in Tokyo.

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: Rising sophomores, rising juniors, or rising seniors may apply. Participating students are expected to have Japanese language proficiency at the advanced or at least completing the intermediate level or its equivalent by the departure since this research project will involve interaction with the Japanese people through interviewing, discussing, and following instructions on the actual sites.

Participants are expected to attend all the seven sessions during the on-campus orientation in the spring of 2018, and will earn one (1) credit.

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.