Student/Faculty Collaborative Research Experience

EPIC ADVANTAGE: Cultural Ecology of Japan’s Hida Region

Dates: July 15 to July 31 (subject to change)
Leader: Eric Cunningham
Credits: 2 credits (credit/no credit)
Application Deadline: October 15, 2018

Description of Experience and Research:

Specific locations: Central Japanese Alps; Matsumoto, Nagano; Otaki, Nagano; Takayama, Gifu; Toyama City, Toyama

In this EPIC Advantage research project we will explore the cultures and environments of Japan’s mountainous Hida Region. Using a cultural ecology approach, students will have the opportunity to investigate cultural features that allow humans to live and thrive in the steep and rugged terrain of Japan’s interior upland areas. Students will have opportunities to live, work, and speak with local residents while pursuing their own individual research questions.

Faculty:

Eric J Cunningham, Japanese Studies Program, Environmental Sustainability Program. Eric is an anthropologist who focuses on human-environment interactions in Japan with an emphasis on the ways in which these are informed by cultural understandings and relationships of power. His book project, *The Unseen Forest: Spectacles of Nature and Governance in a Japanese national forest*, looks at conflicting understandings of forest environments in the highlands of central Japan. He has lived and researched in Japan for over 10 years.

Expectations for Students:

This experience focuses on the ways in which human communities interact with environments in the mountainous Hida region of central Japan. Through a set of pre-departure readings and lectures, students will gain an understanding of the histories, ecologies, and cultures of the region. While in Japan, students will have opportunities to interact with residents at multiple sites to learn about the challenges and joys of living in mountain environments. Through hands-on experiences, students will also learn about farming and forestry as primary modes of production in the region. Students will also develop their own short research projects, for which they will have opportunities to conduct fieldwork.

Through pre-departure readings and group and individual inquiry, by the end of the program students should have a sense of how to address the following questions:

- What cultural features have contributed to humans' abilities to thrive in upland environments?
- In what ways to local environments inform human lives and livelihoods?
- What are the challenges facing human communities in the Hida region today? How did these challenges emerge?
- How are human communities adapting to new challenges and what strategies are they employing to maintain their communities into the future?
In addition, by the end of the program it is expected that:

- Students will have the capacity to understand culture as an ongoing process that is informed by environments
- Students will have greater competency in social scientific research design and implementation
- Students will have competency in understanding how historical forces transform local human communities and their associated environments.
- Students will have a better understanding of social, cultural, and ecological contexts in Japan

**Dates of Experience:**
July 15 to July 31 (subject to change)

**Application Dates:**

**Link to Application:**
Apply in Handshake

**Preparation:**
Students will be required to take a 1 credit EPIC Advantage Orientation seminar during the Spring 2019 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, juniors, or seniors are eligible to apply.

**Cost to Student:**
This experience is funded as an EPIC ADVANTAGE opportunity. Funding includes travel, room and board, and other expenses required by the program. Passports and immunizations as well as other personal expenses will be covered by students. Students who are accepted and withdraw after June 15, 2019 must reimburse the college for all expenses committed on their behalf.

**Program plans subject to change.**

**Program Policies:** [https://earlham.edu/academics/off-campus-study/program-policies/](https://earlham.edu/academics/off-campus-study/program-policies/)