

# **CORAL, CLIMATE and CULTURE:**

## **An Exploration Seminar to the Marshall Islands**

**June 21-July 13, 2009**

**Director:** Julian Sachs, [jsachs@u.washington.edu](mailto:jsachs@u.washington.edu)  
**Assistant Director:** Michelle Townsend, [mtown@u.washington.edu](mailto:mtown@u.washington.edu)  
**Graduate Student TAs:** Alyssa Atwood, [aatwood@u.washington.edu](mailto:aatwood@u.washington.edu)  
Dan Nelson, [dbnelson@u.washington.edu](mailto:dbnelson@u.washington.edu)

**Course website:**  
<http://courses.washington.edu/marshisl/RMIexplosem09/ExploSem09.shtml>

**Pre-Departure Meeting I:** April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 4:30-6:30PM, OSB 425

**Pre-Departure Meeting II:** May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 5:00-7:00pm, OSB 425

### **Learning Objectives**

- Conduct in-water surveys of species diversity on reefs of Majuro Atoll that can serve as a baseline for monitoring future changes.
- Help eradicate invasive species from the reefs on Majuro Atoll, such as the Crown of Thorns Starfish.
- Assess the plans the RMI government has for dealing with the rising seas and acidifying ocean by meeting with RMI government officials.
- Help educate the residents of the RMI about the threat of climate change by meeting with students and presenting one or more seminars on global warming.
- Learn about the rich culture and history of the 60,000 residents of Micronesian descent that inhabit this vulnerable low-lying atoll nation through meetings with tribal leaders, artisans and citizens.

In order to accomplish goals #1-2 above we will spend many of our days snorkeling on the reefs of Majuro Atoll.

In addition to our time in the water we will have some classroom time at the College of the Marshall Islands in Majuro learning about the reefs and planning our diving activities. Other classroom sessions will include learning about the impacts of global warming on the RMI and learning about the culture and history of the Marshallese people.

Outside the classroom we will interview various government officials about their activities and plans to deal with the changing climate. We will meet with tribal leaders and local artisans to learn about the Marshallese traditions. And we will experience the thrill of riding in a traditional Marshallese oceanic sailing canoe known as a proa. Another outing will be a visit to the Alele

Museum, founded in 1981, and dedicated to preserving the history and conserving the folk arts, traditional skills, historic accounts, oral literature and other traditions of the RMI. We will also visit the farm where they are growing giant clams (*Tridacna* spp.), an endangered species that can still be found throughout the reefs of the RMI.

## **Assignments**

### **1. Oral presentation** to Marshallese officials & citizens

- Four teams of 5 to discuss following Climate Change topics: Greenhouse gas emissions, Temperature projections (21st century), sea level projections (21st century), ocean acidification & coral mortality, regional / local impacts.
- Prof. Sachs will put together the Powerpoint slides and distribute hardcopies to each student. Teams of students need to meet and come up with the narrative, then divide up the topics to be orally presented amongst team members.

### **2. Term Paper** on the climate threat to the Marshall Islands and the Marshallese people.

- The expected impacts on the land, the sea and the coral reefs.
- Also address what the Marshallese might be able to do to adapt to these changes.
- Incorporate the observations and experiences you had while in the RMI
- 10 pages
- Due 9/1/09

### **3. Course evaluation**

- What you learned, liked & disliked
- What would have made your experience better?
- What detracted from it?
- 3-5 pages
- Due 7/20/09

## **Credits Offered**

This program will offer a total of 6 credits, including five (5) credits of one of the following options, plus one (1) credit of GEN ST 392:

- OCEAN 494, Field Experience (NW)
- OCEAN 496, Study Abroad (NW)
- OCEAN 497, Advanced Special Topics (NW)

## **Grading**

- Numeric (0-4 scale)
- Oral Presentation(s) in Majuro 30%
- Term Paper 30%
- Participation in Class & Activities 40%

## **POLICIES AND VALUES**

### **Values**

- Open-mindedness and acceptance of diverse ideas and worldviews
- A willingness to be open to new and sometimes challenging learning experiences
- Group dynamics that are cooperative, supportive and inclusive of all members
- Patience and courteousness toward fellow students as well as Marshallese people
- Respect for individual privacy and personal space
- Honesty and personal accountability for comments and actions

### **Expectations for Success**

- Be actively engaged in all academic aspects of the program, including attending all course classes, meetings & outings, completing assignments, and to participate actively and respectfully in class discussions
- Respect the privacy and property of fellow participants
- Respect the opinions and reactions of fellow students
- Interact thoughtfully and respectfully with individuals outside the group (e.g., Marshallese residents and officials) as a representative of the group and the University of Washington
- Abide by all laws of the host country and the rules of all on-site leaders and organizations
- Avoid behaviors that jeopardize the safety of any individual inside or outside the group, or which negatively impact the ability of any participant to be actively engaged in course activities.
- Contribute to the safety of all participants by making responsible personal decisions and actively watching out for the safety of fellow students.

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism, cheating, and other misconduct are serious violations of your contract as a student. We expect that you will know and follow the University's policies on cheating and plagiarism. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be handled according to University regulations. More information, including definitions and examples of Academic Misconduct, can be found at: <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm>