Earn college credits, gain field experience, and train for employment in archaeology

Student experience will include training in:

- Archaeological Survey and Excavation Methods
- Research Design Development and Collaborative Research
- Photography, Mapping, and Data Recordation
- Global Positioning System (GPS)
- Laboratory Dating and Soil Sampling Techniques
- Total Station and Precision Survey
- Geophysics Training
- Precontact- and Postcontact-era Artifact Identification

The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is stewarded by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and is located in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. Students will have the opportunity to explore this remote landscape through an exciting and rigorous 7-week field program. By participating in excavations at sites located miles into the swamp interior, students will assist in the crucial effort to systematically collect many kinds of information on resistance communities that formed and sustained themselves between 1630 and 1860. This is an excellent opportunity for students to learn first-hand how people of different backgrounds dealt with the brutalities of living in the colonial and chattel slavery periods. Students will acquire important training in several areas of archaeological research methodology that can be useful in many career and professional pursuits.
Great Dismal Swamp

History

The Great Dismal Swamp has a complex and significant social and cultural history. The swamp was exploited and inhabited by Native Americans for several millennia prior to contact in the region (early 17th century). After contact, the recesses of the vast swamp were home to thousands of people who had fled there to escape the inequalities and brutalities of colonialism, indentured servitude, and slavery. Included among these groups were maroons, or resistant African-Americans who permanently fled the conditions of chattel slavery. By the late 18th century, corporations found profitability in the swamp through the labors of thousands of African-Americans. In all, a very poorly documented Diasporic world existed in the swamp. Only archaeology can move our understanding past the limited documentation.

The Great Dismal Swamp Landscape Study

The initial phase of the Great Dismal Swamp Landscape Study (2002-2006) was the first sustained and extensive archaeological project to ever take place in the Dismal. Numerous previously unknown archaeological sites were discovered in the swamp that yielded extensive evidence of Precontact and historical Diasporic settlement. Through excavations, researchers have begun to piece together the historical Diasporic world that existed in the Dismal and expand our knowledge well beyond the limited documentary record. But more research needs to be done. A main focus in 2009 field school will be on excavating at a site in the swamp interior that is associated with maroons and Native Americans. Also, Precontact sites and other historical sites may be explored to expand our knowledge of the history of the swamp.

Field School Conditions

The Great Dismal Swamp will be a very difficult place to work in the summer. This work will require participants to be in good physical shape and to work outdoors for long hours in a hot, humid, wet, and insect-heavy environment.

We will work 4.5 days a week within the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and camp on private property outside the refuge during the workweek with weekends off. Full-time participants should take the field school as 6 credit hours through American University.

To participate, students should submit an application by April 20, 2009.

Applications and more specific information about the program and costs can be obtained by contacting the project director:

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"Confronting the historical realities of slavery is facilitated by historical archaeology wherever it is practiced...”