Travel Seminar to Puerto Rico with Skidmore Faculty

For information on the cost and travel logistics of TX 202, contact Lisa Hobbs in Off-Campus Study & Exchanges (OCSE) at 580-5355 or lhobbs@skidmore.edu.

For information on the Latin American Studies program, contact Professor Jordana Dym, Director of Latin American Studies at 580-5272 or jdym@skidmore.edu.

For information on the International Affairs program, contact Professor Gary McClure, Director of International Affairs program at 580-5117 or gmcclure@skidmore.edu

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.” Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad (1869) Chapter LXII

Puerto Rico and the United States:
Culture and Colonialism

TX 202: LAS/IA Faculty-led Travel Seminar to Puerto Rico

January 5-15, 2009

FACULTY

PROFESSOR JORDANA DYM (jdym@skidmore.edu)

PROFESSOR VIVIANA RANGIL (v rangil@skidmore.edu)
Puerto Rico and the United States is a two-course (3 credits total) learning experience combining class work and readings on campus during the Fall semester and a field trip with class work and lectures in Puerto Rico during January break. TX202 Faculty-Led Travel Seminar (1 credit) is the travel segment of the experience. TX 201B Regional Topics (2 credits) is the on-campus segment. Students must be registered for TX 201B in order to qualify for the travel seminar TX 202.

Why Puerto Rico?

Puerto Rico, an ambiguous part of the United States for over 100 years, is not a state or colony or independent country or occupied territory. A former Spanish colony that the US acquired as part of the settlement with Spain after the Spanish American War, Puerto Rico has been a commonwealth in association with the US since 1952, and is, in the words of one author, “a four-storied country” whose past and present raise important questions about Puerto Rican (and US) national identity, cultural autonomy, political processes, and economic integration. Arguably part of Latin America and the Caribbean, with which it shares a colonial past and current popular culture, Puerto Rico is an island of contrasts—rich and poor, urban and rural, scientific and cultural—whose population is now almost evenly divided between people who live on the island and those who live on the US mainland.

This course explores the tensions and paradoxes of Puerto Rico as a commonwealth with the soul of a nation and an increasingly mobile and diasporic people. The on-campus segment will study the social, political, cultural, and economic impact of the U.S. and Puerto Rico on each other. Topics include the social construction of race, gender, and Puerto Rican identity; music and literature and identity; social and political movements from labor to feminist to post-statehood and pro-independence organization, and migration. During the travel seminar students will test in museums, guided tours, and meetings, the ideas developed in classroom discussion and work on group projects that they will present upon their return to campus in Spring 2009.

Preliminary Travel Schedule Subject to Change

January 5: Depart from NYC for Puerto Rico
   Afternoon: Introduction to San Juan
   Evening: Welcome Dinner

January 6: Morning: IPC: Instituto Puertorriqueño de Cultura Arqivo General de Puerto Rico
   Afternoon: Walking Tour – Old San Juan
   Evening: Dinner in Old San Juan

January 7: Morning: Guest Lecture: Musical Traditions
   Afternoon: Lunch/Dance Lesson
   Puerto Rican Literary Traditions: Ruben Avila, UPR
   Evening: Free Evening

January 8: Beyond San Juan 1: Day trip to Ponce, coffee hacienda

January 9: Morning: Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico
   Afternoon: Independent Museum Visit
   Evening: Sonia Fritz: Films of Puerto Rico (screening)

January 10: Morning: Guest Lecture: Being Nyuorican in Puerto Rico
   Afternoon: Preserving biodiversity: El Yunque Forest
   Evening: Bio-luminescent bay

January 11: Beyond San Juan 2: Day trip to Vieques

January 12: Morning: Politics: Discussion with political party representatives
   Afternoon: El Capitolio
   Evening: Dinner Old San Juan

January 13: Morning: Guest Lecture: Consumer Cultures
   Afternoon: Mercadito & Mall of the Americas
   Evening: Free Evening

January 14: Morning: Big Business on a Small Island
   Afternoon: Meet with Business owners/activists
   Evening: Farewell Dinner

January 15: Arrival back to Continental U.S.