Alternative Spring Break
Indigenous Justice

Alternative Spring Break 2016 Application

Thank you for your interest in this year’s Alternative Spring Break engaging Indigenous Justice in the Pacific Northwest. This year we will be traveling throughout the Olympic peninsula and Puget Sound region to meet with and learn with and from Pacific Northwest Native Americans about the on-going impacts of colonialism on local tribes. We will examine the ways history continues to influence the challenges faced by many Native peoples and our role in the systems that perpetuate injustice and marginalization.

We will be accepting only 8 students to participate in this break program due to budgetary constraints. The registration fee is highly subsidized, reducing the student cost to $50.00. Scholarships are available. Applications are due Friday, February 12 by 3:00 pm by email to sbihl@pugetsound.edu. Interviews will be held to select the final Alt. Spring Break team during the following week (Feb. 15-19). Limited pre-break reading will be required and one all-team meeting will be held sometime in the weeks prior to spring break. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Skylar Bihl at sbihl@pugetsound.edu.

Application

1. Name:
2. Email:
3. Phone:
4. Year:
5. Major:

6. Please prepare and submit a maximum of a 5-page (double-spaced) cultural autobiography. Read the description and questions below and address them in your cultural autobiography.

The autobiography is an analysis of how you came to be who you are. Before we can fully understand others as cultural beings, it is important to understand ourselves. As you reflect, consider what attitudes and beliefs about the world around us have influenced who you are. You should describe how your demographic location (your ethnicity, gender, economic situation, race, sexual orientation, cultural background, nationality, etc.) interacted with your social, cultural, and geographic location (those people and places around you) to help shape your identity. Ultimately, it is your story that you are telling. Our stories will help to illuminate the way we organize and understand our experiences. The autobiography is not meant to be a chronological report of the major events in your life, but should highlight the major themes of your life that have helped to determine who you are. You may wish to focus on exploring your sense of self and identity in the context of family, community, nation, and/or world and how these intersect with your social/cultural identities (those demographic indicators listed above).
Some important questions to consider before and during the composition of this paper:

- Was there a time when you were unconscious of your cultural self/identities?
- When, why, and how did you first become aware of them?
- When did you first become aware of being different from those around you?
- What supports did you have in the struggle to come to grips with your identity?
- Are certain aspects of your demographics more influential in your life than others?
- How has your family influenced your development? What are some of the values and beliefs shared by your family that you hold?
- Can you identify certain values and beliefs that you hold in common with a national or regional mainstream culture?
- Do you consider yourself a member of a dominant culture, minority culture, or both?
- Can you identify certain values and beliefs that you hold in common with or differ from mainstream social justice culture?

These are only a few of the aspects you should examine in order to write your story with accuracy and strength. Though you should not feel tied to these questions, and certainly you should not undertake answering them all in a direct or “list” fashion, but it would be hard to write a cultural autobiography without considering at least some of them. Feel free to render the narrative in whatever style best fits your life and your mind. Most importantly, remember that it is your story. What experiences have shaped your story and influenced how you understand your identity and your relationships with others from different backgrounds?

The purpose of this application assignment is threefold. First, it will help focus your thinking about issues of cultural diversity and the manner in which they are lived. As we know, culture and demographics are not abstractions, but lived realities. Second, it will provide you the opportunity to explicitly name your own position in culture and society, a crucial prerequisite to understanding the perspectives and positions of others. Finally, it will provide a grounding of familiarity with others participating in this year’s Alternative Spring Break and their origins. It is impossible to explain all of who we are, but this provides a substantial beginning to understanding one another and our positionality.

Submit your completed application and autobiography to Skylar Bihl at sbihl@pugetsound.edu no later than 3:00 pm on Friday, February 12, 2016. Don’t forget to include the first 5 basic questions at the top of the application. We will begin scheduling interviews as soon as we have received your application.