Seventeen UM students joined IDS professor Dan Spencer (Environmental Studies) for 4 weeks in Vietnam to examine current and anticipated effects of climate change on the people, lands and waterways of the Mekong Delta. Each of the students explored one topic on the course blog site, “Deep in the Delta: Stories from Vietnam” (check them out at: https://umvietnamstudy.wordpress.com). The travel seminar is set up to explore both the socio-cultural and economic dimensions of climate change – particularly its impact on socially vulnerable communities – and on efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change.

While we covered a lot of territory in our time there, three sets of experiences stand out. First, we focused a good deal on coastal areas affected by sea level rise and the loss of mangrove forests to both the effects of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War and intensive shrimp aquaculture in recent years. At Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve near Ho Chi Minh City we met with shrimp farmers involved in conserving the restored mangroves, and participated in a mangrove restoration project. Due to widespread restoration efforts, for the first time in at least 75 years, Vietnam is showing an increase – very modest – in mangrove forests.

Second, we interacted frequently with students from Can Tho University who do environmental projects and activities through the Delta Youth Alliance. Directed by Mr. Ly Quoc Dang – a Mansfield Center fellow here at UM in Fall 2015 – for three years now UM students have worked with DYA students on joint field trips and projects in the Mekong Delta. This year we spent a day examining a proposed ecotourism development project on Son Island west of Can Tho City, and traveled together to look at community conservation efforts in the Rừng Trâm Trà Sư - Melaleuca Forest Agritourism project in An Giang province. Due to the wonders of Facebook, the friendships we established with the DYA students continue beyond the confines of the trip.

Finally, we are very fortunate to be able to examine first hand conservation and climate change adaptation efforts in the rice paddies and small, but vital National Parks that are sprinkled around the Mekong Delta. Examining integrated shrimp aquaculture and mangrove preservation projects in Ca Mau National Park, peat-melaleuca forest conservation and adaptation to increase fire regimes in U Minh Thong National Park, and developing an ecotourism infrastructure to facilitate bird watching and traditional rice harvesting in

Serve near Ho Chi Minh City

Tram Chim National Park gave us good exposure to current governmental efforts to integrate biodiversity conservation with climate change adaptation.

As always our experience was enriched by our local teachers and guides, the skilled researchers and professors at Can Tho University who generously shared their time and insights with us, and especially our two local Can Tho teaching assistants, Phan My Duyen and Nguyen Quyen.

Students interested in the Wintersession trip to Vietnam can find more information at http://www.cfc.umt.edu/studyabroad/programs/vietnam/default.php or by contacting Dr. Nicky Phear at nicky.phear@umontana.edu.

The New Face of UM’s Peace Corps Prep Program

The University of Montana’s PC Prep Program has had an overhaul to better align UM’s PC Prep program to the wave of new PC Prep programs across the country. The new PC Prep program requires 3 sector specific courses, 3 intercultural competency courses, 50 hours of sector specific experience, and participation in a leadership role as well as professional development.

The PC Prep program is designed for students interested in applying for the US Peace Corps or other positions in international development. Applicants with the PCPP certificate receive special consideration when applying to the Peace Corps and it is an excellent resume builder. PCPP certificates are available in the six US Peace Corp work sectors including Agriculture, Community Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health, and Youth in Development. With careful advising UM students can stack IDS minor and certain PC Prep sector course work to avoid taking additional classes while earning both a PC Prep certificate and IDS minor.

For course lists, and PC Prep advisor contact information visit our website at www.umt.edu/PeaceCorpsPrep. To take full advantage of available advising and other opportunities, please contact the advisor for your preferred sector to register for PC Prep certificate as soon as possible!

NEW IDS GRADUATE CERTIFICATE

Starting this semester IDS is pleased to announce our new International Development Graduate Certificate. The IDS Graduate Certificate is designed for graduate students across disciplines who are interested in using their graduate degrees in an international setting. Students seeking a UM Graduate Certificate in International Development Studies are required to complete a total of 12 credit hours including at least 6 credits from the menu of Core Courses and up to 6 credits from the menu of Content Courses. For more information visit the IDS website!