

**BARD COLLEGE AT SIMON'S ROCK
SEMESTER ABROAD PROGRAM**

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES IN
MONTSERRAT**

January 15 – May 1st 2022



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ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES IN MONTSERRAT

This program is an opportunity for students to study abroad while taking advantage of the well-developed connections BCSR faculty have developed with the government of Montserrat, NGOs, and other experts in a variety of fields. The program is focused on understanding the complexities of human engagement with the natural world in light of extensive ecological and social disruption, the global crisis in biodiversity, and climate change, and is designed to allow students to participate in the core curriculum while exploring their own interests.

Specifically it is an opportunity to engage the people of Montserrat in an effort to understand how they are currently responding to major ecological and cultural disturbance due first to Hurricane Hugo in 1989, and then the Soufriere Hills Volcano, which underwent a series of eruptions from 1995-2012, forcing the evacuation of 12,000 people (85% of the population). An important element of the program is that it will include collaboration with resident experts and will be utilizing the Montserrat Community College facilities with Montserratian students participating in the program, providing a rich cultural exchange and learning opportunity for all participants.

Due to its relatively small size (population of 4,500), Montserrat provides a scalable opportunity for participants to fully engage with these issues, to explore and conduct research, and to learn about Caribbean culture and history, tropical ecology, anthropology, volcanology, marine science, and many other disciplines. Specifically it is an opportunity for students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and from around the world to engage with each other in an effort to understand how society can respond to major ecological and cultural disturbance.

This semester experience can be an academic cornerstone for careers in environmental science, social activism, education, and sustainability, and can be the incubator for senior thesis projects. The program is open to students from the Bard network of institutions.

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The Montserrat Semester Abroad program offers students the opportunity to explore a wide range of social and environmental issues on a small island that has suffered significant ecological and social disruption over the past 30 years. Students will get to know both the island and many of its residents quite well, including from government, NGOs, and educational institutions. They will work closely with Montserratian students from the local community college, which as part of the British educational system begins at age 17. Montserratian students who enroll in the program will work alongside our students on various projects and receive college credit through Bard College at Simon's Rock.

To participate students are required to have completed at least two courses at the 200 level or higher in any field. All participants are required to take the three core courses: 1) Environment and Sustainability, 2) Anthropology: Life Histories, and 3) Service Learning: In Praxis. In addition every student will need to register for additional credits from the elective courses, for a total of 15-18 credits. Advanced study can replace up to 3 credits through an approved tutorial or independent study. All course work is subject to approval by the program director and the BCSR Academic Affairs Office.

An important element of the program is the service learning course. This course will introduce students to service learning and connect them with various government offices and NGOs, where they will learn and work alongside experts in a variety of fields. Specific opportunities have yet to be finalized but include working with Montserrat National Trust and Botanical Garden, the Montserrat Volcano Observatory, the Montserrat Dept. of Health and Human Services, and the local elementary schools to name a few. Students will be paired in these assignments based on common interests and available options.

Core courses:

ENVS Environment and Sustainability (Coote, 4 credits)
ANTH Life Histories: Memories of Displacement (Boswell, 4 credits)
ECP In Praxis: Service with and for Montserrat (Boswell & King, 3 credits)

Electives focused on Montserrat or the Caribbean (8-10 credits)

The 7 week short course (module) allows for a diverse educational program through the use of visiting faculty. There will be a total of 2-3 electives offered in each half of the semester. For modules where the primary faculty is only on island for two weeks, students will continue work for an additional five weeks under supervision of one of the core faculty and through remote learning with the primary faculty.

Tentative Elective Courses:

Tropical Ecology (Coote & Schmidt, 7 weeks - 2 credits)
Volcanology and Geology of Montserrat (Bergman, 7 weeks - 2 credits)
Neotropical Botany (McClelland, 7 weeks - 2 credits)
Climate Change, Environmental Law, and CARICOM (King, 7 weeks - 2 credits)

Two Week Safety Course:

Water Safety: Man o' war, bearded fireworms, and surfing (Meier)

HOW TO APPLY

In order to attend the program interested students must submit a brief application outlining their reasons for wanting to attend the program and an explanation of how it fits into their overall academic plan. This is particularly important to ensure that students are able to meet their graduation requirements. In most cases this can be accomplished with sufficient planning and in conversation with your academic advisor and the program director. The full program application can found here:

<https://simons-rock.edu/academics/program-overview/ecology-and-sustainability-studies-in-montserrat.php>

PROGRAM EXPENSES

If you are a student of Bard College-Annandale, or Bard College at Simon's Rock your AY22 financial aid package will be applied to the program. Additional costs include vaccinations, airfare, and personal expenses. Required field trips are covered by the program but some optional programs, such as becoming a certified diver, are not. All travel on the island, food, and accommodations are included. There may be some opportunities to travel to other islands in the area which may carry a surcharge. All required program expenses are included.

KEY LOGISTICS

Time Difference

Montserrat time is one hour later than Eastern Standard Time during the winter
e.g. 9:00 am EST is 10:00 am in Montserrat

Local currency

Eastern Caribbean Dollars (XCD) at an exchange of xcd 2.7 = US \$1. US dollars are generally accepted everywhere, however you will receive your change in XCD.

Emergency Phone Numbers (see section on Communication for more details)

On island: Police dial 999 / Fire dial 911

Simon's Rock: 413-644-4400 (24/7)

Calling Montserrat from the U.S.: 1 – 664 – local number (7 digits)

Montserrat Volcano Observatory

The active Soufriere Hills Volcano is monitored by the Montserrat Volcano Observatory. Details available at www.mvo.ms. Radio Montserrat can be monitored for information (Radio ZJB).

STUDENT CHECKLIST

- Covid-19, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, and Tetanus vaccinations
- Passport
- 2 copies of passport – 1 copy left at home; 1 copy given to Tom Coote
- Pre-departure travel plans communicated to Tom Coote
- Snorkel, mask, fins, & dive skin
- Write-in-the-Rain or similar waterproof journal.
- Adequate supply of all necessary and preventative prescription medications
- Parent/guardian current contact information is on file with Simon's Rock

CULTURE & CUSTOMS

Bard College at Simon's Rock is visiting Montserrat under the invitation, auspices and guidance of the Government of Montserrat, and the local communities within the project area, and as such, we are guests in Montserrat. As guests, we therefore have a duty to ensure that we behave accordingly and conduct ourselves with every due respect, courtesy and consideration to our hosts. Everyone will be expected to conduct themselves with the care and consideration that they themselves would expect of any guest in their own home.

We have worked closely with the Minister of Education and the Permanent Secretary, as well as others to develop this opportunity and we hope to have many years of bringing students to the island to study. Please work with your program staff and fellow students to help build this relationship.

Soufriere Hills Volcano

Soufriere Hills Volcano had a major eruption in 1997 which essentially closed the southern end of the island – known as the “Exclusion Zone.” However the north end of the island was largely unaffected and the impact of the continued low-level emissions is minor. The volcano is closely monitored by the Montserrat Volcano Observatory (details available at <http://www.mvo.ms>) and Radio Montserrat can be monitored for information (Radio ZJB).

PROGRAM ITINERARY

Important! – The following itinerary is tentative and will be finalized in October. Do not purchase any flights until the final dates are determined and only in conversation with the program director.

Arrival – Around January 15th

Students have two options for travel. They can meet at JFK/Newark and depart with other members of the team, or they can arrange to fly into Antigua and Montserrat on their own. Regardless of which option is chosen, all flights have to be coordinated through Simon's Rock. This process is tricky because the only flights from Antigua to Montserrat are small 7-8 seat planes and they only fly 2-3 trips each day. Likewise the ferry only has two trips each day and does not run 7 days a week. Therefore flights into Antigua need to be coordinated with the small plane and ferry departure times. You will be provided with detailed transportation coordination information in the fall once flight schedules are confirmed. Do not make any reservations until that time.

Class Begins – January 17th

Spring Break – March 12th – 20th (BCSR spring break is March 19th – 27th)

Program Ends – May 1st

ACCOMMODATIONS

Housing on the island is very limited, with only one 12 room hotel. To house 25-30 people several private homes will be rented in two neighborhoods known as Woodlands and Old Towne. Most have limited Wi-Fi. The housing assignments will include staff in each house. Students will be sharing rooms of 2-3 people, with shared baths. Beds may include only mattresses on the floor, or sleeping mats.

FOOD, MEALS, & CHORES

Groceries are expensive in Montserrat. The meals that are planned are simple and rice and beans will be a staple. Everyone (program staff and students) will be involved in food preparation and cleanup. Breakfast and lunches will be “self-serve” but dinners will be prepared in rotating teams for the full group. The dinner crew will also be

responsible for making sure that the kitchen remains in order after breakfast and lunch on their assigned day.

Recommendations About Food and Water

The water is considered safe and the groups in past years had no problem drinking water from the tap. However, we recommend:

- Eat only thoroughly cooked foods. Boil it, Cook it, Peel it or Forget it!
This means:
 - No salads from food stands! They look good... but you'll regret it!
 - Only eat fruit that you can peel or wash yourself, not fruit that has been pre-peeled or washed for you.
 - Fruit juices may be problematic—best to avoid them or buy juice in a can or bottle.
- Don't eat food that looks like it was cooked yesterday and has been sitting in the sun since then.
- Don't eat food that looks or smells bad.
- If you are eating in a restaurant, eat only cooked food (not fresh foods)
- **STAY HYDRATED!** Drink plenty of fluids. Got a headache? Drink water. Tired? Drink water. Stomach problems? Drink water! Basically, carrying drinking water at all times of travel is required. Your goal is to pass light colored urine every 2 hours.

These guidelines are mentioned as a precaution to help keep you healthy. Traveler's diarrhea is not pleasant and the bathroom is **NOT** where you want to spend your time!

Personal Hygiene & Avoiding Certain Discomforts

- Wash Your Hands Thoroughly and Often!
Because food is being prepared in groups and served to groups, we ask that everyone pay extra attention to their personal hygiene. Washing hands thoroughly and often can prevent much transmission of bacteria.
- Rinse your ears out with fresh water after swimming in the ocean (to avoid ear infections).
- Body rashes can happen in hot environments with exposure to salt water – avoid wearing wet clothing longer than necessary.

Chores

Assignments will include:

- Dinner Prep Team (includes same day kitchen maintenance after breakfast and lunch)

- House maintenance (kitchen and bathrooms and common spaces)
- Other tasks as assigned by program staff or community-wide decisions

A word about septic – all houses are on septic fields. This means there is no town or island water treatment plant. It is an absolute necessity that **ONLY** toilet paper be flushed down the toilets.

SAFETY & MONEY

Money

Credit cards are not widely accepted. Traveler's checks can be cashed at banks only. All students should travel with some cash on hand for small personal purchases but these funds **need to be brand new bills in denominations of \$5 or more** Local merchants will not accept even a slightly worn bill, and they will check every bill for the slightest tear or blemish.

The national currency of Montserrat is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (XCD) although USD is equally welcome in most establishments. There is no need to change USD into XCD at any stage during your time in Montserrat but bear in mind you will be given change in XCD when purchasing from shops on the island. The exchange rate is approximately XCD 2.7 = USD \$1.

There are only one or two ATMs but they will accept most debit or credit cards and will disburse cash in XCD. Once on island it is recommended that you hold onto your US \$ and take out some EC \$ to use during your stay. Be sure to call your bank and credit card company to authorize use in Montserrat.

MEDICAL NOTES

If medical care is required the nearest critical care facility is the Mount St. John's Medical Center in Antigua. There is an air ambulance on standby to transfer people to the hospital on Antigua as necessary. Basic services are provided by the St. John's Medical Centre in Montserrat and a few small clinics. All basic medical expenses are covered under the program fee.

Simon's Rock is providing expanded medical coverage for travel abroad, which covers serious medical issues including support for medical evacuation. It is up to each individual whether to purchase additional international travel insurance.

PACKING LIST

You are limited to one large carry-on backpack and one checked bag. If you have any questions about what to purchase, contact Tom Coote. Carry-on bag size limit is 45 linear inches (14"+9"+22"); checked bag size limit is 62 linear inches (length+width+height) and 50 lbs. There are significant airline charges for overweight bags.

If you take the small plane to Montserrat anticipate a strong possibility of having your large bag left behind for delivery the next day. In other words, have a change of clothes and toiletries in your carry-on.

If you have packing questions about what you can carry in your carry-on and what should go in your checked bag, see tsa.gov (where there is a useful app about luggage).

Seasonal temperatures – winter and summer temperatures vary between 76-88 degrees Fahrenheit (sea breezes are the norm).

Required Equipment List:

- Snorkeling gear (snorkel, mask, fins)
- Dive booties or water shoes (needed for comfort and safety)
- Dive gloves
- Dive skin
- Sturdy water bottle(s) – 2L in size at least
- Backpack

Recommended Equipment List:

- 1 mm wetsuit – recommended, but not required (not having one will not impact your participation in the academic programming)
- Headlamp/flashlight
- Multi-tool knife (don't pack this item in your carry-on bag)
- Camera & spare batteries
- Write-in-the-Rain booklet
- Sunglasses
- Beach towel
- Binoculars

No Goretex – doesn't work
well in the tropics!

Sleeping bag & mat

Clothing List:

Non-cotton field pants and shorts
Non-cotton long-sleeved and short sleeve shirts
One set of casual, nice clothing for outings in town
Fleece/sweatshirt
Lightweight waterproof jacket
Sturdy walking shoes with ankle support
Sandals
Wide brimmed hat
Swimwear
Underwear

No Linen – although cool,
it doesn't dry well!

Toiletries:

1. Keep in mind the limits on liquids/gels in carry-on luggage
2. Wherever possible, please ensure that these items are biodegradable and environmentally friendly (i.e. low in nitrates and phosphate-free).

Toothbrush and toothpaste
Insect repellent (with deet)
Benadryl
Hydrocortisone cream
Sunscreen (see side note) and lip salve
Razor blades for shaving as needed
Shampoo & soap
Hand sanitizer towelettes
Moleskin for blisters
Medicated talcum powder (for “nappy rash”)
Contact lens solutions if needed
* Female participants: bring extra supply of feminine care products

There is evidence that
sunscreen is killing reefs so
dive skins and hats are the
preferable tools to protect
yourself from sun exposure.

Medications:

- Bring any prescription drugs you take IN THE CONTAINER they came in with your name and the prescription on it. Be sure to have enough for the whole trip (double your usual supply).
- A small supply of any over-the-counter drugs you use regularly (such as aspirin or migraine headache medications)
- If you wear contacts, bring an extra pair and/or a pair of glasses.
- The program staff will bring a first aid kit with basic medication/band aids/etc. BUT there won't be an unlimited supply. If there's something you think you will need while you are there—allergy medication, motion sickness medication, etc., bring it yourself.

- Consider bringing a multivitamin since your diet will be quite different than what you are used to.

What to Leave Behind:

- Hair dryers or other small electrical appliances (remember the voltage there is 220V so a converter will be needed for any North American appliances)
- Jewelry—if you wear jewelry, tone it down as much as possible. Anything that you love, leave at home. Plan on removing all jewelry when snorkeling or swimming.

Laundry facilities:

There are laundry facilities in the houses.

PROGRAM STAFF INFORMATION

There are three core faculty members from Simon’s Rock that will be on site the full semester. Visiting faculty and staff will come from both Simon’ Rock and Bard. The program staff will be living in the same houses as the students and will be on hand to ensure that all activities are being conducted in a suitable and safe manner.

Dr. Thomas Coote, Program Director & Faculty

Environmental Studies, Landscape Ecology and Genetics

BA, Bard College at Simon's Rock; MSES Bard College; PhD, University of Massachusetts, Amherst (Department of Environmental Conservation)

Dr. Coote’s research focuses on aquatic ecology and genetics with a particular focus on molluscs. In his teaching and research, he draws from several disciplines including agroecology, environmental science, political ecology, and landscape ecology. Dr. Coote has been the recipient of the Hudson River Foundation’s Polgar Fellowship as well as the New York National Sea Grant Fellowship. In addition to his academic background he served for 10 years in Student Affairs. He is the director of the Berkshire Environmental Research Center, based on the Simon’s Rock campus.

Dr. Kathryn Boswell, Associate Program Director & Faculty

Anthropology

MA & PhD, Indiana University, Bloomington

Dr. Boswell's recent publications include “Establishing ‘Stable Beginnings’ through Alternative Channels: Voluntary Association Membership, Marriage, and Women’s Socio-Economic Welfare in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso” in *Africa Today* and “Accumulation, War, and Dispossession: Burkinabé Repatriates’ Problematic

Reincorporation in the Homeland” in NEAA Bulletin. She has previously taught at Indiana University, Richmond and served as an OSI-Africa Doctoral Scholar; Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C. She has been the recipient of several Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships as well as two-time IIE Fulbright awardee to Côte d’Ivoire (1999-2000) and Burkina Faso (2004-2005). Dr. Boswell has presented at the African Studies Association, American Anthropological Association, Northeastern Anthropological Association, among others. She has been teaching at Simon's Rock since 2008.

Arielle V. King, Program Manager

Environmental Law

BA, Bard College at Simon’s Rock; Masters in Environmental Law, Vermont Law School

Arielle V. King is an environmental justice, social justice, and anti-racism advocate. As of August 2021 she will be working as an Environmental Justice Staff Attorney at the Environmental Law Institute. She earned her BA in Environmental and Sustainability Studies from Simon’s Rock and a Master’s in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School in 2018 through a 3-1 joint degree program, then stayed at Vermont Law School to earn her law degree. During her time in law school, Arielle co-founded the Environmental Justice Law Society, a student group focused on advancing environmental justice through advocacy, education, and knowledge of the law; served as the school's first Black student voting member of the Board of Trustees; revived the school newspaper and currently serves as the publisher.

Dr. Mike Bergman, Faculty

Geophysics

BA, Columbia University; PhD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Dr. Bergman joined the Simon’s Rock faculty after a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University, where he studied fluid dynamics, magnetohydrodynamics, and the generation of planetary magnetic fields. He is the recipient of fellowships from the National Science Foundation (NSF), NASA, and NATO, which sponsored his work at the University of Glasgow. His recent work involves experimental studies of the effects of magnetic fields, rotation, and fluid flow during the solidification and deformation of ice and metals, for which he has received grants from the Research Corporation and the National Science Foundation. He was awarded the 2000 Doornbos Memorial Prize in Exeter, United Kingdom, for his research on the Earth’s interior, and is the secretary of SEDI, an international association of scientists who study the Earth’s deep interior. He has published papers, some with student coauthors, in *Geophysical and Astrophysical Fluid Dynamics*, *Physics of the Earth and Planetary Interiors*, *Metallurgical and Materials Transactions*, *Nature*, *Geophysical*

Research Letters, *Journal of Geophysical Research*, and *Journal of Crystal Growth*. He is the author of a chapter in the American Geophysical Union monograph *Core Dynamics, Structure, and Rotation*, and a chapter in the *Elsevier Encyclopedia of the Earth Sciences*, and has served as guest editor for *Physics of the Earth and Planetary Interiors*. He has also written a News and Views column for *Nature*. In Spring 2013, Dr. Bergman was a visiting research scientist at the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon, France.

Dr. Donald McClelland, Faculty

Botany

AA & BA, Bard College at Simon's Rock; PhD & MPhil, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York and The New York Botanical Garden

Dr. McClelland was The New York Botanical Garden's National Science Foundation funded Planetary Biodiversity Inventory: Solanum graduate fellow. Before returning to Simon's Rock as a faculty member, he taught at Baruch College, Lehman College, the College of Mount St. Vincent, and The New York Botanical Garden's Adult Education program and the NYBG School of Professional Horticulture. Dr. McClelland's research focuses on the taxonomy and systematics of the plant family Solanaceae, the nightshade family, and the flora of eastern North America. He has conducted botanical fieldwork in Bolivia, New Caledonia, the Philippines, throughout the eastern United States, and in Hawaii. Future research projects include conservation of *Solanum viride* (also known as the cannibals' tomato), a species endemic to Oceania, and melissopalynology of southern New England.

Dr. Bob Schmidt, Faculty Emeritus

Ichthyology

BS, University of Rhode Island; MS, PhD, University of Connecticut

Dr. Schmidt's specialty is ichthyology, with current interests in biogeography and the fishes of Montserrat, South America, and Hudson River fish larvae. His grants from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and Hudson River Foundation, among others, have enabled him to do research resulting in over 80 papers published in scientific journals including *Copeia*, *Ecology*, *Northeastern Naturalist*, *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society*, and *Caribbean Naturalist*, and contributions to several symposia on Hudson River ecology. His publications include seven coauthored papers on Montserratian fauna. He is an associate director of Hudsonia Ltd., located at Bard College, a director of the Berkshire Environmental Research Center, Ltd. at Simon's Rock, and adjunct curator of fishes at the New York State Museum.

Dr. Sarah Snyder, Faculty

Herpetology

BS, Unity College; PhD, University of Nevada, Reno

Dr. Snyder was a National Academies Education Fellow in the Life Sciences from 2013-2014 and has previously taught at the University of Nevada, Reno. Her research addresses conservation concerns for sensitive reptile and amphibian populations by examining mechanistic relationships between animals and their environment. As a doctoral student, she studied the effects of wildfire on the thermal ecology of tortoises in the Mojave Desert. Her work has been presented at many national and international conferences including the World Congress of Herpetology, the Joint Meeting of Herpetologists and Ichthyologists, and annual meetings of the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology and the Ecological Society of America. Dr. Snyder has been actively involved in educational outreach at the University of Nevada Museum of Natural History, Nevada Bugs & Butterflies, and the Flying Cloud Institute's Young Women in Science Program.

COMMUNICATION

Families Needing to Reach their Son/Daughter on Montserrat

In the event of an emergency and you must contact your son/daughter while they are abroad, please follow these guidelines:

Sunday, December 27-Sunday, January 3 and evenings/weekends

Contact Simon's Rock Security: 413-644-4400 or 413-528-7291

Even when the College is closed during Intersession, someone will always answer the phone

Monday, January 4-21 during office hours (9 am-5 pm)

Contact Academic Affairs at: 413-528-7247 or 413-528-7240

Home and cell numbers (please use these only in the case of an emergency and on the off chance that the above numbers don't reach anyone)

Before departure: Tom Coote: 413-229-0312 (home)

During program: Anne O'Dwyer: 646-265-3848 (cell)

Karen Advokaat: 413-281-8628 (cell) / 413-442-7653 (home)

Cell service is not necessarily reliable in the accommodations on the island, however Wifi has generally been very reliable. All the houses have landlines and those numbers will be available through Simon's Rock as needed in the event of an emergency.

On Island Emergency Numbers

Police & Emergency Numbers: Fire 911, Police 999

Police Headquarters: 1-664-491-2555

Emergency Line: 1-664-491-7790

General Means of Communication

If students wish to use their cell phones on Montserrat to make international calls, a local SIM card will need to be purchased (at a cost of approximately XCD\$20) and cell phones will need to be unlocked or “open line.” Calls are very expensive without pre-purchased international minutes.

We have found that the best way to remain in touch with family and friends is through video calls (such as Skype or Facetime).

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR PREPARING YOURSELF

Montserrat Tourist Board

<http://www.visitmontserrat.com/>

Government of Montserrat

<http://www.gov.ms/>

<http://www.gov.ms/a-z-government-listings/>

CDC

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/montserrat>

State Department

<http://travel.state.gov/>

Fit for Travel

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/caribbean/montserrat.aspx>

Kew Royal Botanic Gardens

<http://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/montserrat>

Montserrat National Trust

<http://montserratnationaltrust.ms/about-us/>

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/projects/details/198131-montserrat-programme>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology Neotropical Birds

http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/overview?p_p_spp=673516