Community Learning in Action

CLIA, short for Community Learning in Action, are courses involving some form of community-engaged learning.

CLIA 24 (W) Class of 1959 TeachNYC Urban Education Program
The Williams Class of 1959 Teach New York Program is a fantastic Winter Study Course which gives students an opportunity to teach in challenging K-12 urban school settings. Each year between up to eight sophomores, juniors and seniors participate in this intense experience that takes them worlds away from the traditional college classroom setting. Students use the program as an opportunity to explore their interest in different areas education-teaching, policy, pedagogy, reform- while also having a three week adventure in one of the greatest cities in the world. In the end, students return from this experience with a greater appreciation for the complex world of urban education as well as the daily challenges that teachers and under-resourced students face on a daily basis. Students are matched with an elementary, middle or high school classroom and subject area of their interest. They spend weekdays working closely with a mentor teacher. Depending on their interest level, they will tutor individual students and groups, create lesson plans, lead discussions and even teach a subject if they desire. While in New York, the group convenes for weekly dinner meetings where they process their experience with teachers, principals and experts in urban education. These events are hosted by Program Director Tracy Finnegan.

Requirements/Evaluation: Paper(s) or report(s); Creative project(s)
Prerequisites: Students should show a genuine interest in education, whether it be policy, teaching, or reform. This is an intense winter study course. Students should be ready to show up at their respective schools M-F, on time & ready to work hard and have fun!
Enrollment Limit: 8
Enrollment Preferences: Interview and seniority
Expected Class Size: NA
Grading: pass/fail only
Unit Notes: Tracy directs the Class of 1959 TeachNYC Winter Study Program, developing New York City public school teaching & policy placement opportunities. Tracy mentors & guides the students during their school NYC internship.
Materials/Lab Fee: $500
Attributes: EXPE Experiential Education Courses
Not offered current academic year

Winter Study -----------------------------------------------

CLIA 11 (W) Teaching 3rd Grade about Zebrafish - BioEYES
BioEYES brings tropical fish to 3rd-grade classrooms in Williamstown and Lanesborough Elementary schools, in a science teaching workshop. Elementary school students will breed fish at the school, then study their development and pigmentation for one week. Williams students will adapt BioEYES lesson plans to the science curriculum for the schools we visit, work with classroom teachers to introduce concepts in genetics and development, help the 3rd-grade students in the classroom, and assess elementary student learning. No zebrafish experience or science expertise is necessary. All training is provided. During the first week, Williams students will learn to set up fish matings and review BioEYES lesson plans on embryonic development and the genetics of fish pigmentation. In small groups, students will practice teach hands-on experiments using living animals. In the subsequent three weeks, students will present lessons at the schools and review assessment data. Time commitment: Week 1 - approx. 6 hours total for program training and lesson preparation with additional outside-of-class time needed to create teaching posters, dates, and times TBD. Weeks 2 & 3 - approx. 3 hours per day, times TBD, dependent on elementary school schedules during the regular school day between 8:30 am and 3:00 pm. Week 4 - TBD; 3 hours per day if running a school program; minimal hours if not running an elementary school program.

Requirements/Evaluation: Presentation(s)
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 12
Enrollment Preferences: Preference to first years
CLIA 12  (W) "Be"ing Whole; integrating mindfulness through movement, art, nature, and creativity

Want to focus this winter study on being more present and on your sense of well-being? In this year's "rendition" of the class on "Be"ing and learning how to maintain/reach homeostasis in the autonomic nervous system (balancing "fight or flight" and the "rest and digest" parts of our nervous system) we will explore the neuroscience behind why mindfulness practices can help restore the homeostasis of a stressed nervous system while practicing different types of mindful movement (yoga, hiking, walking, etc.), creative art and grounding mindfulness activities (making lavender pillows, slime, stress balls, "yoga" prose, and engaging in games, etc.), and meditative exercises (body scans, loving-kindness, etc.) Each class will start with an invigorating/challenging yoga flow (modifications are always welcome, taught, and encouraged) and will then continue to highlight a specific activity followed by a 5-10 minute journal prompt. The final project will be for students to take what they've learned about mindfulness exercises and practices as well as their own physical and psychological reactions to these practices and to customize a toolkit that includes soothing reminders, activities, prompts, and supplies. What to Expect: - Playful yoga practices; we will explore having fun with movement and breath while challenging ourselves with possible arm balances and even playing around with some inversions! - Calming meditative practices - loving-kindness, gratitude, body scans, visualization exercises - Creative mindfulness through art (observing art, creating mandalas, other tactile or sensory activities) - Mindful outdoor/nature exploration (adapted based on the weather - mud or snow - hopefully it's snow! - Creating a customized kit for self-soothing during - At least one visit (possibly more depending on class size) into local elementary schools to teach yoga and mindfulness; we will "practice" kids yoga games to fully embrace our inner childhood!

Requirements/Evaluation: Creative project(s)
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 30

CLIA 13 Depictions and Portrayals of Minoritized Identities in Picture Books

In this course, students will examine and reexamine everything they thought they knew about picture books. Often thought of as books for children, what can these seemingly simple books teach us about ourselves and our world? During the class, we will look at three sets of minoritized identities: racially minoritized identities, body diversity and disability, gender identities and sexual orientation, and the intersections of all of the above, as depicted in cutting-edge picture books of today. Books include: Big by Vashti Harrison Papá's Magical Water Jug Clock by Jesús Trejo and Eliza Kinkz Watercress by Andrea Wang. The Activist by Nicholas Smith and Homeland by Hannah Moushabeck. We are Water Protectors by Carole Lindstrom and more! Beyond simply reading these books, students will explore how to use picture books to open and guide difficult conversations with children, mitigate the harm caused by books presented without understanding and context, and learn how to create and monitor a diverse, rich picture book library. Students will have the opportunity to visit a local children's bookstore, tour the picture book collections of local libraries, and participate in a panel discussion with picture book authors, picture book Instagrammers, and illustrators. By the end of the course, students will have a foundational understanding of the modern picture book landscape. They will be able to find, evaluate, and select books for a diverse picture book library and monitor that library for any gaps in representation they might need to fill. This class would be perfect for aspiring teachers, librarians, or anyone with a love of and interest in books. Students will leave this class with the start of a picture book library!

Requirements/Evaluation: Presentation(s); Creative project(s)
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 30
Enrollment Preferences: If over-enrolled, preference will be given to students hoping to enter the education or library science fields after graduation. Students may be asked to write a brief paragraph on what they hope to get from the class.
Expected Class Size: NA
Grading:
Unit Notes: Ash Bell works at CLiA as the Assistant Director for Community Inclusion. They also are the founder and director of The Rainbow Toolbox, an educational consulting company that supports implementing inclusive practices in education.
Materials/Lab Fee: $230
Attributes: EXPE Experiential Education Courses  STUX Winter Study Student Exploration
Not offered current academic year

CLIA 14  (W)  Food Justice and the Righteous Entrepreneur

DC Central Kitchen, an iconic, food-based social enterprise that was founded in 1989 to turn the notion of charity on its head, has been at the forefront of food access, food justice, economic opportunity and racial equity for over three decades. The Kitchen’s CEO, Mike Curtin ’86, will lead the class on an exploration of these issues through the lens of DC Central Kitchen’s growth and evolution. The class also work through the Kitchen's experiences during the pandemic and the simultaneous racial reckoning that highlighted the fragility of our food system, the thin line between food security and insecurity for so many, and the structural and systemic inequalities that create these realities. In addition to using as text Food Fighters, A History of DC Central Kitchen, by Alex Moore, the Kitchen’s Chief Development Officer, the class will explore DC Central Kitchen’s Eight Rules for Righteous Entrepreneurs, principles that have defined the organization’s impact. The class will also discuss the basics of nonprofit management and the roles that social enterprise and innovation can have in disrupting a more traditional nonprofit structure. Guest speakers who are also engaged in the fight against hunger and for systemic changes to our food system and access to economic opportunity and liberation will join the class to share their work and challenge students to look at food justice from environmental, legal, political, racial and economic perspectives. Past guests have included chef and humanitarian, Jose Andres; Pulitzer Prize winning author, Marcia Chatalain; former US Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Kathleen Merrigan ’80; Congressman Jim McGovern; food and fracial justice activist, Chris Bradshaw; Chef activists including Tom Colicchio, Michel Nishan and Andrew Zimmerman, and several DC Central Kitchen alumni and staff.

Requirements/Evaluation: Paper(s) or report(s); Presentation(s); Other: Class participation
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: If the course is over enrolled, preference will be given to students closest to graduation.
Expected Class Size: NA
Grading: pass/fail only
Unit Notes: Mike has led DC Central Kitchen through the Great Recession, the COVID-19 pandemic, and significant periods of organizational growth and expansion. In 2023, the Kitchen opened the country’s most innovative and ambitious urban food hub.

Materials/Lab Fee: $35
Attributes: STUX Winter Study Student Exploration
Not offered current academic year

CLIA 21  (W)  INTRODUCTION TO ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

This course enables students to learn the theory and practice of community-engaged scholarship while engaging in a small partnership project with a community organization or initiative. Engaged scholarship is understood as mutually beneficial learning partnerships between higher education institutions and community entities addressing pressing social and civic issues. Through brief readings, class discussions, and meetings with community partners, students will learn the history and context of engaged scholarship, explore the ethical, political, and cultural issues associated with this work, and improve their understanding of the Berkshires and town/gown relations. Through their project work supported by the Center for Learning in Action, students will learn how to navigate the simultaneous challenges of engaging as learners, collaborators, knowledge co-creators, and social change agents.

Requirements/Evaluation: Creative project(s)
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 8

Enrollment Preferences: Students will be invited to submit a statement of interest

Expected Class Size: NA

Grading: pass/fail only

Unit Notes: Paula Consolini serves as the Adam Falk Director of the Center for Learning in Action, where she leads a team supporting community-engaged work. She earned her doctorate in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley.

Attributes: EXPE Experiential Education Courses  STUX Winter Study Student Exploration  WELL Winter Study Wellness

Not offered current academic year