

S U M M E R 2 0 1 5

Save the Bay!

IDLS 395- Issues of the Chesapeake: An Educator's Overview
By: Meghan Stemann

Meet the Instructors!

The professors of this course were Eric Fitzgerald and Dr. Cindy Klevickis. They have lead this class for 3 Maymester sessions. When asked what their favorite part of the class was, they responded:

EF: The best part about teaching this class is watching students work as a team and experience new ways of learning. Students really enjoy learning about the environment through experiential learning. My favorite part is when students look at each other and say, "I can use this in my classroom" or "I can do that!"

CK: This class can change students' lives forever. I love watching the transformation as students fall under the spell of the beauty of the Chesapeake Bay. Everyone, including me, leaves with a great appreciation for the environment and for the "sense of place" exhibited by the people who live on the Bay."



"On three yell, 'Let's go Captain Jessie'!!!"

This is just one of the many chants we cheered while on a trip to Smith Island, Maryland, for a Topics of IDLS class, where the topic was, Issues of the Chesapeake: An Educator's Overview.

The purpose of this class is to teach future educators about the Chesapeake Bay, how to influence the bay, and how to incorporate it into the classroom using hands-on activities.

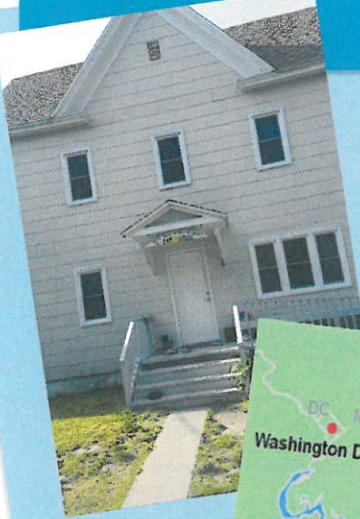
Before heading to Smith Island, we attended three locations near Harrisonburg. First we visited Cook's Creek, which was located at the Dayton Poultry factory. While here, we learned the importance of riparian buffers to the health of the water. We encouraged these buffer zones by checking on the trees planted last year and planting new ones in the place of those that did not survive.

Next we visited Steve Baker's pig farm and Mount Crawford Creamery. While on these farms we experienced what they go through on a daily basis. We were also able to witness and feel the passion that these families put into their work. They appreciate the farms that have been handed down to them, are passionate about eating local goods, and helping to better the environment for the Chesapeake Bay. We then took this knowledge from the local communities to compare to what we would see at Smith Island.



"The sense of a small tight knit community was amazing to experience and was like stepping back in time." –Christi Querry, Sophomore, IDLS

Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Smith Island Environmental Education Center



"No Slop in the Slop Bucket!!"

While staying on the island, we lived in a house provided by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. In order to instill good habits of keeping the bay healthy, we composted, reduced, recycled, and reused products while in Tylerton. One of the ways we did this was by making sure to be aware of how much food we put on our plate and not leaving any "slop" behind. We also used bandanas instead of napkins and reused plates and utensils. While cleaning dishes on the island we filled the sinks with the water needed to clean the dishes. Another way that we conserved water was by not showering!

Challenges!

At the Smith Island Environmental Education Center, we participated in many challenges that resembled things you would do at summer camp. One of those was the slop bucket mentioned above. Others included setting a goal and finding a certain number of creatures and plants on the island. Another challenge included making sure that no doors were left open or lights left on.

Meet our Educators on Smith Island

Megan Fink: is the Island Senior Manager for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's four island education residential centers. She supervises the field experiences for students and implements teacher professional development within each center.

Norah Carlos: is the Educator for the Smith Island Education Center. She is a graduate of the University of Vermont and led us on our adventures while on the island.



“The Shenandoah Valley and the Smith Island communities are a lot alike in that they pass traits down to their children and grandchildren, so that they can keep the heritage and culture going.” –Bethany Vann, Junior, IDLS



EWELL SCHOOL

One of our many adventures on Smith Island involved visiting Ewell School (pictured above). While at the school, we were able to engage with the students. There are a total of 11 students enrolled at the school and their ages range from Pre-School to Seventh grade. The students really seemed to enjoy getting to know us and we loved talking to them about their experiences at their school and what they like to do in their free time. It was interesting to find that they are much like the children from our neck of the woods. You would think with all of this water and nature around them, that they would go fishing and crabbing all of the time. It was surprising to find that was not the case. They enjoy playing videogames and on iPads, rather than being in the

water. We also were able to have an open discussion with the principal/teacher, Janet Evans. The pastor of United Methodist Church, Rick Edmunds also answered some questions for us. Janet shared that they do not have the resources that they need to be able to give these students the best education. She does all that she can to juggle the different grades, but she does this all alone. She expressed how a student who needs additional support in the classroom sometimes only receives help once a month. Educating these students and getting to know them personally motivate Janet everyday. She takes pride in influencing these children. Although her job is not easy, she enjoys being in the strong, supportive community that is evident on Smith Island.



CAPTAIN JESSIE

Captain of the Susquehanna and Educator for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Not only was Jessie our amazing Captain during our stay, but he is a native Smith Islander. He grew up on the island and now owns homes on the island and the mainland. Jessie showed extreme dedication to the Bay through his stories and appreciation for us as future educators. His knowledge of the Bay and the community of Smith Island is overwhelming. His passion for the community and the water was displayed through his action and love for this organization! Thank you Captain Jessie for all that you do!!!

“It seems like the people of Tylerton know that the community doesn’t have a great future, but they continue to stay in good spirits and live every day in their town to the fullest.” –Courtney Didlake, Senior, IDLS

Adventures of Smith Island

“Kiss and Twist!”

On the first day of arrival, we learned how to pull out a crab pot, bait it, and place it back into the water to catch more crabs. Maryland has many laws in place when it comes to crab potting, one of them includes you can only keep crabs that are longer than 5 inches. To bait the crab pot, we had to kiss the Herring and thank them for being the bait. Then twist it apart to attract crabs with the Herring’s oils and smell.



Canoeing in the Bay!

On the second day, we took an adventure out on the bay in canoes. While out on the water, we paid attention to the different species to add to our log. Some of the species we encountered were osprey, eel grass, and brown pelicans.

Does the Bay pass the test?

Later on the second day, we were able to assess the quality of the water through testing its temperature, pH, nutrients that include oxygen and nitrogen, living organisms, and turbidity. We found that the water in the Chesapeake Bay was much better than we thought it was!



What is that smell?!?!

Sulfur from the marshes. This gooey mud is home to many species including muskrat (I believe that is what it was...) and plants such as marsh elder and saltmeadow cordgrass. We enjoyed discovering the marshes as a habitat and diving into its squishy mud.



“It is truly sad to see how much has been taken away from the island because they no longer have the population to continue to keep it running.” –Nicole Greer, Junior, IDLS

About the Author

My name is Meghan Stemann and I am a senior at James Madison University. My major is in Interdisciplinary liberal Studies and my minor is in Elementary Education. I chose to take this class because I really enjoy science! I heard that this class was a great experience and something that I would never forget! I agree wholeheartedly. I truly appreciated learning about this body of water that I have been surrounded by my whole life but oblivious to what it entailed. I am thankful for the experience of the class and the opportunity to get to know more people within my major. Thank you Fitz and Cindy for providing such a rich educational and wonderful experience. I would recommend this class to anyone!!!

-Meghan Stemann



“Water is the driving force of all nature”
-Leonardo da Vinci