Frugal Innovation Field Practicum In Lilongwe, Malawi

An interdisciplinary experiential learning opportunity in community engagement, inter-institutional collaboration, and urban food systems

Summer 2016

The Global Center for Food Systems Innovation (GCFSI) at Michigan State University is piloting an innovative experiential learning course that focuses on building skills in collaborative community engagement in the context of urban food exchange and provisioning in Lilongwe, Malawi. Students from MSU and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) will work together to engage small- to medium-scaled food entrepreneurs to identify, articulate, and propose appropriate (or frugal) solutions to common problems in urban markets, which, if properly addressed, would allow improved livelihoods and/or food security.

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to 1) develop a deeper understanding of urban food environments in urban Africa, 2) build critical skills in community engagement, interdisciplinary problem-solving and collaboration, and 3) co-produce appropriate innovations to critical food system problems as they are identified by those working in food-based livelihoods. You can also view a video about last summer’s practicum here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOjWBCASI3M

Course Aims

- To develop an understanding of alternative food system arrangements, specifically “wet-markets”\(^1\)
- To build civic engagement skills
- To provide a practical forum for applying disciplinary perspectives to interdisciplinary problem-solving
- To provide a practical forum for co-creating and presenting appropriate innovations to decision-makers

Course (Tentative) Calendar

The course runs from June 26 to August 25.

*June 26-July 28:* Reading and online interaction (students will read 2-3 articles per week and comment in an online forum. There is no need to be on campus. Total hours required for each week should not exceed eight hours of work)

*July 29-August 3:* Classroom-based. Students will meet at MSU campus for in-class discussion. Field trip in local food system included. (Each class runs for a few hours each morning. The field trip will be one full day.)

*August 5-20:* Lilongwe, Malawi—Field Practicum

*August 25:* Wrap-up and presentations at MSU campus

Requirements

Students must be able to be on the MSU campus beginning July 29, 2016.

Students must be able to travel to Malawi from August 5 to August 22.

Students must agree to complete course requirements.

Students should be prepared to pay for their airline tickets (around $2,500) and Malawi visa ($75). GCFSI will be able to subsidize a portion of this cost, though that amount is not yet definite.

For more information, please contact Dr. Stephanie White at whites25@anr.msu.edu.

\(^1\) “Wet markets” refers to the open air food markets where people throughout sub-Saharan Africa commonly acquire food. They are sometimes referred to as ‘wet markets’ because they often are.
Malawi Frugal Innovation Practicum in Lilongwe, Malawi
Global Center for Food Systems Innovation, Michigan State University

PRACTICUM INFORMATION:
This is a summer experiential learning opportunity designed to improve skills in community engagement in the context of urban food systems in Lilongwe, Malawi. (See the cover page for more information about course timing, content, and goals. You can also view a video about last summer's practicum here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0jWBCASI3M).

To apply, you must be an advanced, full-time undergraduate or full/part-time graduate student in good academic standing. There are a limited number of positions available for this practicum. This is NOT an academic credit-bearing program. In-country costs for program participants will be covered, including meals and lodging, but you will be responsible for a portion of your plane ticket. All participants will be expected to participate in pre-planning activities either online through hybrid learning or on campus from June to August (see cover page for calendar). In addition, participants will be expected to provide feedback and interviews that will 1) improve future iterations of the course, and 2) share your learning experience with the wider MSU and GCFSI community. Without exception, participants are required to be in Malawi August 5-20, 2016, and need to have all immigration requirements to travel internationally (such as a passport, visa, or immigration permit for travel if needed for foreign citizens).

To be considered, submit the following:

1. This form
2. Your written answer to the essay question
3. Your resume and one letter of recommendation from a faculty member

Applications should be submitted by Friday, April 8, 2016, to Dr. Stephanie White at whites25@anr.msu.edu with the subject heading “Frugal Innovation Practicum Application.”

PERSONAL INFORMATION:
Name: ____________________________________________ MSU PID: ________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________ City, State, and Zip: _________________________________
Phone: ________________________________ E-Mail: _______________________________________________________
Home Country: ____________________________________________________________________________________

ACADEMIC INFORMATION:
Course Plan: (circle): Undergraduate Masters PhD
Department: ____________________________ Major/Area of Study: ____________________________
Total Credits Earned: ______________________ MSU GPA: ____________________________

SELECTION CRITERIA:
There are a limited number of positions available for involvement in this practicum. GCFSI is seeking students who
• Offer a unique perspective in the areas of business, marketing, urban planning, agriculture, food systems, community engagement, and sustainability
• Have demonstrated a commitment to their chosen field
• Are well-rounded in their academic and non-academic pursuits
• Have a vision for their future careers that involve the areas of study mentioned above
• Have a demonstrated commitment to the process of collaboration, inclusion and information exchange

ESSAY QUESTION:
In one page or less, describe your interests in this practicum and how your participation will contribute to enriching the experience of other members of the class; how it relates to your academic or personal aspirations; and any experience you have in collaborating in an international setting. In your essay, include any experience that you’ve had in promoting or enabling positive change on behalf of others.

If you have any questions please contact Dr. Stephanie White at whites25@anr.msu.edu.