



The Appalachian Cluster

Ferrum College

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Appalachian Cluster? It is a group of classes in the spring semester which examines modernization in Appalachia from several different points of view: English, sociology, and science. Each participant in the cluster takes all the classes so that students and faculty form a unique learning community.

Suppose I like the learning community idea but don't really want to spend a whole semester studying Appalachia? You will learn a great deal about Appalachia, but this is not an Appalachian Studies curriculum. Our focus is that of general education in liberal arts core classes, teaching basic concepts of science, sociology, and English; learning about the Appalachian region is a tool for getting there. The region is close at hand and rich in opportunity. So we do site visits to locations we have been studying, learning our subject matter partially through original research into areas that have been overlooked or misinterpreted.

If you are in the honors program, one of these courses (your choice) will count as HONORS credit.

Will I be able to fit two or three additional classes into my spring schedule? Yes.

How do these classes help me meet graduation requirements? All of these classes meet liberal arts core requirements. Together that amounts to 10 hours:
SOC 101 or 391—3 hours / ENG 102 or 207—3 hours / ESC 110 & the lab—4 hours

Where do we go on field trips?

We've been known to show up at a professor's house, a train museum, a sustainable farm, and an assembly of fourth graders—we'll do some of that again. The big field trip (a Thursday through Sunday in late March or early April, 2010) will take us to coal and timber country around Hurley, Virginia to conduct oral histories; then we'll head to St. Paul, Virginia to work with high school students who are restoring their wetlands. On the way we may go into a coal mine and visit a town with ties to prehistoric mammals, Native Americans, Civil War battles and environmental disasters. You never know where the Appalachian Cluster may show up!

How can I learn more about the Appalachian Cluster? Talk to your advisor. E-mail Susan Mead (smead@ferrum.edu), Carolyn Thomas (cthomas@ferrum.edu), or Tina Hanlon (thanlon@ferrum.edu) the Appalachian Cluster professors, and they will answer your questions. Whatever way you do it, take the opportunity to find out more about this great learning experience! There is nothing else quite like it!