THE GUYANA EXPERIENCE

The Guyana Experience has been in existence for 25 years as a service learning component of the Religious Studies course. We have developed many important relationships with the people of Guyana. This has enabled us to have many of our arrangements set and secure prior to our traveling to Georgetown, Guyana. We take every precaution necessary for living in a developing nation and no one in the group travels alone. We work intentionally to form a community that looks out for one another with the student group and with the people we come to know in Guyana. Students initially travel as a group visiting sites and may break off into groups of two or three during the day to go to a service site.

Criteria:

- Students applying for the Guyana experience must be a junior, senior or a graduate student.
- You will be registered for the class for the spring (3 credits) upon acceptance: Special Topics- Core
- The Application Process is open to TRADITIONAL age students 19-22/23 full time undergraduate or graduate students.(exceptions may be made for older students)
- A student is encouraged to have participated in a Spring Break service trip, the Jamaica experience or been abroad for a week in a group living environment, or have spent a week on a service trip.

PRE TRIP ARRANGEMENTS: Christine Somers, Director of Campus Ministry, will serve as the program facilitator and course instructor for this experience. There will be 2 or 3 adult chaperones at all times with the group.

II. Service Learning Course: Those students selected to participate in this experience will be required to take part in 10 class sessions that look at Cross Cultural ministry, theological reflection, community building and communication skills.
III. THE COURSE: The Guyana Experience will be offered as a three credit core course that meets Friday afternoon. The course provides students with the theological foundation necessary for relating with human experience by addressing the major resources of the Christian faith, looking at vocation, identity and mission, cultural influences and experience. The process of theological reflection will be explored within the context of human experience. The course involves looking at the lives of missionaries in the Church and exploring global realities of those in a developing nation.

COMPONENTS OF THE GUYANA EXPERIENCE:

TENATIVE DATES: early June for 2.5 weeks

ACCOMMODATIONS: The group will reside together at a retreat center. Students and staff may have to share bedrooms, living space, kitchen and bathrooms. Meals are provided as part of the trip and transportation.

COST: Students are asked to pay $1100 (depending on cost of flight) in addition to paying for the 3 credit hours through Misericordia.

GUIDELINES: In our Instructional Sessions we will review and hand out guidelines for the trip. These guidelines must be adhered to by all participants. Failure to abide by these guidelines can result in dismissal from the trip/program.

GROUP TR SESSIONS: These sessions will give each student the opportunity to present a theological reflection to the group while in Guyana.

DAILY JOURNAL: Students will be asked to journal daily to record their experiences and write their reflections and impressions, putting the model of theological reflection into practice in written form. These journals will be referred to
during the weekly individual sessions with the program facilitators.

INSTRUCTIONAL SESSIONS: There will also be a couple educational sessions introducing the students to the reality of Guyana, helping them to understand what has brought the country to where it is today. Different speakers will be brought in to talk to the group both in the class and in Guyana.

FIELD TRIPS/CULTURAL INTERACTION: While in Guyana, getting to know the people and the culture is a major part of the experience. We will eat Guyanese food, be invited to spend time with Guyanese families, have some day trips and participate in different Guyanese cultural events. Kietuer Falls is a day excursion the group takes, the cost of the trip is usually $250 that is the responsibility of the student to pay for that trip. Student will need another $90 for a separate day trip to the Interior.

MINISTRY NIGHTS: Students will be given an opportunity to meet in a relaxed and informal atmosphere with Guyanese people and sisters in ministry and learn of the various works in which they are engaged and learn more about the culture, history and Sisters of Mercy.

PRAYER EXPERIENCES: Once a week, students will have the responsibility to lead the group in a brief prayer experience. The prayer centers on their work, an experience of their week, a passage from scripture or other readings, a reflection from their journal, etc.

MINISTRY WORK: Students will be required to engage in at least 6 hours of field placement a day (Monday-Friday). Possible ministry sites include; St. Joseph's Mercy Hospital and Mobile Clinic; St. John Bosco Orphanage and Bosco Academy, a school for boys residing at the orphanage; a Red Cross convalescent home for children; a physical rehabilitation hospital; the Palms,
an institution for the elderly poor and homeless; Mercy Wings, a vocational school; and a drop-in center for teenage boys. This ministry work will be the main substance of the individual and group sessions, as well as the journal writing.

Learning outcomes:

- Through this service learning experience, students will exercise their professional skills in their ministry setting giving them the experience in working in an underdeveloped country.
- Students will be infused into the culture of Guyana, forming relationships with each other and the Guyanese people, thus giving them an experience of diversity that will increase and help build their multi-cultural competency.
- Through working and living in a country that is economically poor students will learn about the history, politics and economics of this country increasing their knowledge of the political, historical and economic struggles of developing nations.
- Through individual class session students will learn about the element of Cross Cultural ministry, the Spiritual and Corporal works of mercy, Critical and global concerns of the Sisters of Mercy. Students will be able to put these themes into practice in Guyana and witness firsthand how the Mission of the Sisters of Mercy is lived out in Guyana. Through this experience students will have a greater understanding of the Sisters of Mercy and their mission and our mission here at the University.

INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS: Each student will meet with the program facilitators once a week for an hour to discuss their Theological reflection, ministry work, their journal reflections, and to address any issues or difficulties that may arise.

LIABILITY: Student will be required to sign a liability/release form from the University as part of this trip. They will also be required to sign a commitment contract, which will outline student’s responsibilities before the trip and during the trip.
REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATION

A) Two page essay as part of the application form: Why would you want to go to Guyana? What would you bring to the group? How do you think your faith or spirituality may be impacted participating in a trip like this? What would motivate you to go?

B) Completion of Application/Information Questionnaire

C) 2 letters of recommendation
   (Include a letter from an administrator, faculty or staff member) peer recommendations are not acceptable.

D) A letter of endorsement from your parents
   (This letter is simply to verify that you have discussed this trip with your family and they support your exploring it as a possibility. Perhaps your family might want to express concerns, questions or reservations in this letter. They are at liberty and encouraged to contact Christine Somers (674-6314 or csomers@misericordia.edu) at any time to discuss concerns.)

E) A copy of your academic record

F). Health form completed and filled out by your physician upon acceptance.

G.) Disciplinary form and commitment contract upon acceptance
   Liability form upon acceptance.