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Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies: about the program

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About the Program

Interdisciplinary study

Grounded in the liberal arts tradition, the 2008 Rhodes Institute brings together faculty members from archaeology, history, music, psychology, religious studies and theatre. These faculty members team teach the regional studies seminar, as they provide information and insight from their own disciplinary perspectives through lectures, readings, and discussions. Although each fellow works under the supervision of a faculty mentor within a specific discipline, all members of the Institute faculty take part in discussions of all of the projects during weekly meetings. During these sessions, fellows begin to see the relationships and make the connections among their various topics.

Independent Research

After gaining a broad, interdisciplinary perspective in the seminar, students embark on their own specialized research. Institute fellows leave the confines of the classroom and venture into the community to work in libraries and archives or in collaboration with businesses, government, or non-profit institutions and organizations. Encouraged and advised along the way through individual meetings with faculty mentors, as well as in the weekly group sessions, fellows produce papers and projects that conform to the rigorous standards of the Institute faculty.

Regional immersion

Because the program focuses on the Mid-South, the Rhodes Institute serves as a cultural immersion experience. Much in the same way that students go abroad to imbibe the culture of a specific country, the Rhodes Institute provides fellows the chance to get to know the Memphis region in ways that few Rhodes students ever do. Fellows engage not only in “academic immersion” during the regional studies seminar, they also take a variety of field trips to experience first-hand the things they have studied in the classroom. In doing so, Institute fellows develop a sense of the unique attributes and contributions of the city and region.

Civic Engagement

The Rhodes Institute also fosters civic awareness and involvement in Memphis and the Mid-South. During the regional studies seminar and weekly group meetings, Rhodes Institute faculty and fellows discuss current events in the community. The program requires all fellows to read the Commercial Appeal newspaper and to report on articles relating to issues raised in the seminar. In conducting research, fellows make connections between their research interests and contemporary regional issues, while at the same time becoming acquainted with community leaders.

Rhodes Institute Fellows do not earn academic credit for their work, but participation in the Institute does fulfill Foundation requirement 11 (connections) under the Foundations Curriculum.

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