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Helen Rozwadowski
Helen.Rozwadowski@uconn.edu

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Maritime Studies at UConn

An exciting new salty-flavored program for lucky students

by Helen Rozwadowski

Bordered by the salty waters of Long Island Sound and adjacent to the Thames River and the historic commercial and defense ports of New London and Groton, the Avery Point Campus of the University of Connecticut occupies a unique place in the physical and educational geography of Southern New England. Now it is home to a new, interdisciplinary major –Maritime Studies–one that is uniquely suited to its setting.

Through the Maritime Studies major, students explore the historical and contemporary aspects of human society and the marine and coastal environments. Sophomore Michelle Gillan, from Westerly, Rhode Island "liked the low ratio of students to professors." Michelle is pursuing a Maritime Studies degree with a concentration in history, and would like to use her degree to teach. Not only does this course of study take advantage of the natural environment of the Avery Point campus, but it also draws upon the excellence of the marine sciences on campus and the close proximity of major cultural resources including museums, libraries, government agencies, and research institutions that focus on maritime heritage and coastal resource use.

Maritime Studies is an interdisciplinary major that embraces the liberal arts as the foundation for exploring humankind's critical and continually evolving connections with the world's waterways and watersheds. The Maritime Studies program will produce students with rigorous liberal arts training in recognized disciplines such as history, English, economics, political science, and anthropology but who also possess specialized knowledge of the opportunities, issues, and traditions that influence life in maritime regions.

"I appreciate the easy to reach professors who take a personal interest in each student."said Jameson Gregg, a student from Haddam, Connecticut.

Students complete an interdisciplinary series of core courses that explore maritime issues from historical, literary, social science, and physical science perspectives. The gateway course is itself an interdisciplinary introduction that explores readings from a variety of disciplines. Conducted as a seminar, it encourages students to confront new ideas, to question and refine their thoughts, and to begin building an understanding of the complex relationships between humanity and the water, relationships that cannot be fully explored through a single academic discipline. A second introductory-level course, named after Rachel Carson's famous book, *The Sea Around Us*, provides a broad scientifically focused examination of the history of ocean exploration, the interaction between the oceans and the atmosphere, the impact of technology on the marine environment, climate modification, and the exploitation of ocean resources.

Four upper-level courses in different disciplines explore the maritime workplace and the interactions between the maritime world and shore-side society. A literature course focuses on classic works of the maritime literary tradition, including texts by Joseph Conrad, Herman Melville, and others that contribute to the culture, history, and aesthetics of the sea. Atlantic voyages are the focus of a historical examination of the relationship between seafaring and society from the time of Columbus to the present,

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photo: UCONN

University of Connecticut English Professor Stephen Jones, curriculum chair of the UCONN Maritime Studies program, talks about marine programs with a student at Avery Point.

with particular emphasis on the Anglo-American experience. An economics course examines the industries that use and manage ocean resources, while another course in maritime law explores the exercise of jurisdiction by nations over the maritime area, focusing particularly on U.S. domestic statutes that apply in maritime areas.

In addition to these required upper division courses, students have the opportunity to pursue a series of courses in a chosen discipline, including history, English, economics, political science, and anthropology, as well as create a series of related courses tailored to their specific interest within the field of maritime studies. Sophomore Evan McOmber of Wethersfield, Connecticut is "excited by the core courses as well as the wide range of options Maritime Studies offers."

A capstone senior seminar provides students with an opportunity to synthesize what they have learned and apply it to a special topic that will form the theme of the seminar. Examples of potential themes include: African-Americans and the maritime experience; politics and economics of fisheries; or cultural perspectives of Long Island Sound. Through this course, students have an opportunity to pursue undergraduate research using primary source documents.

Opportunities for undergraduate research and co-curricular experience only begin with the formal curriculum. Students have the opportunity to pursue supervised internships and fieldwork. These projects take place in conjunction with the many maritime-related institutions in the vicinity of UConn's Avery Point campus. Some of these are partners in the Southern Connecticut Higher Education Consortium, including Mystic Seaport, the Mashantucket Pequot Museum, and the Mystic Aquarium. Others are community development organizations, such as Niantic Main Street, or local museums, such as the New London Custom House Museum. Students can also pursue non-local internships, such as with the Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C., or on the *U.S.S. Constitution* Museum in Boston, MA. The Avery Point campus is also the home of other related institutions, such as the Connecticut Sea Grant Office, the Coast Guard Research and Development Center, the National Undersea Research Center, the International Ice Patrol, and Project Oceanology. The campus also offers working students the opportunity to pursue a

Depending upon the track of studies completed, program graduates are prepared for a range of careers including those in the maritime service and heritage tourism

Professor Helen Rozwadowski is Coordinator of the UCONN Maritime Studies Program and an expert on the history of oceanography.

sectors as well as for graduate study in maritime and public history, English, journalism, marine policy and cultural resource management, planning and regulation, education, law, or business.

Maritime Studies is the third undergraduate degree program offered at UConn's Avery Point campus. The first was the Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) degree, a boon for working students. The second, the Coastal Studies major, offers a science-and social science-oriented program of study that complements Maritime Studies. Maritime Studies highlights the social and cultural side of the human/water relationship, but recognizes and explores the links between human activities and composition and the condition of the coastal and marine environments. The development of both of these interdisciplinary majors follows the recognition of Avery Point by the Board of Trustees as the University of Connecticut's marine and maritime campus.

With the addition of Maritime Studies and the resources and activities itbrings to campus, Avery Point opens new vistas for degree-seeking students and maritime-oriented visitors alike.