

# Summer courses train leaders, teach hands-on skills, and invite critical thought

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The Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine prides itself on providing opportunities for hands-on learning. Most of the school's classes focus on building practical skills rather than remaining purely theoretical. This is

especially true with our summer travel courses.

Summer programs were disrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions, but this past summer demonstrates that they are back in a big way! Here are highlights from three of them.

## **Destination: Wyoming**

### ***Leadership for Sustainable Development in the Age of Disruption***

In an immersive two-week session in rural Wyoming, participants explored how leadership, sustainability, and adaptive strategies can be used to tackle global disruptions. Through readings, discussions, and hands-on experiences in Wyoming's rugged terrain, students explored public health leadership, disaster management, and innovative solutions like telehealth.

The course, taught by Dr. Nancy Mock, professor of international health and sustainable development, was enriched by engagement from with rural healthcare providers, indigenous communities, and crisis teams. Students interacted with tribal health leaders, wilderness medicine practitioners, conservationists, and public health professionals to study real-world examples of adaptive leadership in the face of challenges such as climate change, resource conflict, and access to care in rural areas. Complementary coursework presented case studies on Grand Teton National Park, conservation, fracking debates, and the role of AI in sustainability.

Master's and doctoral students alike reported not only a deeper understanding of public health in diverse contexts but also a renewed sense of purpose in applying their skills to real-world challenges. Many described the course as "life changing," citing how the unique setting and immersive approach helped them build confidence, form lasting professional connections, and see sustainability and health leadership through an entirely new lens.

"This course completely reshaped the way I see leadership and sustainability," commented one student, while another said, "it was the most transformative academic experience I've had—professionally and personally."



## **Destination: Italy**

### ***Food Security and Resilience***

Led by Dr. Nathan Morrow, associate professor of IHSD, this two-week course immersed students in the interconnected challenges of food security, sustainability, and systems thinking within Italy's dynamic agricultural, political, and cultural landscapes. Set in historic and rural regions across central Italy—from global institutions in Rome to family-run farms in Bolsena—the course combined policy engagement, community-based learning, and cultural exploration.

A diverse cohort of Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) and new Master of Public Health (MPH) participated. Through lectures, field visits, and discussions with leading practitioners and scholars, they examined how food systems respond to disruption, and how leaders at local and global levels are shaping resilient futures.

A valuable element of the course was the opportunity for students to engage directly with key international institutions, including a visit to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), headquartered in Rome. At FAO they learned first-hand about the organization's global mission to end hunger and support sustainable agriculture.

Another major highlight was a meeting with Jean-Martin Bauer, director of food security and nutrition at the World Food Programme (WFP). Bauer shared firsthand

accounts of his work leading humanitarian food operations in conflict-affected regions and discussed the WFP's data-driven strategies for emergency aid and long-term resilience. In preparation, students read Bauer's book *The New Bread Line*, which framed the discussion and lead to a rich book club experience. Bauer signed student copies at the end of his session.

Upon their return, students shared how valuable they found the course. "I came away with a deeper understanding of the complexity of food systems and my role as a future leader in public health," said one participant.'



## **Destination: Peru**

### ***From Theory to Practice: Public Health Field Skills***

During this two-week course, students visited two very different locations in Peru: the Amazon rainforest basin city of Iquitos and the coastal capital city of Lima. The focus was on building real-world field skills. Students visited an Amazon river community to provide counseling for human papillomavirus (HPV) testing, practiced GPS mapping and GIS geospatial analysis, conducted environmental health risk assessments, discussed the topic of ethics in global health, and worked through implementation science process mapping of health facilities, among many other activities.

The course, led by tropical medicine professor Dr. Valerie Paz Soldan, also featured special participation from Dr. Thomas LaVeist, dean of the school; Dr. Richard Oberhelman, associate dean for global health; and Dr. Ron Blanton, chair of the Department of Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease.

Students and administrators visited one of Paz Soldan's projects, led by volunteers affectionately known as brigadistas. On the site, they observed and then participated in trapping and collecting both adult and larval mosquitos to monitor dengue fever, which is endemic across South America.

They also visited the National University of the Peruvian Amazon, where they met with the dean of the Medical School, as well as health facilities where Tulane students learned about ongoing public health projects, as well as the public health system, in Peru.

## **Opportunities for 2026**

The chance to not just talk about public health but to see and experience it in the field is invaluable. Faculty are confirming plans for Summer 2026 now, so interested students should keep an eye on the [Global Opportunities and Study Abroad](#) page for details.