Sustainable Societies: Finland
Faculty-led Field Course, Helsinki, Finland, Summer 2020
Led by Paul Kaldjian, Professor of Geography and Anthropology
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Tentative travel dates: Depart MSP on Tuesday, 27 May 2020 and arrive in Helsinki, Finland on 28 May 2020. Depart Helsinki and arrive back in Minneapolis, MN on Friday 19 June 2020.

Context: Finland is regularly recognized as an international leader in social wellbeing (e.g., education, health care, human rights) and environmental protection and enhancement (e.g. clean energy practices, green transportation planning, sustainable development). From architecture, design, and technological innovation to orchestra conductors, heavy-metal bands, and ice-hockey goalies, Finland is known for its support of the arts, applied creativity, and close relationship between society and the environment. In 2010, Finland’s Ministry of Social Affairs and Health presented a strategy to achieve a socially sustainable society. In 2018, the City of Helsinki set its aspirations on being the world’s most functional city, a humane city that puts people first. In 2019, Finland’s government made a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable Finland the center of their national agenda.

Course: This University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire Faculty-led Immersion goes to Finland to examine the realities and implementation of 21st century socially and environmentally sustainable policies and practices. This 3-credit course (GEOG 366) is intended for students from all disciplinary traditions who are committed to and engaged in improving their communities and our world. It is intended to provide students with innovative tools and aspirational possibilities for social and environmental improvement. We will meet with government officials, local practitioners, engage in research projects of individual interest, visit businesses, museums, and other field sites to help us understand the emergence, implementation, practice, and challenges of social and environmental sustainability. We expect to include short excursions outside of Helsinki, including Estonia. Thus, this field experience will improve our geographic knowledge and understanding. In keeping with the theme of this field course, and to enhance our “on-the-ground” learning, bicycles will be our primary and daily mode of transportation. Helsinki has 1,200 kms of cycling routes, 730 of them paved. Individually and as a group, we will bike.

Student participants must enroll in a 2-credit participatory course (GEOG 491) in Spring 2020. In the course, students will develop a foundation for the learning through the field experience. In addition to learning about Finnish geography (environment, culture, society, language, etc.) and history, students will participate developing research projects based on individual interests. These, in turn, will be used to inform our specific itinerary. We want to include people and places linked to unique student interests.

Immersion Leaders: The 12 - 13 students in this immersion are led by two faculty. Dr. Paul Kaldjian, a human/cultural geographer with expertise in food systems, regional geographies, and geographic education, is the faculty leader. He is a dual US-Finnish citizen who has lived, worked, and studied in Helsinki. He knows the city, its opportunities, and its resources well. This includes Helsinki’s exceptional network of bike paths. Dr. Doug Faulkner is a physical/environmental geographer with expertise in geomorphology and water systems. He is an avid and accomplished bicyclist.

More information: Contact Paul Kaldjian, Professor and Chair, Department of Geography and Anthropology, UWEC (kaldjian@uwec.edu, (715) 836-232). Registration and cost details will be available in September 2019. Travel costs will be underwritten by Blugold Commitment Differential Tuition.

105 Garfield Avenue I P.O. Box 4004 I Eau Claire, Wisconsin I 54702-4004 I uwec.edu I @UWEauClaire