

## New Science & Spirituality Courses "Spirit" Learners to Exotic Locations

The objective of "The Minds of Our Ancestors," a course offered through Union Institute & University's Science & Spirituality certificate program, is to explore the art and culture of prehistoric humanity. At many universities, the syllabus might read: come to lectures twice a week, read *The Roots of Civilization*, write 15-page paper, take exam.

But at Union Institute & University, the syllabus reads: fly to Perigord Region of France, meet in Bordeaux, visit caves and interpretive museums, explore the food, people, and vineyards of the south of France. Families welcome.

The course is just one of four travel courses now offered by Union Graduate College Faculty **Kevin Sharpe**, Ph.D., as part of Union's and Oxford University's Science & Spirituality certificate program. Other courses transport learners to exotic locations including New Zealand, Greece and Cyprus, and Kenya and Tanzania. Sharpe conceptualized the program only a year ago, offering the 15-credit hour certificate program to those interested in exploring the relationship between science and spirituality, including clergy, scientists, scholars, and "general inquirers."

In the beginning, the course offered a two-week summer residency in Oxford, England in conjunction with online courses such as "Ecospiritual Literature" and "Spirituality and the Biological Sciences."

Although the program has enjoyed rapid success, Sharpe saw a need for a travel component. "Returning to a place of historical, scientific, and spiritual significance—the cave of an ancestor, for instance—quickens the imagination," he says. "The experience inspires questions, ideas, and conversations that might never have arisen reading a book, or in a classroom."

Learners who participate in "The Minds of Our Ancestors," for instance, will be encouraged to ponder questions such as, "What are the pitfalls of attempting to interpret prehistoric art and culture?" Other courses have a vastly different focus.

"Wilderness and Imagination," that spirits learners to The South Island of New Zealand, asks "What is the relationship between wild places and our imagination?"

As with all Science & Spirituality courses, learners are guided and asked questions, but never told what to think of their experiences. "The goal of the courses is to offer learners room to discover, interpret, and explore in the company of other creative and intelligent thinkers," says Sharpe.

The first Science & Spirituality travel courses will be offered in 2003: "Wilderness and Imagination," November 29-December 8 and "The Minds of Our Ancestors," May 18-24. To find out more about the Science & Spirituality certificate program, and its travel course options, visit [www.lui.edu](http://www.lui.edu).

— HEATHER SMITH

PHOTOS COURTESY KEVIN SHARPE



Graduate College Faculty **Kevin Sharpe**, Ph.D. joined learners at this summer's first Science & Spirituality Residency at Harris Manchester College in Oxford, England.