

## **DUKEENGAGE IN SERBIA**

Addressing human rights and the global refugee crisis. *This program is organized by SIT Study Abroad in collaboration with DukeEngage.*

**Program Dates:** May 27 – July 21, 2019

(Dates subject to change up until the point of departure.)

### **Service Themes**

- Community development & outreach
- Human rights, transitional justice & civil liberties
- Immigration & refugees

### **Program Focus**

Addressing issues related to human rights, post-conflict transformation, and democratization processes, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups, including homeless people, refugees, and asylum seekers.

While all students are welcome to apply, this program may be of particular interest to students studying:

- Political Science and International Relations
- Slavic & Eurasian Studies
- Russian
- Sociology
- Public Policy Studies
- Psychology
- International Comparative Studies
- Global Cultural Studies
- Cultural Anthropology
- History
- Peace and Conflict Studies
- Religious Studies

### **Program Leaders**

- Aleksandar Skundric, DukeEngage Program Leader, School for International Training (SIT) Study Abroad Balkans: Mr. Skundric is the Program Assistant at the SIT Study Abroad Balkans program.
- Orli Fridman, Ph.D., School for International Training (SIT) Study Abroad Balkans: Dr. Fridman is the SIT Study Abroad Balkans Academic Director and Lecturer
- Jennifer Cinti, Assistant Director of Custom Programs, SIT Study Abroad
- Claudia Koonz, Professor Emeritus, History, Duke University; DukeEngage in Serbia Faculty Fellow

In Belgrade, students will also work with members of SIT Study Abroad/DukeEngage Serbia local staff:

- Nenad Porobic, Program Assistant
- Jelena Nikolić, Homestay Coordinator
- Milica Vuković, Language Teacher and Cultural Immersion

### **Program Overview**

During the DukeEngage-Serbia program, students are placed in organizations that are committed to defending human rights and/or providing humanitarian aid in a young democracy where ethnic tensions run high. As a member of their organization's team, each DukeEngage participant may be able to make a significant contribution to one or more aspects of its overall goals. Because of the immense variety of host organizations in this program, SIT is able to match Duke students' skills and interests with the needs of their host organizations. Living with local Serbian families provides students with the opportunity to feel at home in an amazing city.

In Serbia, a post-socialist society that has experienced the breakup of Yugoslavia and wars in the 1990s, civil society continues to evolve. While building a thriving milieu of arts and culture, Serbia remains fraught with profound social, political and economic challenges. As a candidate state to join the European Union (EU), Serbia is expected to change a number of its laws, from laws that protect minorities (for example, ethnic minorities or members of the LGBT community) to changes in institutions that provide aid to the recent influx of refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly from the Middle East and North Africa. SIT has developed a wide range of work sites that vary from cultural centers and policy thinktanks to daytime care facilities for street kids and shelters for refugees. In the past decades, prominent actors, led by women mostly, formed a number of important NGOs who resisted war and nationalism, and created the foundation for civic engagement and for current civil society in Serbia. Today, younger generation of activists, among other things, continue to engage in efforts to reestablish peaceful regional relations in the Balkans. DukeEngage participants from previous summers have expressed deep admiration for the perseverance and idealism of the young Serbians they met.

### **Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

- Develop critical thinking skills – To identify problems, to apply research skills in analyzing possible solutions and formulate potential outcomes.
- Understand the importance of global engaged citizenship – Students confront social attitudes and cultural assumptions that may challenge many of their beliefs. Through dialogue they may hone their persuasive strategies and learn to respect others' points of view in a global context.
- Expand their awareness of civic responsibility – Working directly with vulnerable groups, students will have a chance to reflect on the ethical obligations that inspire involvement in local community issues at home as well as in Serbia.

### **Partnership Opportunities**

For more than 10 years, SIT Study Abroad has created strong ties with host institutions and organizations in Belgrade. SIT semester students conduct research about civil society in Serbia as well as enter organizations for internship experiences. In the last five years, DukeEngage students have achieved a reputation for their ability to collaborate as well as for their dependability and willingness to take initiative. As a result, from their first day "on the job," the 2019 students will be treated as equal members of staff at their host organizations. They will be assigned tasks and will participate in their organizations' routine activities – which might include meetings, public events, or conferences at which English is spoken.

A few examples from earlier years illustrate the variety of opportunities created by SIT: working on the agenda for panel discussions at the annual security conference in Belgrade; aiding former prisoners in adjustment to civilian life; helping Syrian, Pakistani, and Afghan refugees with registration; surveying E.U. regulations for other nations that (like Serbia) aspire to E.U. membership; creating a visual presentation of an organization's business plan and donor base; creative play with traumatized children (some of whom were unaccompanied) in refugee centers; evaluation of measures designed to test the effectiveness of corporate investment in socially responsible projects; and investigative journalism for Serbia's most independent news outlet.

Students are placed individually (or occasionally in pairs) with organizations, based on their skills, professional goals, and personal interests, as well as on the needs of each organization. Possible host organizations include:

- [NGO Atina](#): promotes programs to combat human trafficking and gender-based violence
- [SMart Kolektiv](#): connects business and society to promote corporate social responsibility and uses business concepts to solve social problems
- [The Asylum Protection Center](#): provides assistance to asylum-seeking refugees in Serbia
- [Jesuit Refugee Service \(JRS\) Serbia](#): provides assistance to refugees and runs a safehouse for underage refugees
- [The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network \(BIRN\)](#): promotes democratization through journalism training and publishing
- [Heartefact Foundation](#): Supports socio-politically engaged visual arts and theater
- [ISAC Fund](#): promotes the European Union and Euro-Atlantic integration of Serbia

- [ADRA](#): offers relief and development assistance to individuals and communities
- [Psychosocial Innovation Network \(PIN\)](#): provides psycho-social support to vulnerable groups and individuals

The nature of student work at each site will vary:

- Researching and reporting on current events
- Drafting and editing policy papers/briefs
- Identifying potential project ideas
- Assisting in writing project proposals (brainstorming, gathering data, editing, etc.)
- Developing and/or improving organizations' websites
- Managing organizations' social networking sites (FB, Twitter, Instagram)
- Field-work, particularly when based in organizations working with refugees (aid delivery, communication with refugees - especially if students possess a good command of spoken Arabic, Urdu, or Farsi)
- Working with refugee children through English conversation, games, art, and teaching
- Developing crowd-funding or other fund-raising initiatives
- Connecting organizations with potential partners worldwide
- Creating promotional material (including videos, short films)
- Building stock photography for the needs of organizations (especially those producing news stories)
- Assisting with logistics (e.g. planning and organizing conferences, roundtables, and other public events)

During interviews, students may indicate placement preferences and specific thematic interests. Students' hobbies, fluency in other language(s), and other personal interests/skills will also be taken into consideration during the process of selection and placement in organizations. Site staff will work closely with local community partners to find an adequate placement for each student, based on their specific skills, knowledge, and interest.

### **Program Requirements**

**Language:** Although not required, knowledge of a Slavic language will be advantageous. During the spring orientation, students will use the Serbian language instruction available on the Perkins website to learn the basics of "survival" spoken Serbian, and the program will include some basic language instruction.

**Coursework:** No specific courses are required. Students are encouraged to enroll in coursework related to the history of the Balkans and of the Middle East, peace and conflict resolution, identity studies, human rights, migration studies, and other disciplines within a broad realm of social studies/humanities. Students earning a Human Rights Certificate may find their experiences with DukeEngage could shape their future course choices.

**Other Skills:** All host organizations welcome students with excellent English-language writing ability. Students with backgrounds in photography, documentary filmmaking, web design, and visualization could find opportunities to use those skills. While by no means required, any knowledge of Arabic, Urdu, or Farsi would aid students who work with refugees.

**Personal Qualities:** Participants will live and work in a politically vibrant/dynamic environment. SIT expects students to meet high ethical standards (such as respecting refugees' privacy and the professional norms of their host organizations) and as well as respectful and ethical engagement with their colleagues, homestay families, and SIT staff with respect. Students are expected to be respectful and sensitive to cultural differences and willing to integrate into their homestay families' daily routines, cuisine, and traditions.

Successful participants will possess the following qualities:

- Intellectual curiosity
- Cultural sensitivity
- Humility

Also, students' ability to manage stress in a foreign environment will be key to their success, as will their self-awareness, confidence, and willingness to adapt to different lifestyle and cultural norms. They should, therefore, be able to demonstrate good judgment, tact, maturity, empathy, and willingness to see things from multiple perspectives.

### **Curricular Connections**

Suggested coursework includes history of the Balkan region, peace and conflict resolution, ethnic identity, human rights, migration, research methods, and social studies. Please see the DukeEngage-Serbia LibGuide for additional resources.

### **Program Details**

**Description of Community:** The program will be based in Belgrade. Students will have many opportunities to visit different neighborhoods to reach their organizations, homestays, and for free-time activities.

**Housing and Meals:** During the first three nights of the orientation period, all students will stay in the same hotel. Starting with the fourth night and continuing throughout the rest of the program, students will live with Serbian host families – an experience which was a highlight for many past DukeEngage-Serbia participants. Living with families enables students to be absorbed into the life of a Serbian family and learn about Serbian culture, tradition, and language through first-hand experience. Through the homestay, students will have a chance to develop strong connections with the people of their host country and practice some of their new Serbian language skills (though at least one member of each host family speaks English). In total, students will spend a little more than seven weeks living with their homestay families. Most host families are centrally-located, and some students will live in close proximity to one another.

Although based in Belgrade, some students may be invited to visit their hosts' extended families in other parts of Serbia. Some homestay families have always lived in Belgrade while others have relocated to the city from other parts of Serbia. During group excursions, accommodations may include guesthouses or small hotels.

While in homestays, students will eat breakfast and dinner each day with the family, and a stipend will be provided for lunch. During orientation and on excursions, some group meals will be provided, and in other cases, students will be given a meal stipend. The program ends with a farewell party where students' host families, as well as representative(s) of respective organizations, will be invited to recognize students' accomplishments as well as to celebrate the connections and friendships that have been forged throughout the program.

If you do not eat certain types of food for cultural, religious, or personal reasons, please contact the DukeEngage office, [dukeengage@duke.edu](mailto:dukeengage@duke.edu), to discuss whether or not your dietary needs can be reasonably accommodated at this program site.

**Transportation:** DukeEngage provides transportation to and from service placements and all scheduled program activities. Students will be met at the airport upon their arrival to Belgrade and accompanied to the hotel by local SIT staff members. Students will take public transport to get around the city. SIT staff will help students become familiar with the public transport system so that they can use it with confidence during the homestay period. Students will be provided with a monthly student's pass to cover their public transportation needs in Belgrade. For other program events that include travel (educational excursions, enrichment activities), transportation will be provided by the program in any of the following ways: cabs, public bus/train or private bus/mini-van. Transportation to the airport will be arranged for each student through a reputable company at the end of the program.

**Communication:** Students will be provided with a basic local cell phone for program-related and emergency communication. Communication between staff and students will be in person and via email, text messages, and phone – whichever is the most appropriate for the situation. Furthermore, students will be required to update SIT staff and advisers regularly on their work in organizations, progress achieved, and final results. All homestay families have internet in their homes, and students will be able to use it for free there, in their organizations, and at SIT premises. In addition, most cafes and restaurants in Belgrade provide free internet.

Local Safety and Security; Cultural Norms, Mores and Practices: DukeEngage strongly advises all applicants to familiarize themselves with the challenges travelers commonly encounter at this program site in order to make an informed application decision. We recommend starting with these two resources:

- The International SOS (ISOS) portal for up-to-the-minute travel, health and security advice ([Log in to the Duke ISOS portal](#) with your Duke NetID)
- The [Diversity, Identity and Global Travel](#) section of the DukeEngage website

Opportunities for Reflection: SIT Study Abroad's programs are founded on a model of experiential learning theory and practice, and these foundations will provide the basis of the DukeEngage program. Reflection activities will be scheduled for the students throughout the program, at which participants can share their impressions, experiences, and achievements, as well as their challenges, doubts, and disappointments. During these sessions, students will offer support to one another and seek guidance from SIT's experienced staff.

Students are strongly encouraged to write posts for the DukeEngage Serbia blog during the program. Ideally, one or two students are in charge of administering the blog, scheduling the posts, and encouraging and reminding their peers to contribute to it.

Reflection is considered an integral part of students' overall experience – particularly in terms of their immersion and adequate absorption of new (and sometimes overwhelming) content. SIT staff are very skilled in designing and facilitating reflection sessions, combining both their experience from regular academic semesters and previous years of the DukeEngage program in Serbia. DukeEngage is primarily an *experiential* and *immersive* program. As such, in addition to sharing their experiences during reflection sessions, students are encouraged to lead some of the sessions themselves, thus taking a more active role.

Other Opportunities: Outside of work time, past DukeEngage participants have engaged with their host families as well as with colleagues and local friends. Although most weekends are free, two weekends will be spent on group excursions outside Belgrade. These excursions might be guided tours, visits to other cities or towns of interest around Serbia, hiking trips, or other group activities. Open water swimming is not a sponsored activity in any DukeEngage program.

### More Information

- Reporting Balkans – read recent reporting stories by SIT Journalism students: <https://reportingbalkans.com/>
- SIT Digital collections/Undergraduate Research – read recent academic papers (independent Study projects) by SIT semester students: <https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/hrr1/>
- History of the Present: Belgrade (Places Journal): <https://placesjournal.org/article/history-of-the-present-belgrade/>
- Lonely Planet city description: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/serbia/belgrade>
- 36 Hours in Belgrade (Telegraph, UK): <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/serbia/belgrade/articles/36-hours-in-belgrade/>
- 36 Hours in Belgrade (New York Times): <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/25/travel/what-to-do-36-hours-in-belgrade.html>
- Is Belgrade the New Berlin? (Vogue): <https://www.vogue.com/article/belgrade-travel-guide-the-new-berlin>

### Books:

There are plenty of readings you can access prior to your arrival, here are only few. Please feel free to approach us and we will be happy to share more information.

- Beck, P., Mast, E., & Tapper, P. (1997). *The History of Eastern Europe for Beginners*. New York, NY: Writers and Readers Pub.
- Seierstad, A. (2005). *With their Backs to the World: Portraits from Serbia*. Translated by Sindre Kartvedt. New York: Basic Books.

- Judah, T. (2009). *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press
- Glenny, M. (2012) *The Balkans: nationalism, war, and the great powers, 1804-2011*.
- Silber, L., & Little, A. (1997). *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. New York: Penguin.

#### Websites and Articles:

- Balkan Insight: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/page/all-balkans-home>
- Balkan Insight Transitional Justice Focus: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/page/balkan-transitional-justice-home>
- Balkanist: <http://balkanist.net>
- A story written by SIT Balkans Journalism student: 'Repat Serbia': Many Leave, a Few Are Lured Back (Balkan Insight): <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/repat-serbia-many-leave-a-few-are-lured-back-07-19-2018>
- A story written by SIT Balkans Journalism student: Blocked in the Balkans: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/08/eu-refugees-serbia-afghanistan-taliban>
- Academic articles about civic civil society in Serbia, by SIT Balkans Academic director Dr. Orli Fridman [https://works.bepress.com/orli\\_fridman/](https://works.bepress.com/orli_fridman/)

#### Selected Fiction:

Ugrešić, D (2005). *The Ministry of Pain*. SAQI. [or any other books by the same author]

#### Films:

BBC Documentaries: the Death of Yugoslavia

- Part 1 - Enter Nationalism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDADy9b2lBM>
- Part 2 - The Road to War: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcZvQxoTzdQ>

Circles/Krugovi (2013) – a film by Srđan Golubović [though the film is not available online, it is highly recommended]