Maymester: Earn three credits then have your summer

By Tiffany Jones

Maymester will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year with about 60 courses for students to meet General Education or other requirements for their majors or minors.

The abbreviated session is also ideal for students looking to take a class for enrichment or to get into a course they were closed out of during the academic year.

Maymester runs concurrently with First Session and begins on Wednesday, May 11. A birthday celebration with cupcakes and giveaways will be from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. that day in The Pit.

“This is such a wonderful milestone for this program, and we wanted to create a little birthday party that would allow us to celebrate with the faculty, staff and students who have made Maymester a great program,” said Professor Jan Yopp, dean of Summer School.

Students who enroll in Maymester might find the opportunity to earn three credit hours in three weeks also a reason to celebrate. Just ask Charlie Rogers, a junior economics and political science major.
“It was the only course that I had to focus on,” he said of his American Studies class. “It is much easier to stay on top of assignments and study for tests with only one course on the schedule rather than four or five courses.”

In addition to the reduced course load for students, instructors find that the classes are significantly smaller, which makes for a different teaching and learning experience.

Kia L. Caldwell, professor in the Department of African, African-American, and Diaspora Studies, said: “We are able to dig into the course materials in a deeper way. Meeting every day for several hours also allows Maymester classes to build upon the knowledge gained each day and helps students to retain the knowledge they are gaining.”

Ritchie Kendall, assistant dean for Honors and associate professor of English and Comparative Literature, agreed. For him, the condensed structure is more about the seamless, continual threads of conversation.

“I also choose to make my Maymester course more about in-depth, collaborative exploration rather than coverage,” he said.

Maymester also leaves the remaining two months of summer available for students to take additional classes, travel, or earn practical hands-on experiences in internships and jobs. It offers faculty members different opportunities.

“(Faculty) can still have the rest of the summer free for research and other projects,” Caldwell added. “It also provides a great setting for faculty to share their passion for teaching and research with a smaller group of students than they typically teach during the academic year.”
Just as in previous years, Maymester will offer a diverse list of courses, including Kendall’s and Caldwell’s courses. Classes are open to UNC-Chapel Hill students or to visiting students who can have their credit hours transferred to their home institutions.

Maymester began as a pilot program in 2007 and became a permanent part of First Session in 2010. Registration continues through May 11. For additional information, visit http://summer.unc.edu.