



California Wilderness Program: Wilderness Skills and Nature Awareness

Recreation (REC 480)

2 semester units

Spring Program Instructor: Patrick Bixler

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

As Practicum, this course emphasizes experiential learning. Students learn the course topics by practicing them. Lectures, hands-on demonstrations, and readings guide and supplement the experiential learning. All course topics are introduced early on in the program. They are refined and deepened throughout the term.

This course teaches basic backpacking and nature awareness skills by actively practicing them in the context of an extended field program. Students will learn safety procedures and first aid treatments, as well as a full gamut of backpacking skills including minimum impact camping and the use of map and compass. Theories and practices for cultivating nature awareness will also be emphasized.

COURSE OVERVIEW

At the outset, special emphasis is given to safety, wilderness first aid, and risk management issues. Minimum impact camping will also be introduced. Students will achieve a basic comfort and efficiency with equipment use and food preparation. Concepts and practices of cultivating nature awareness will begin.

As the program progresses, group dynamics will receive more focus. Effective communication skills will be discussed and practiced. Students will role-play first aid scenarios.

Deepening of safety, backpacking skills, and group process work. The range and variability of leadership styles will be discussed. Nature awareness theory will be discussed further and more practices introduced. An optional alone time will be scheduled.

The class will finish with a review. Students design a wilderness trip they would lead and present a description of it (place, season, type of participants, emphasis of program, leadership style, safety precautions, etc.)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate general backcountry travel and backpacking skills
- Feel confident in minimum impact camping
- Be able to build a safe and effective fire for warmth and for cooking food
- Know how to make use of map and compass
- Have an understanding of basic wilderness first aid
- Know how to handle themselves in a backcountry emergency
- Participate in group discussions and consensus decision making
- Practice a variety of awareness building activities (activities that awaken enthusiasm, focus attention using 5 senses, promote direct experience with nature, enhance observational skills)

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Risk Management

- A. Safety protocols
- B. Environmental dangers and their handling
- C. Physical injuries and first aid treatments
- D. Emergency procedures
- E. Backcountry hygiene

II. Equipment and food

- A. Essential gear and their purposes
- B. Backcountry cuisine for nutrition, flavor, and portability

III. Backpacking skills

- A. Route selection
- B. Campsite: selection, set-up, breaking
- C. Map and compass
- D. Fires, stoves, cooking

E. Minimum impact camping

V. Leadership and group process

- A. Different styles of leadership from authoritarian to laissez-faire
- B. Facilitating group process
 - 1. communication skills
 - 2. consensus

VI. Nature Awareness

- A. Cultivating observational skills
- B. Nature as teacher
- C. Ecological literacy and the ecological self
- D. Solo retreats
- E. "Old Way" skills
 - 1. fire, shelter, tools
 - 2. food (edible plants)

REQUIRED TEXTS

Tilton, B 2007. 5th ed. Backcountry First Aid and Extended Care. Guilford: Globe Pequot Press
Harper, in Kanner, Roszak, Gomes. Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind. Sierra Club, 1995.
Sewell, in Ecopsychology. (see above)
Starhawk: Earth Path. Harper, 2004. (selections)

EVALUATION

This is a Credit/No Credit class. Students will receive credit by satisfactory completion of:

- 1) Presentation on the design of a wilderness program. Each student has 10 minutes to tell the group something about the characteristics, intentions, and tones of a wilderness program they might want to lead. Presentation should include practical matters (location, length, number and type of participants, etc.) as well such matters as overall intention and desired outcomes.
- 2) Final exam: Students work in groups to demonstrate backcountry competence. Exam will be part verbal (instructor asking questions) and part active (instructor asking for direct demonstration of skills or inventing mock scenarios for students to act out).

COURSE SCHEDULE

The general structure of the California Wilderness program is that there are 6 separate backpacking segments throughout the 9 weeks. For information on the location of each segment, please see the California Wilderness “Program” web page. Each backpacking trip varies from 7 to 12 days. Usually, we hike in to a base camp over the first one or two days. Then we establish our academic routine, which consists of a class in the morning, an afternoon to do reading and other assignments, and then a second class around a fire after dinner.

The following table indicates the planned class meetings for this course during each backing segment:

<i>Backpack segment</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Assignments</i>	<i>Class hours</i>
#1	<i>First aid:</i> safety protocols emergency procedures environmental hazards basic first aid <i>Backpacking:</i> Loading a backpack Picking a camp and tent spot Backcountry hygiene Minimum impact camping <i>Nature Awareness</i> Grounding Soft focus	Tilton Starhawk Sewell Harper		12
#2	<i>First aid:</i> animal cautions and dangers <i>Backpacking:</i> map and compass fire making food selection and cooking <i>Nature Awareness</i> Activating senses Observation acuity Yoga	Tilton		4
#3	<i>First aid:</i> strains, sprains, and fractures <i>Backpacking:</i> Continuing skill development Leadership and group process <i>Nature Awareness</i> Breathing Chi Gong	Tilton		4
#4	<i>First aid:</i> head and spinal injuries <i>Backpacking:</i> Continuing skill development <i>Nature Awareness</i> Stalking	Tilton		5
#5	<i>Backpacking:</i> Continuing skill development <i>Nature Awareness</i> Continue practices		presentation	3
#6	<i>Backpacking:</i> Continuing skill development <i>Nature Awareness</i> Continue practices		Final exam	5
				Total: 33