



Office of Extended Education • Humboldt State University

Rainforest Field Studies:
WILDERNESS SKILLS AND NATURE AWARENESS

Recreation (REC 480) • 2 semester units

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.

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 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.)

Week 1

Monkey Bay Nature Reserve

This private nature reserve lies approximately 30 miles west of Belize City in savannah/pine ridge habitat along the Sibun River. We'll start by introducing the course, academic expectations and resources, evaluation criteria, and exploring issues of learning in a field setting. Curriculum topics to be covered include: one day walks to the Sibun River, preparation of backpacks for daily excursions and for extended trips in tropical rainforests, trip planning (equipment, foods, etc.), environmental dangers and emergency procedures.

Week 2

Sibun River Canoe trip and Backpack up Indian Creek

We will spend 3 days canoeing the Sibun River with experienced local guides, learning from their experience and knowledge of their region. Following a layover day back at Monkey Bay to regroup, we will backpack for 3 days up Indian Creek, a tributary to the Sibun River, from the Western Highway near Monkey Bay to the Hummingbird Highway. We will end the backpack at Five Blues National Park and be transported to San Ignacio for a layover day. Curriculum topics include: basic canoeing skills, safety protocol and Leave No Trace Principles

Week 3

Las Cuevas Research Station

This remote field research station, managed by a consortium of parties, including the London Museum of Natural History, lies south of San Ignacio in the Chiquibul Forest Reserve. Here we will explore moist deciduous tropical forest in the Macal River watershed deep within the Maya Mountains. A two-night backpacking trip into the headwaters of the Macal River watershed will allow students to put into practice their increasing wilderness skills, and take part in a jungle survival class by an expert Mayan guide.

Week 4

Tikal National Park, Guatemala

Tikal, part of the Maya Biosphere Reserve in the Peten region of Guatemala, contains awe-inspiring Mayan ruins within an extensive tropical forest. We will spend 4 nights camping in the Tikal National Park and having daily excursions and exercises through the Mayan Ruins. Curriculum topics include: Nature Awareness
Minimum camping impact

Week 5

Tobacco Caye

While on Tobacco Caye, an island in Belize's Barrier Reef, located 30 kilometers from the coastal town of Dangriga, we will dive into coral reef ecology and conservation. Basic snorkeling techniques will be taught and used to explore the rich and complex coral reefs, mangroves and sea-grass beds. Through different exercises and talks we will discuss about the natural principles on the biological systems. Curriculum topics include: basic snorkeling skills and safety protocols at marine environments.

Week 6

Maya Center and Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary

In the village of Maya Center, we will experience a multi-day homestay with Mayan families and learn about their co-management of this local protected area and the way their culture interacts with their natural environment. We will camp for two nights at the Cockscomb Wildlife Sanctuary and have daily hikes to diverse spots of interest. Curriculum topics include: safety protocols and low impact camping.

Week 7

Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE)

Located south of Cockscomb, the Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE) is a private research and educational facility located on an 1153 acre reserve next to the Bladen Nature Reserve. Includes a six-day backpacking trip into the Bladen Nature Reserve, a protected area with access restricted only to researchers and selected groups of students. Guided by expert local Mayans and sometimes assisted by rangers, the backpacking trip into this remote reserve provides an extraordinary experience of the wilderness. Curriculum topics include: compass use, camping in backcountry and leadership exercises.

Week 8

Barranco

Barranco is a small, remote Garifuna village in southern Belize. For 3 days we will intertwine our lives with the Garinagu people, exploring their village and life ways, traveling up the Temash River and learning about their culture, beliefs and lifestyle. In this small village, we will have another first-hand example of the co-management of a protected area. Curriculum topics included are student discussions and leadership exercises.

Week 9

Belize Agroforestry Research Center (BARC)

At BARC, located in the southern Maya Mountains, we will use the study of rainforests as a model to learn about sustainable landscape design. Guest instructors will lead us in discussions of permaculture, agroforestry, and other sustainable uses of forests. Students will participate in a number of farm tours, and critical thinking exercises related to the incorporation of ecological patterns and processes into food production systems inspired by nature awareness.

We will also explore ways to transfer the knowledge and wisdom gained from our tropical field studies to our lives back at home by considering the choices we make and opportunities we create.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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- Know how to make use of map and compass
- Have an understanding of basic wilderness first aid
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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

Kricher, John. *A Neotropical Companion: An Introduction to the Animals, Plants, and Ecosystems of the New World Tropics*. Princeton University Press. 2nd Ed. 1999.

Reader

Hawken, Paul. "Commerce and Wilderness", *Wild Earth*, Fall 2002.

Lopez, Barry "The Naturalist", *Orion Magazine*, autumn 2001
 Noss, Reed, *Saving Natures Legacy*, Island Press, Washington D.C., 1994. (selections)
 Hawken, Pawl. "Commerce and Wilderness", *Wild Earth*, Fall 2002.
 Suzuki, David. *The David Suzuki Reader: A lifetime of ideas from a leading activist and thinker*. Greystone Books. 2003.
 Suzuki, David & McConnell, Amanda. *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering our place in nature*. Prometheus Books. 2001

EVALUATION

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

- 15%: Safety Quiz (Monkey Bay)
- 15%: Leave No Trace Quiz
- 30%: Design a Trip
- 30%: Participation
- 10% Leadership Exercise

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following table indicates the planned class meetings for this course during the program:

<i>week</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Assignments</i>	<i>Class hours</i>
#1	Academic expectations, evaluation criteria Nature awareness: cultivating observational skills Safety - environmental dangers; emergency procedures Walks to the Sibun River Trip planning (equipment, food, route, etc.) How to pack your backpack	Kricher's (1999) Safety Appendix	Journal entries Food planning	8
#2	Basic canoeing and safety Backpacking Skills: Leave No Trace: minimum impact camping Safety protocols	Leave no trace principles	Food planning Presentations: Leave-No-Trace	6
#3	Jungle survival class Experiential education		Camping trip and solo retreats Camp setting	4
#4	Nature Awareness Minimum camping impact	Suzuki & McConnell (1997), Protected by our kin.		2
#5	Basic snorkeling skills Safety protocols at marine environments. Nature as a teacher		Sound Map	4
#6	Nature awareness	Hawken (2002), Commerce and Wilderness	Student's discussions	2
#7	Map and compass use Camping and hiking in backcountry Leadership Styles		"Leader for a day" Student's discussions	4
#8	Leadership styles		"Leader for a day" Student's discussions	2
#9	Nature awareness	Suzuki (2003), Why is the bravest position is Biocentrism?		2
				Total: 34