



Office of Extended Education • Humboldt State University

Natural History of the Patagonian Cordillera: Argentina and Chile
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
AND THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

Education/EDUC 480 • 4 semester units

Instructor: Brett Lovelace

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

The assumption in this class is that the program as a whole is the laboratory in which the academic concepts are experienced directly. In this case that “laboratory” consists of a series of backpacking trips throughout diverse regions of Argentine and Chilean Patagonia. We visit a conservation-based native tree nursery, ascend an active volcano, and spend time around the cook fires of local gauchos and herders in the cordillera.

Thus the activities and complexities of a long-term, international, small-group backpacking trip are not merely the context of the class, but to a large extent are the class itself. Students learn by examining and discussing their own experience and relating it to the ideas supplied by lectures, readings, exercises and class discussion.

The class is, however, not exclusively experiential; it involves focused intellectual themes as well, including an analysis of the purpose and practice of field environmental education in general. Distinctions will be made in examining field programs at the personal, academic, and social levels. Topics will include: application of learning styles to the wilderness experience, discussion of the academic vs. experiential learning dichotomy, group dynamics and communication skills, and a variety of environmental education values.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The class begins with a focus on understanding environmental field programs from three vantage points: personal, academic, and social. The separate validities and qualities of those levels will be discussed and experienced.

We will then focus on wilderness education—theories, goals, academic vs. experiential approaches, interdisciplinary models, and learning styles. Special emphasis will be given to the complementary dimensions of ecological literacy (a deepening understanding of the particulars and processes of nature) and the ecological self (a deepening felt sense of one's place in nature). Exercises to cultivate both of these dimensions will be introduced.

We will also take a critical look at the paradigms associated with the traditional educational model, specifically the abdication of “self-education” and personal responsibility in exchange for reliance on memorization and exam performance, all at the expense of “learning how to learn.”

Group dynamics in a wilderness setting will be discussed along with a variety of experiential methods to develop group rapport. Points of discussion will include self-disclosure, privacy, individuality, conformity, compromise, and dispute resolution. Various decision-making formats will be introduced, particularly consensus.

For the last section of the course, environmental ethics and cultural and personal values will be explored. We will search for definitions: nature, culture, education, sustainability, etc. The intent is to for students to clarify their

personal understanding of these concepts. As we prepare for return, we will review our time together and assess the cumulative experience, evaluating changes in our ecological literacy and our ecological self, and extrapolate from those changes to a general understanding of the wilderness experience.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To develop one's ecological literacy: a deepening understanding of the particulars and processes of nature
- To develop one's ecological self: a sense of one's place in the large contours of nature
- To understand the virtues and challenges of in-the-field experiential education by direct participation in such a program.
- To be able to monitor and follow one's learning experience as it is happening, and to share and discuss it with one's peers in class.
- To be able to analyze field-based education in terms of personal, academic, and social components.
- To be able to communicate clearly about the advantages and disadvantages of field-based education based on personal experience gained in such a program.
- To learn about group dynamics through participation, discussion and observation.
- To learn communication skills through active participation in formal and informal group sharings.
- To learn and practice consensus decision-making.
- To gain a general sense for the natural history and overall ecology of each of the wilderness areas visited.
- To enter a solo period (optional) for several days and learn about oneself and the wilderness in that way.
- To allow the nine weeks of wilderness time to sink into oneself and to be able to express and discuss that influence.

COURSE OUTLINE

I. History and Purpose of Wilderness Education

A. Approaches to the backcountry classroom

1. personal
2. academic
3. social

B. Goals of wilderness education

1. academic content and standards
2. ecological literacy
3. ecological self and the wilderness effect
4. group communication and rapport

II. Facilitating Learning in Wilderness

A. Learning styles and academics in the outdoor classroom

B. Experiential education: theory

1. learning by doing
2. education of the whole person (body, mind, spirit)

C. Experiential education: practices

1. getting out of the way: nature as teacher
2. cultivating the wilderness effect
3. exercises, processes, etc.

D. Working with field journals

1. integrating field observations and assignments
2. creativity and personal reflection

III. Group Dynamics

A. The individual and the group: rights and responsibilities

B. Stages of group development

C. Communication

1. privacy and self-disclosure
2. direct feedback: giving and receiving

D. Cooperative learning

1. instructor as member of group
2. learning from peers and small groups

E. Decision-making and facilitating group consensus

F. Interpersonal difficulties and dispute resolution

IV. The Spirit of Wilderness Education

A. The mythic journey: separation, initiation, return

B. Deep ecology: an individual experience

C. Environmental ethics: marrying philosophy and practice

REQUIRED TEXTS

Reader

- Elpel, T. J. 2004. *Primitive Living, Self-Sufficiency, and Survival Skills: A Field Guide to Primitive Living*. The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut.
- Kahn, P. H. 1999. *The Human Relationship with Nature: Development and Culture*. (Selections.) Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Lopez, B. 2001 (Autumn). *The Naturalist*. Orion Magazine. Great Barrington, Massachusetts.
- Orr, D. W. 2005. *Ecological Literacy*. (Selections.) Sierra Club Books. San Francisco, California.
- Orr, David. 2004. *Earth in Mind*. "Introduction: The Problem of Education"; "What is Education For?" Island Press. Covelo, California

In addition, a substantial filed library of texts is made available for students from which they draw material for their environmental education essay.

EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated according to the following requirements:

- 25% Lead discussion
 25% Environmental Education Essay
 30% Participation
 20% Self- Assessment (oral eval mid-course; written eval. end of course).

The grades used in this course will be as follows:

A+	98-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	Below 60
A	93-97	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66		
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62		

COURSE SCHEDULE

There are four separate backpacking sections or "legs" throughout the nine weeks of the program. For more information about the locations and logistics of each leg, refer to the program introductory web page. The backpacking sections range in length from 10 to 23 field days. Typical field days incorporate one hour of lecture in the morning, at least three hours of focused field experience pertaining to the appropriate courses in the late morning or afternoon, followed by an hour of discussion (based on the morning lecture and assigned readings) in the late afternoon or evening. Between the sections are brief resupply periods, one in the town of Junín de Los Andes, Argentina and the second in Pucón, Chile.

Section	Topics	Readings & Assignments	Hours
Section 1 (10 Days) Estancia Ranquilco, Argentina: Patagonian Steppe	<u>Goals of Wilderness Education:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Wilderness? & What is Education? • Responsibilities & Self-Reliance <u>History & Purpose of Wilderness Ed.:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal, Academic, Social • <u>Group Dynamics:</u> Rights & Responsibilities 	Elpel 2004, Orr 2004	12
Section 2 (23 Days) Estancia Ranquilco, Argentina: Patagonian "Altoandino" or "High Andes"	<u>Goals of Wilderness Education:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological Literacy and "Ecological Self" <u>Facilitating Learning in the Wilderness:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Styles <u>Goals of Wilderness Education:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deconstructing the paradigms associated with 	Elpel 2004, Lopez 2001, Orr 2004, Orr 2005	28

	<p>the traditional educational model, specifically the abdication of self-reliance, responsibility and the education of one's self</p> <p><u>Group Dynamics:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus Decision-Making • Privacy, Boundaries, & Self-Disclosure • Individuality and Compromise • Cooperative Learning <p>2-Night SOLO</p>	<p>LEAD DISCUSSION</p> <p>SELF-ASSESSMENT</p>	
<p>Section 3 (10 Days)</p> <p>Santuario El Cañi, Chile: Western Slope of the Patagonian Cordillera de Los Andes.</p>	<p><u>Facilitating Learning in the Wilderness:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching IS Learning <p><u>Group Dynamics (Continued)</u></p> <p><u>Goals of Wilderness Education:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations of Wilderness Education 	<p>Kahn 1999, Orr 2005</p>	15
<p>Section 4 (13 Days)</p> <p>Río Cochamó, Chile: Coastal/Montane Western Slope of the Patagonian Cordillera de Los Andes</p>	<p><u>Group Dynamics (Continued)</u></p> <p><u>Environmental Ethics:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What We Take Back <p><u>Goals of Wilderness Education:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Wilderness? & What is Education (Revisited) 	<p>Elpel 2004, Kahn 1999, Lopez 2001, Orr 2004</p> <p>SELF-ASSESSMENT</p> <p>ESSAY DUE</p>	13
TOTAL HOURS: 68			