



**Office of Extended Education • Humboldt State University**

**Natural History of the Patagonian Cordillera: Argentina and Chile**  
**WILDERNESS SKILLS AND NATURE AWARENESS**

Recreation/REC 480 • 2 semester units

Instructor: Brett Lovelace

**BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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As a 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, and 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 a map and compass. Theories and practices for cultivating nature awareness will also be emphasized.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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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 a 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**

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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 and we will spend more attention on safety, backpacking skills, and group process work. Nature awareness will be discussed further and more practices will be introduced. An optional solo, or alone time will be scheduled. Effective communication skills will be discussed, encouraged, and practiced. Students will role-play during first aid scenarios.

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

## COURSE OUTLINE

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- 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
- IV. Leadership and group process
  - A. Different styles of leadership from authoritarian to laissez-faire
  - B. Facilitating group process
    - 1. communication skills
    - 2. consensus
- V. Nature Awareness
  - A. Cultivating observational skills
  - B. Nature as teacher
  - C. Ecological literacy and the ecological self
  - D. Solo retreats
  - E. Survival priorities & skills
    - 1. Attitude
    - 2. Shelter
    - 3. Water
    - 4. Food
    - 5. Fire
    - 6. Tools

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## REQUIRED TEXTS

### *Reader*

Elpel, T. J. 2004. *Primitive Living, Self-Sufficiency, and Survival Skills: A Field Guide to Primitive Living*. (Selections.) The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut.

### *Made available to Students in Backcountry Library*

Tilton, B. 2004. *Wilderness First Responder, 2nd Ed.: A Text for the Recognition, Treatment, and Prevention of Wilderness Emergencies*. Globe Pequot Press. Guilford, Connecticut.  
Schimelpfenig, T. 2006. *NOLS Wilderness Medicine*. Stackpole Books. Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

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## EVALUATION

This is a Credit/No Credit course (no "letter" grade). Students will receive a 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).

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## 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
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<p>Section 1 (10 Days)  <b>Estancia Ranquilco, Argentina:</b>  Patagonian Steppe</p>	<p><u>Risk Management:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Assessment and Minimization</li> <li>• Safety Protocols</li> <li>• Emergency Procedures &amp; Principles of Search &amp; Rescue</li> <li>• Appropriate Communication</li> <li>• Environmental Hazards</li> <li>• Animal Hazards</li> <li>• Backcountry Hygiene</li> <li>• Basic First Aid &amp; Wound Management</li> </ul> <p><u>Wilderness Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loading a Backpack</li> <li>• Fitting and Wearing a Backpack</li> <li>• Intro. to Minimum Impact Camping</li> </ul> <p><u>Nature Awareness:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activating Senses</li> <li>• Sensory Acuity</li> <li>• Introduction to Survival Priorities &amp; Skills</li> </ul>	<p>Elpel 2004,  Tilton 2004,  Schimelpfenig 2006</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>Section 2 (23 Days)  <b>Estancia Ranquilco, Argentina:</b>  Patagonian “Altoandino” or “High Andes”</p>	<p><u>Basic First Aid (Continued)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wound Management</li> <li>• Sprains, Strains, &amp; Fractures</li> </ul> <p><u>Wilderness Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route Selection</li> <li>• Campsite Selection</li> <li>• Fire Making</li> <li>• Rope/line Management and Knot Tying Workshop</li> <li>• Tarp Shelter Strategies</li> <li>• Leadership Development</li> <li>• Map &amp; Compass Workshop</li> <li>• Food Selection &amp; Preparation</li> </ul> <p><u>Nature Awareness:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfort/Discomfort</li> <li>• Necessity/Luxury</li> <li>• Stalking</li> <li>• Tracking</li> <li>• Movement/Camouflage</li> <li>• Survival Priorities &amp; Skills (Continued)</li> </ul>	<p>Elpel 2004,  Tilton 2004,  Schimelpfenig 2006</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>Section 3 (10 Days)  <b>Santuario El Cañi, Chile:</b>  Western Slope of the Patagonian Cordillera de Los Andes.</p>	<p><u>Basic First Aid (Continued):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head and Spinal Injuries</li> </ul> <p><u>Wilderness Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued Skill Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Nature Awareness:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued Skill Development</li> </ul>	<p>Tilton 2004,  Schimelpfenig 2006</p> <p>PRESENTATION</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>Section 4 (13 Days)  <b>Río Cochamó, Chile:</b>  Coastal/Montane Western Slope of the Patagonian Cordillera de Los Andes</p>	<p><u>Basic First Aid (Continued):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued Skill Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Wilderness Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued Skill Development</li> </ul> <p><u>Nature Awareness:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued Skill Development</li> </ul>	<p>Elpel 2004,  Tilton 2004,  Schimelpfenig 2006</p> <p>FINAL EXAM</p>	<p>9</p>
<b>TOTAL HOURS: 66</b>			