

Politics and the Park: This Land is Your Land? (2008 May Mini-session)
BIOL 493/593
PSC 493/593

Professors

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Permission of instructors is required to be enrolled in this course

Course credits: 3

Meeting times: 12 – 25 May

Meeting places: One week on campus with travel to nearby Great Smoky Mountain National Park. One week in Yellowstone National Park

Required books:

1. Coursepack of Readings (available on WebCat)
2. *Desert Solitaire*. 1968. Edward Abbey. (~\$7.00 for a re-issued paperback copy).

Course Description: This two week course will explore the political and biological issues in the National Parks. You will visit both the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Yellowstone National Park. This comparative approach will allow you to see similarities and differences between the parks and to gain an appreciation for the diversity and complexity of the national parks—both as a natural habitat, and as a governmental program. The emphasis will be on engaged, hands on learning—you will spend time in the parks, visit with park stakeholders and experience wildlife, rather than reading about it all from a classroom in Cullowhee.

Course Objectives:

- 1) Students will be able to critically evaluate complex issues from multiple perspectives and will be able to verbalize multiple viewpoints rationally.
- 2) Students will gain a greater appreciation for the biodiversity and interactions between wildlife, plants, the landscape, and human activity.
- 3) Students will gain a better understanding of how politicians and public policy decisions are made at the local, regional, and federal level.

Evaluation: Grades will be broken down into 25% Participation, 25% Field Quizzes and Discussions, 25% Final Exam, and 25% Final Project. The final paper will be a 10-12 page report on some issue in the parks where biology and politics meet. You will investigate a single issue, interview stakeholders involved with that issue, and read relevant scholarship related to that issue. Your paper should explicitly compare and contrast the issue in Yellowstone and in GSMNP.

Itinerary

12 – 16 May 2008: On campus instruction with guest speakers and field trips

- 12 May – Introduction to political science and ecology; course overview.
Distribution of course materials (articles, syllabus, assignments, etc.).
- 13 May – Field trip to Great Smoky Mountains National Park: The Road to Nowhere.
Visit Lake Fontana, the Road to Nowhere, and meet with representatives from Swain and Graham counties, National Park Service employees.
- 14 May – Field trip to Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Pollution Effects at High Altitude.
Visit Clingman’s Dome and Newfound Gap and meet with National Park Service, Tennessee Valley Authority, and Canary Coalition representatives.
- 15 May – Field trip to Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Development around the Park.
Visit Cherokee and Gatlinburg and meet with representatives from the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, Gatlinburg Chamber of Commerce, and National Parks Conservation Association personnel.
- 16 May – Great Smoky Mountains National Park Wrap-up: Field trip to Purchase Knob.
Lunch and hike around the Appalachian Highlands Science Learning Center.

19 – 25 May 2008: Yellowstone National Park portion of class

- 19 May – Meet at Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel at 9:00 AM
- 20 May – Topic: Wolves, Ranchers, and Environmentalists.
- 21 May – Topic: Snowmobiling and Motorized Recreation.
- 22 May – Topic: Initiative for Connecting the Yukon to Yellowstone (and Smokies?).
- 23 May – Topic: Brucellosis – Considerations for Elk, Bison, and Cattle.
- 24 May – Wrap-up, Discussion, and Touring.
- 25 May – Depart Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel at 11:00 AM

Policies and Procedures

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Disability Services for more information at (828) 227-2716 or 144 Killian Annex.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is required at all class sessions. You will receive a one letter grade penalty for each day missed.

Academic Honesty Policy: We will enforce the current University honesty policy. If you are unfamiliar with this policy, we strongly recommend reading that appropriate section of the Student Handbook.