

“A Week in the Woods” For Educators
ED F595P, Two Credits
2011

Instructor: John Manthei, Instructor/Director, 907-455-4547

Contributing Instructors/Staff

Richard Barnes
Toni Kaufman
Knut Kielland
Rebecca Levey
Philip Marshall
Charlie Mayo
Marianne Stoltz
John Zasada

Prerequisites: Teaching certification or baccalaureate degree or permission of instructor. “A Week in the Woods” is a rugged outdoor program. Participants will need to be resourceful, have a desire to work with their hands, not be afraid to get dirty, and be familiar with basic camping conditions in Interior Alaska. Everyone will be expected to set up their own living quarters, supply their own water and feed themselves for five days and 4 nights.

One pit toilet and one fire pit will be built cooperatively for use during the program. Participants have to be prepared to keep themselves warm and dry in rainy conditions, as well as stay comfortable with mosquitoes and flies.

Location: A relatively isolated upland forest outside of Fairbanks with no facilities or power. The camp will most likely be about ¼ mile up a hill off a dirt, logging road.

Dates and Times: 9am, Monday, through 4pm, Friday. Students are required to spend all five days and four nights onsite and participate fully in projects and discussions. In addition they will be required to prepare a lesson plan based on their camp experience. The lesson plans will be presented at a meeting of the group at an agreed upon date and time determined for the sixth day of “*Week in the Woods*.”

Course Reading/Materials: No reading materials are required. Students are encouraged to bring tools if they have them; i.e., crooked, hook or straight knives, gouges, adzes, hatchets, saws, sharpening supplies, pencils, etc.

Course Description: This course will provide educators or other professionals the opportunity to investigate a hands-on approach to learning that is enhanced by environmental, historical, and cultural information. Augmented by the instructors’ knowledge and expertise, students will work in the natural environment with treasures from the forest to construct projects that interest them. This camp offers a unique occasion to learn skills while working side by side with students from 7 to 97 years.

Course Goals and Outcomes:

Students will explore the creative process in the boreal forest environment.

Students will be exposed to new ways of seeing, experiencing and appreciating the woods so that they can develop methods of instruction that will effectively communicate the knowledge and skills of “woods” craft and natural history to children.

Students will experience the connection between natural history and the creative process, or as many others have said it “science and art”. Understanding this connection will enable students to incorporate art into their existing biology curriculum.

Students will explore the unique characteristics and treasures of several different forest types and the influence that man, animals, fire, wind, disease and age have on these forest systems. Once students become familiar with these characteristics, they begin to internalize and personalize Alaska geography in a way that makes it easy to share with their pupils. Students will begin to feel the connection between the resource they are using in their projects, and the source (its immediate environment). Feeling this connection will stimulate curiosity and creativity and it will expand their comfort level in the woods. This familiarity will inspire creative lesson plans and will help students find avenues to expose children to Alaska geography, natural history, and ecology.

We hope, in the end, students and *their* students will want to return to the woods again and again not only to “go shopping” but for inspiration and solace.

How We Hope to Achieve These Goals

Students will stay in the woods for five days and four nights allowing the energy of our urban lives to be replaced by a more peaceful energy of the forest. Through the process of creating objects from forest treasures students will learn joinery, riving, hewing, carving, weaving, lashing, cord making, birch tar making and more. Students will explore old and new techniques and hand tools from many cultures.

Students will repeatedly go on guided excursions learning how and where to find specific treasures by learning the unique characteristics of forest types and recognizable situations within those types (plants, animals, colors, smells, sounds, textures, moods, moisture levels, etc.) They will harvest small quantities of bark, roots, branches, crooks, foliage, dry and green wood of all species, burls, galls, fungus and more.

Students will look for inspirational treasures and create objects around them. They will search the forest for particular treasures to fill specific needs of their developing projects.

Students will also study edibles and medicinals and their current and historical uses.

Each student will be expected to design a project using the introduced techniques and knowledge. Socratic instruction and mentorship will provide students with a framework to build successfully. Students may choose to focus on one thing or sample some of everything.

While collecting, creating, and living in the woods students will be absorbing lessons of botany and natural history. Students will be taught to appreciate everything they utilize from the woods in its environmental context. Students will also take part in discussions about the historical context of using forest resources.

Instructor demonstrations will be for the purpose of teaching technique or process and not necessarily for the creation of a specific product. We hope students will use what

they have learned as a guide along a new path and not necessarily as a pattern to reproduce what they have seen.

Specific projects we may attempt depending on time and interest

Sharpening

Carving

Riving and Shaping

Post and Rung Construction

Steam Bending

Several Decoration Techniques

Water Hauling Yoke Making

Twig Figures

Spruce Branch Buttons, Chip or Coins

Birch Bark Knife Handles

Birch Bark Knife Sheaths, Mats and Baskets

Aspen Bark Baskets

Birch Tar Making

Fans and Roosters

Shrink Boxes

Spruce Root Digging and Techniques

Lashing

Electronics and cell phones will not be allowed except for emergencies

Instructional Methods: Lab, discussion, demonstration, socratic instruction. Instructors will be available for students from 9am to 9pm each day.

Course Calendar

Monday:

9am - 11am: Set up camp

11am – 12pm: Introduction to the program, the staff and one another. Review potential projects

12pm – 1pm: Lunch

1pm – 3pm: Walk in the woods with Naturalist and begin “shopping for materials

3pm – 5pm: Work on projects

5pm – 5:30pm: Group discussion, Q&A

5:30pm – 7pm: Supper

7pm – 9pm: Work on projects

9pm: Tools put away

Tuesday - Thursday

9am: Breakfast and chores done

9am – 12pm: Work on projects

12pm – 9pm: Same as Monday

Friday:

9am – 12pm: Same as Thursday

12pm – 2pm: Lunch, group discussion, Q&A, critique, review camp’s successes and

failures

2pm – 4pm: Disassemble camp

The 6th and Final Day will consist of curriculum development for the classroom. Time and date will be chosen by consensus.

Course Policies: Students are required to spend all five days and four nights at camp and adhere to the schedule as closely as possible especially with regard to start times for projects and walks.

Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on attendance, journal entries, the completion of a lesson plan symposium, and participation in demonstrations, projects, discussions, and walks.

Preparation for and attendance at the 6th day (symposium) is essential. The symposium is a mock lesson in which the teachers execute a lesson plan that they have designed by acting as the student. Teachers are required to act as students by using their non-dominant hands to execute the lesson plan. This is considered a culminating project.

Staying in the woods 24/5 is also essential.

This course will be graded Pass/Fail.

A pass grade will require that a student achieve 80 out of 100 possible points.

10 points --Journal

15 points --Attendance

25 points--Participation

50 points--Lesson Plan Symposium

Receiving less than 80 points will determine a failing grade.

Support Services: Instructors will be available by appointment after “Week in the Woods” to assist students as well as follow-up collaboration in the classrooms.

Disabilities Services: The Office of Disability Services implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and insures that UAF students have equal access to the campus and course materials. We will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (203 Whit., 474-7043) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. Realize, however, that this is a “field” course and all students must be prepared to meet those challenges.