

**“A Week in the Woods” For Educators**  
**ED F595P, Two Credits**  
**July 12-16, 2010**

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

**Contributing Instructors/Staff**

Richard Barnes  
Jan Dawe  
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, July 12 through 4pm, Friday, July 16. 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

## **Guided Techniques/Projects**

### **Tools and Sharpening\***

- Every student is required to have their own sloyd knife, hook knife and sharpening supplies.
- Discuss tool use, care and responsibility
- Begin the long process of learning how to sharpen
- As part of the first birch bark class, everyone will make a sheath for their sloyd knife and make an essential item that relates to tool care and safety
- Students will also have the opportunity to make their own knife with a birch bark handle and a more elaborate sheath to go with it.

### **Carving**

- Simple and useful spoon\*
  - fairly simple project with rapid returns and satisfaction
  - begin to learn the nature of wood grain
  - begin to learn tool use and technique
  - can use your spoon the rest of the week
- More complex spoons leading to simple cups. Begin to make use of branches, crooks and other unusual treasures
- Kolrosing – a traditional decoration technique using your sloyd knife
- Roosters – a carving technique making use of shavings left attached
- Fan Carving – splitting, bending and twisting thin feathers of wood while leaving them attached at one end
- Carve a water hauling yoke out of aspen
- Shrink Boxes – hollow out a green log, fit a dry wood bottom and let the greenwood shrink around the bottom yielding a potentially water-tight box
- Chip carving

## **Spruce root digging, peeling, splitting and what you can do with it**

**Fiber and Spinning** – make cord from inner bark of aspen and willow and experiment with lots of other fibers as well

**Bark weaving and folding** – woven birch bark mats and baskets; folded aspen bark basket; knife sheath, birch bark boxes with wood bottoms and lids

**Birch Bark Knife Handle**

**Make Birch Tar**

**Twig Figures/Doll-making**

**Containers** – using intact cylinders of birch bark that remain after log has rotted. Make wood bottom and use it for a tool pail

**Post and Rung Construction** – using mostly dry wood from standing dead spruce. Make a stool, chair, ladder or a sculpture

**Greenwood Construction**

- Riving and shaping
- Mortise and tennon joinery
- Use shrinking to your advantage
- Steam bending

**Make a Mallet**

**Make a Bow Drill**

**Lashing**

**Spruce Branch Buttons or Medallions**

\* Projects everyone will participate in because of its relevance to everything else we do

**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 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

Electronics and cell phones will not be allowed except for emergencies

**Evaluation:** Evaluation will be based on participation in demonstrations, projects, discussions, and walks. Preparation for and attendance at the 6<sup>th</sup> day is essential. 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% of the following criteria:

60% Attendance

30% Participation

10% Lesson Plan Development

Receiving less than 80% 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.