

## Ecology, Geology and Cultural Significance of the Greater Yellowstone

**Professors:** Jeff Groff and Steve Shaffer

**Meeting Times:** TBD

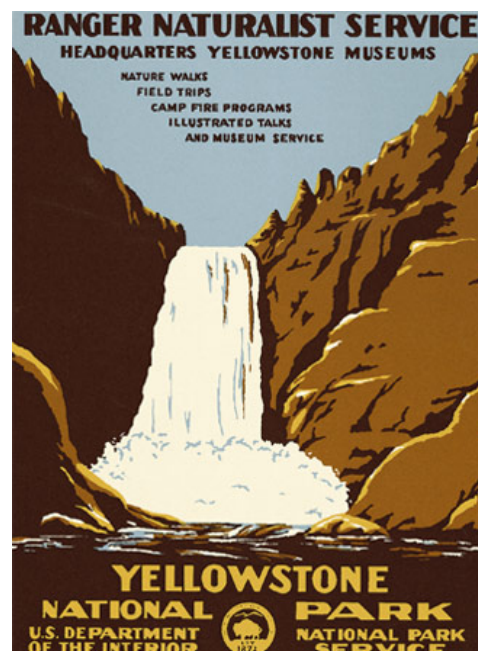
**Classroom:** TBD

**Cost:** \$900 plus tuition

### I. Course Description

In 1872, Yellowstone National Park became America's, and the world's, first national park. It is an otherworldly place of geysers, hot springs, waterfalls, and canyons. It is an ecological treasure where megafauna such as bison, elk, grizzly bears, and wolves roam free. Its origin reflects the emergence of efforts to conserve and protect wild places in America and the birth of a wilderness-for-its-own-sake ethos. Its history echoes the often violent and unjust collision between encroaching peoples of European decent and native cultures during American westward expansion.

This course will explore the ecology, geology, and cultural significance of the greater Yellowstone area through readings, discussions, use of a GIS, and a field excursion to Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park. The field excursion will be July 18<sup>th</sup> through July 27<sup>th</sup>. We will spend one night at a state park in eastern Idaho, five nights at Yellowstone National Park, and two nights at Grand Teton National Park. In addition to tuition, students will be required to pay a \$900 course fee to cover airfare, food, and associated field excursion costs. For environmental studies majors, this course will substitute for ENVS 368 (4 cr).



## **II. Course Requirements**

Students are required to register concurrently for both ENVS 399A and 399B, and participate in a field excursion to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks as part of this course.

### **Course Materials**

Robert Smith and Lee Siegel, "Windows into the Earth: The Geologic Story of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks"  
ISBN-13: 978-0195105971

Douglas Smith, "Decade of the Wolf, Revised and Updated: Returning The Wild To Yellowstone" ISBN-13: 978-0762779055

## **III. Grading**

### **Participation**

This portion of the course grade will be based on attendance, evidence of completion of assigned readings, engagement in classroom discussions, and contributions to the planning and implementation of the Yellowstone and Grand Teton trip.

### **Assignments**

This portion of the course grade will be based on written assignments, an oral presentation, and completion of a project.

0.50 – Participation

0.50 – Assignments

#### IV. Course Timeline

Week	Date	Tentative Schedule
1	7/5	Orientation
	7/7	Culture of Greater Yellowstone
2	7/10	Ecology of Greater Yellowstone
	7/12	Geology of Greater Yellowstone
	7/14	Packing and Gear Check
3	7/18	Departure from Shepherd
	7/19	Arrive at Yellowstone
4	7/24	Leave Yellowstone, Arrive at Grand Teton
	7/26	Leave Grand Teton, Return to Shepherd
5	7/31	Reflections
	8/2	Writing Assignment Due

#### V. What to Expect

The climate of Yellowstone National Park is influenced by elevation and topology. In July expect partly cloudy to mostly sunny days with low humidity and highs in the low to mid 70's. Afternoon thunderstorms are not uncommon and weather systems can move through that bring extended periods of rain. Alpine weather is notoriously unpredictable. Expect dramatic temperature swings and sudden showers, especially at higher elevations. Nighttime lows can dip into the 30's.

Tent camping and hiking in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park can be a somewhat primitive experience. Expect pit toilets in the campgrounds and on trails although flush toilets are located at many popular sites and visitor centers. Potable water is readily available from outdoor faucets. Shower and laundry facilities are available near the campgrounds, but don't expect to have the opportunity to shower every day.

## **VI. Essential and Recommended Gear**

While tents and other camping gear like stoves will be provided, there are other items you will be responsible for bringing.

### Essentials:

- sleeping bag (a 20-30 degree bag that weighs under 4 lbs. is ideal)
- rainwear (separate jacket and pant)
- backpack (a lightweight 50-70L internal frame bag with water reservoir compartment is ideal)
- water reservoir (*e.g.*, Platypus 2-3 L)
- flashlight (LED headlamps work great)
- broken in hiking shoes/boots
- sunscreen

### Recommended:

- sleeping pad (*e.g.*, lightweight backpacker's inflatable)
- compressible pillow
- water bottle (*e.g.*, 1L Nalgene)
- thermals
- wool or synthetic hiking socks (several pairs)
- insect repellent
- pocket knife or multitool
- water shoes
- bonnie-style or other wide-brim hat
- fleece jacket or vest
- lighter or matches (campfires may be prohibited depending on weather and location)
- camera
- wrist watch