

Political Science 224 / Recreation, Sport and Tourism 224,  
Politics of the National Parks: Yellowstone's Wilderness  
Campus Honors Program, Spring 2023 (second eight weeks)  
Field Trip, two weeks in late July – early August 2023

This three-credit course gives you a theoretical introduction to the concept of “wilderness,” along with the practical and political challenges that federal agencies face when managing wilderness areas. Managers seek to protect intact ecosystems, preserve natural processes such as wildfire and water cycles, reduce the impact of humans on natural resources, and protect the “wilderness values” that people experience. They do this in a political environment representing people with many values.

Our class sessions in the first half of Spring 2023 will explore the theory of wilderness, wilderness regulations, recreational management, and the politics of national parks. We will also have an orientation session to help prepare you for the field experience.

The course concludes with a ten-day field experience in Yellowstone National Park and adjacent national forest lands. We will discuss three possible itineraries for backpacking trips to remote areas of Yellowstone National Park.

Here you will develop your own wilderness values. You will assess the management choices that you experience on the landscape as you hike. While we give particular attention to the national parks, we will also discuss the US Forest Service.



This challenging field experience requires that you can hike 8-12 miles a day with a heavy backpack, though a 16-mile day is possible. One itinerary will offer less mileage but a steady elevation gain. You will experience country and few other people, and you will need a spirit of self-reliance.



We will finalize the spring class times and field trip dates by the end of 2022, and finalize the itinerary in April.

A program fee of \$900 covers three nights in hotels, all meals except one dinner in town, and local transportation. You can ride to Cody, Wyoming, on the course van, paying for your own food along the way, or get there on your own.