

Ecology and Management of the Adirondack Park

ENVI 350

Instructor:

Elena Traister, Ph.D.

Elena.Traister@mcla.edu

225F FCSI

413-662-5303

Class meeting times:

Travel dates: Friday, October 11 – Monday, October 14, 2019.

One ~2 hour planning meeting TBA during September, 2019.

Requirements:

Pre-trip planning meeting (5%)

Directed reading (15%)

Species/community report (20%)

Issue report (20%)

Course journal (35%)

Participation (5%)

Prerequisites: permission of the instructor is required in order to sign up for this course.

Textbook and additional materials:

[Adirondack Wildguide: A natural history of the Adirondack Park](#) by Michael G. DiNunzio, 1984

[Contested Terrain: A new history of nature and people in the Adirondacks](#) by Philip G. Terrie, 2008

Additional materials may be available on Canvas and/or on reserve in the library. You are expected to locate additional sources for your papers.

Canvas Course Area:

Course materials will be available on Canvas. The species report, issue report, and directed reading are to be submitted through Canvas.

Course Summary

Located in northeastern New York, the Adirondack Park is a 6-million acre combination of private and public land, including 2.8 million acres of state land protected as “forever wild.” The Park contains a diversity of natural habitats, including alpine plant communities above tree-line on the tops of the tallest mountains. It is also a home to over 100,000 people, and draws 10 million visitors each year, many of which are drawn to the exceptional recreational opportunities in the region. During this field course, we will explore the diverse biological communities of the Adirondack high peaks region and learn about the history and management of the Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve. We will learn about the human history of the Adirondacks, including how people have altered this landscape and the events that led to its preservation. We will visit natural areas and interpretive sites for an up-close view of the ecology and characteristic flora and fauna of the region. Through site visits, meetings with scientists and land managers, and presentations, we will consider current conservation issues for the Adirondack Park.

Graded Activities

Species/Community Report: In consultation with the instructor, you will select one species or biological community found in the Adirondacks. You will write a short (approx.. 4 pages double-spaced) report summarizing relevant biological/ecological information about this species or community. The report should also describe the threats and conservation status of this species/community. Students should also be prepared to give an informal description of their research at an appropriate time during our trip.

Issue Report: Each student will select one current issue relating to the current and future management of the Adirondack Park. A list of possible topics will be made available to choose from, or students may pursue their own interests in consultation with the instructor. Topics will be selected before the trip, however the report (approx.. 4 pages double-spaced) will not be due until several weeks after the trip, allowing students the opportunity to discuss these issues with the professionals we will be meeting with in the Adirondacks.

Pre-trip planning: Before departing on our trip, we will need to make sure that meals are planned and that students pack appropriately. Therefore, your attendance at a pre-trip planning meeting is required

Directed Reading: Each week during the fall semester prior to the trip, students will read and post a paragraph to Canvas summarizing an assigned reading about the ecology, history, or

current issues facing the Adirondack Park. Students will also be responsible for commenting on the summary posts made by the other students in the class. A sign-up for individual reading selections will be made available at the start of the course.

Journal: We will be squeezing a packed itinerary into one long weekend. To encourage students to reflect upon what we will be learning about, you will keep a journal to record your thoughts including:

- Observations about what we see
- Thoughts and questions that come to mind related to what we observe
- Comparisons of what we see on our trip to your own personal experiences in Massachusetts and/or elsewhere
- Anything else you'd like to include

You will be graded on the comprehensiveness and thoughtfulness of your entries, which should clearly show that you are absorbing and processing course topics. Journals are due a couple of weeks after we return.

Participation: During our four days on the road, we will need to work as a team. There will be shared accommodations, we will be cooking together, and we will be learning from professionals and from one-another throughout the long weekend. The active and appropriate involvement of each person is key to making this trip awesome!

Equipment

Field clothes (bring enough to be comfortable for all four days—we will not be stopping to do laundry)

Rain gear

Warm clothes (hat, gloves, jacket—it could be cold/snowy in the High Peaks)

Field guides (optional)

Binoculars

Camera (optional)

Hiking shoes (or shoes with good traction that can get dirty)

Refillable water bottle

Day backpack

Space will be tight. Please pack your gear in soft baggage (duffle bags are ideal)

*The ENVI Department has binoculars that can be borrowed for the trip, however if you borrow a pair, you are responsible for replacing them if they are lost or damaged

We will be staying at a hostel in Lake Placid ([TMax-n-Topo's Hostel](#)) all three nights, where bedding and towels will be provided. Students will stay in shared bunk rooms. We will also have access to their kitchen, but we will be shopping for and cooking our own food there.

Policies

Cost of trip: All costs associated with the trip are included in the additional course fee. You will not need to bring any cash or money except for any personal snacks or souvenirs you wish to purchase along the way.

Payment schedule:

May 1, 2019: \$125

Sept 20th, 2019: \$125

The May 1st deposit will reserve your space. After September 1st, \$95 is non-refundable, as the hostel reservations are subject to full payment. If the hostel is at maximum occupancy and provides us a refund, then you would be refunded as well, but this is not assured. If at any point you decide to cancel your participation, you must communicate in writing to the instructor. You must be enrolled in this course to go on the trip.

Attendance policy:

All students are expected to participate in all trip-related activities as well as in the pre-trip planning meeting.

Late assignment policy:

If you need extra time to complete an assignment, you must ask me for an extension **at least** one day before the assignment is due to avoid being penalized. Otherwise, *late assignments will forfeit half of all possible points.*

Laptop and Technology Policy:

You are welcome to bring technology on the trip, but please plan to use it in an appropriate and respectful way—it should be a tool, not a distraction. Each student assumes the responsibility for any lost or broken electronics or other equipment.

Communications:

Prior to the trip, email is the preferred method of contact with me. You may also call my office phone (413-662-5303).

Academic conduct:

The MCLA policy on academic conduct applies to this course.

Tentative Schedule

	Date	Location	Site Visit Themes
Friday	11-Oct	Depart MCLA at 8:30 am	
		Adirondack Park Agency, Ray Brook Wilderness ethics/hike, Lake Placid	Planning for management of public and private lands in the Adirondacks, wilderness conservation
		Night: Tmax –n-Topo’s hostel, Lake Placid	
Saturday	12-Oct	Paul Smith's Visitor's Interpretive Center, Paul Smith's	Variety of natural Adirondack habitats, loons and other Adirondack research
		Night: Tmax –n-Topo’s hostel, Lake Placid	
Sunday	13-Oct	Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake	History and management of the Adirondack Park, management of natural resources (mining, logging...),

		Wild Center, Tupper Lake	Aquatic ecosystems and animals in the park
		Night: Tmax –n-Topo’s hostel, Lake Placid	
Monday	14-Oct	Drive to summit of Whiteface Mountain, Lake Placid	Alpine ecosystems and their conservation
		Finch Paper mill in Glens Falls	Sustainable forestry, corporate sustainability
		Return to campus	

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Does this course contribute towards the ENVI major and/or an MCLA degree?** Yes— for all MCLA students this course will contribute 2 upper-level credits toward the 39 required upper level credits. For ENVI students, this course will satisfy one of your “Society” course requirements.
2. **What is the weather like in the Adirondacks in mid-October?** Probably slightly colder than the weather in North Adams at the same time.
3. **What is the format of this course?** This is primarily a field-based course. Before we travel, you will be responsible for reading and summarizing some background material, submitting one paper, and attending a planning meeting. When Columbus Day Weekend arrives, we will drive one or two college vans to the Adirondacks (est. driving time close to 4 hours). Our days will start early (between 7-8 am) and end after dinner (~ 7 pm). We will stay in a hostel with shared bunk rooms, a kitchen, and dining room. Our itinerary will be packed, including visits to unique habitats and interpretive centers, short hikes, and meetings with scientists and environmental managers. We will cook dinners together at the end of the day, when we will also gather to hear informal presentations from students (on the species/communities you researched before the trip) and to go over the plan for the next day. After we return from the trip, you will be responsible for submitting your journal (a couple of weeks later) and your second paper (by November 22).

4. **How much time will I need to devote to this course?** The majority of the time put into this course will be during the trip itself. Aside from one planning meeting, we will not meet during the first half of the fall semester. You will need to devote ~1-2 hours per week to complete the assigned reading and summary responses before the trip departs. You will also have to investigate one species or natural community and write a ~4-page paper on it before we depart. Another ~4 page paper on a current issue facing the Adirondack Park will be due several weeks after we return.

5. **What is included in the course fee?** Everything you need to go on this trip is included in the course fee (transportation, food, lodging, admissions fees). If you want to buy souvenirs or particular snacks (aside from the healthy options we will have with us), you should bring extra cash for those.

6. **What travel documents do I need?** You must bring your MCLA ID (your college ID may be needed for some activities). You will also fill out an MCLA form required of all students participating in travel courses.

7. **Can I drive my own car?** No—all students on this trip will travel in an MCLA van.

8. **What happens if the trip runs over budget?** This is extremely unlikely to happen—I budget very conservatively. In the case that we do go over budget, the ENVI department will contribute funds to make up the difference.

9. **How many people can go on the trip?** There are 10 seats for students in one MCLA van. If a participating student volunteers to drive a second van, then we will have space for 14 students to go on this trip (there are currently 14 bunks being reserved for students at the hostel).

10. **Will I have free time to explore on my own?** Days will be scheduled from ~7 am to ~7 pm. There will be small amounts of time (~20 minutes) for unguided exploration at the various interpretive sites we visit.

11. **What will we eat?** Teams will take turns cooking dinner (and cleaning up) at the hostel. We will have a hearty and nutritious dinner as a group each night. We will bring a variety of breakfast and lunch food with us (bread, wraps, cheeses, crackers, corn chips, salsa, oatmeal, granola bars, cereal, eggs, peanut-butter & jelly, fruits and veggies, and other healthy food you suggest). You'll be responsible for eating breakfast on your own and preparing a lunch to bring with us each day. No raw meats will be allowed in the coolers. Deli meats, if desired, must be carefully wrapped and stored in the coolers to be used for breakfast or lunch. Dinners will be vegetarian.

12. **Can I use financial aid for the additional course fee?** Yes—please see the financial aid office to discuss details.

13. **This is an upper-level course—do I need to be a junior or senior?** Not necessarily. Some familiarity with environmental science and natural resources (i.e. ENVI 150H and/or ENVI 152H) provides important background knowledge for this course. Students will be approved for this course on an individual basis (I will meet with each student to sign him/her in individually). If you are interested in taking this course and have not previously taken any ENVI courses, you are still welcome to have a discussion with me to explore whether this may be a good fit for you. For this to be a successful course, all participating students must be enthusiastic team players.

14. **How does the registration work for this course?** If I approve your participation in this course, I will sign you into the course (either allowing you to add the course through Banner or signing a paper add/drop form) and you will submit payments to the Bursar.

15. **Will there be cell phone reception?** Depending on your provider, cell service may be spotty.

16. **How physically demanding is this course?** We will be going on a couple of moderate 1-hour hikes. Where we look for alpine vegetation on the top of Whiteface Mountain, we will be on an exposed summit where the footing is poor in some places. Students will have to have the stamina to maintain their enthusiasm through 12-hour days with full itineraries.

17. **When are grades reported for this course?** This is a fall course with grades reported at the same time as your other fall courses.

18. **If I'm interested, what do I do next?** Get in touch with me! We'll chat about whether this course is a good fit for your background and interests. Don't delay, as spots are expected to fill up.