

Field Studies in Conservation: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

ANTH/FORS 4270/6270 (3 credits, CRN 44371)

August 5 – 11, 2025 (field program)

plus follow-up weekly meetings (on campus) in August and September (at a time to be arranged with students)

Fall Semester credit

Field program fee is \$810 (meets Experiential Learning Requirement/EL-approved)

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Course Instructor, Schedule and Contact

Instructors: Dr. Michael Tarrant, Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, UGA, Tarrant@uga.edu

Contact: Apply online at www.discoverabroad.uga.edu or by email discoverabroad@uga.edu

Course Description

Live and study for a week inside the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) with the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont (GSMIT) and earn 3 credits. This experiential field program is appropriate for students of all disciplines and for anyone with an interest in the natural and cultural history of the Southern Appalachia. More specifically, the course will expose students to a variety of on-going and innovative programs, using hands-on, practical experiences, to explore the scope of human – environment relationships in the most visited national park in the country. The course is 24/7 during the field portion of the program and there are post-program assignments (including bi-weekly meetings during the early part of the Fall Semester). A program fee for accommodations, transport and meals is charged.

Course Prerequisites, Corequisites and Cross-listings

There are no prerequisites nor corequisites and all students in good academic standing are eligible to take the course. This course fulfills the requirements of Anthropology (ANTH) or Forestry and Natural Resources (FORS) at the undergraduate level (4270) or graduate level (6270). The course is POD, so please email discoverabroad@uga.edu to register.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The focus of this experiential learning course is learning by doing; as such we will seek to:

1. Actively engage with the world's natural environments and protected areas.
2. Encourage self-awareness through personal relationships with the natural world.
3. Promote creative discourse on conservation and related topics.
4. Engage in citizen science activities related to conservation.
5. Translate knowledge into informed values, such that students can then engage in future discourse on conservation issues and related topics.

Institutional Competencies

The course will meet the following two UGA institutional competencies (listed with associated learner expectations)

- Creativity and Innovation
 - To develop original ideas and thinking about protected areas management and conservation through experiential learning
- Communication
 - To translate (existing and new) knowledge into informed values, such that students can then engage in future discourse on conservation issues and related topics

- To engage in citizen science activities (such as environmental education and interpretation) that convey information and values to different audiences (e.g., park visitors, general public, schools, etc)

Graduate and Honors Option Credit

Students who wish to take this course for honors credit will be required to register for the graduate version of the Course and complete "Additional Course Assignment for Graduate Credit and Honors Option" (see below). Questions about graduate course credit and how it works with your honors program of study may be directed to the Honors Program (honors@uga.edu), Tel: 706-542-6938.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to engage in all lectures and seminars.

Academic Honesty

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found [here](#). All academic work must meet the standards described in the [University's Culture of Honesty policy](#). Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and this policy should be directed to the instructor.

Required Course Material

Linzey, D.W. (2008). *A Natural History Guide to Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, TN. ISBN # 13:978-1-57233-612-4. (Used copies available on Amazon.) **Bring this book with you to the Smokies.**

Course Requirements

1. Field participation (15%)
 - a. Actively participate in all lectures, orientations, activities and presentations, service projects, and general tasks and duties.
 - b. Any unexcused absences will result in an automatic loss of 2.5% per absence.
2. Journal and reflection (5%)
 - a. Turn-in two separate journal entries which comply with, and show detailed understanding and consideration of, the essential entries/standards required for nature/observation journaling.
 - b. Turn-in one reflection piece (~250 words) addressing one of the reflective questions posed during the program.
3. Essays (15%)
 - a. Prior to departure, use AI (e.g., ChatGPT, etc) to answer each of the questions below. Submit your answers (using the format guidelines below) on eLC.
 - i. Give equal weight to each part of the following questions
 - ii. Include your name on each page and type the full question before each answer
 - iii. Attach a Word file (only, not .pdf or other format) using Arial 9.5-point font, single-spaced, continuous numbered essays (i.e., a single line break between essays)
 - iv. Between 200-250 words (only) per question
 - v. **Due 24 hours prior to departure on day one of the program.** Late submissions receive an automatic 2% penalty.
 - b. Essay questions
 - i. Describe how and when the Appalachian Mountains were formed.
 - ii. How do environmental factors (e.g., plants, sunlight, climatic conditions, etc) combine to create the blue haze typical of the Great Smoky Mountains? How has air pollution altered this characteristic blue haze?

- iii. Describe the cultural changes of the Smoky Mountains region over the past two centuries (i.e., from 1820 – 2020~).
 - iv. Why does GSMNP have so much diversity?
 - c. Throughout the week, use the textbook and information from the lectures, presentations, discussions, and field activities to refine your answers.
 - d. Submit your final answers (using the format guidelines above) on eLC **due 24 hours after departure from Tremont**
- 4. Post-field program seminars (15%)
 - a. Engage in the following seminars (date/time to be scheduled in Fall Semester) on
 - i. Smokies trip debrief and the problem of over-tourism
 - ii. Solutions to over-tourism
 - iii. The future of national parks
 - iv. TBA (honors/graduate student led)
 - b. You will be assessed on the quality of your engagement in the seminars in terms of constructive comments, questions, and dialogue. As with the concept of progress, *more* (in terms of the amount of engagement) is not necessarily better.
 - c. Please submit two questions (simply, numbered 1 and 2, no more than 12-15 words per question) on eLC under “Discussions” the day prior to each Seminar (from the respective pre-recorded lecture, video, and/or reading). **Type your two questions directly into eLC (no attachments, word docs, etc)** by the deadline on eLC. Failure to turn it in on time will result in a zero grade for the assignment.
- 5. Smokies Socio-Scientific Issues Simulation (10%)
 - a. You will adopt a character role in the Smokies simulation, play that role, and submit your talk including 5 additional references to the instructor at least two hours prior to the start of the simulation activity.
- 6. Exam (40%)
 - a. Open-notes exam (morning of the final day of the program)
 - b. This comprehensive exam will require extensive mastery of the material, as little time will be available for note searching.
 - c. Strong suggestion: read the textbook before leaving for the trip. This knowledge will be crucial for your participation and understanding throughout the week.

Additional Assignment for Graduate or Honors Option Credit

Graduate credit for the Course requires both of the following: (1) engagement in, and submission of, the assignments will be of a higher quality than at the undergraduate level (accordingly, written material and project assignments will receive more rigorous grading than at the undergraduate level) and (2) lead a post-field program seminar on a related topic of your choosing. Failure to meet a passing grade for the assignment and/or submit the assignment by the due date may result in an incomplete grade.

Grading Policy

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

A	93 –100 percent
A-	89.5 – 92.9 percent
B+	87 – 89.4 percent
B	83 – 86.9 percent
B-	79.5 – 82.9 percent
C+	77 – 79.4 percent
C	73 – 76.9 percent
C-	69.5 – 72.9 percent
D	59.5 - 69.4 percent
F	below 59.4 percent

Registration

1. Apply to the field program [here](#) or at www.discoverabroad.uga.edu.
2. Upon acceptance to the program, a \$150 non-refundable deposit will be requested from you. This deposit will count towards your total program fee, the remainder of which will be billed at a later time. The deposit is requested by credit card payment via a link within your application.
3. After you have committed to the program and based on information provided on your application, you will be provided with registration information via email.
4. After registration, your student account will be assessed the remainder of the program fee. Payment in-full must be completed no later than two weeks prior to the program departure. Federal student loans, scholarships, and other authorized aid will be taken into consideration in determining if your account is "paid". As the Smokies course is a Fall course, the Bursar may set a due date that conflicts with the due date set by Discover Abroad, in which case the Discover Abroad due date supersedes this due date.

Notes

1. We depart from Parking Lot S07 (next to Warnell/the Creamery on Green Street) UGA South Campus, Athens, GA on day one of the program @ 7:45am. Please be there 15 minutes prior, to check your luggage on the vans. You will not be able to leave your own vehicle at S07 so please arrange to get dropped off or to leave your vehicle elsewhere. **Bring a packed lunch or money for lunch (we will stop at Ingles in Franklin) on day one – all other meals are covered.** You are limited to one duffle-bag, backpack, or suitcase (plus one small daypack). We will return to S07 campus on the final day of the program in the late afternoon.
2. You are fully responsible for any medical treatment while participating in the program as medical insurance coverage is not provided by the program.
3. There is a mandatory online program orientation and [Complete the Tremont Registration Form](#) (Enter "1" on the home screen to register; Use 180 East Green Street, Athens, GA 30602 as the school address; there is no fee payable to Tremont)
4. There is no extra credit opportunity.
5. It is your responsibility to speak with the instructor of any other courses that you are taking if you will miss any classes or assignments for that course whilst on the Smokies field program.

What to Bring

Summer in the Smokies is generally warm and can be dry or wet. The average daily high in August is 88 degrees F and the average daily low is 62 degrees F. It will likely rain at some point during your visit so please bring raingear. Packing a variety of clothing layers will be helpful, as you may be hiking in cool or warm, high and low elevations. You will be walking on trails so be sure to bring a pair of well broken-in hiking boots or good sturdy walking shoes along with an old pair of sneakers or water shoes for aquatic studies. Everyone should bring a daypack for you to carry raingear, water, sack lunch and other essentials. We stay at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont (GSMIT).

1. The program (GSMIT) provides
 - a. Heated and air-conditioned indoor facilities (classrooms, dining room, etc)
 - b. Bunk beds (dormitory style)
 - c. Meals and snacks (vegetarian and vegan options are available, upon prior request)
 - d. Small bookstore (for souvenirs)
2. What you must bring
 - a. Bedding (sleeping bag, or sheets and blanket, and pillow)
 - b. Personal clothing (shorts/t-shirts for day hikes and long pants/long sleeved shirts for evenings)
 - c. Hiking shoes (day-hikes)
 - d. Water shoes/sandals (can double as shower shoes)

- e. Rain jacket
 - f. All toiletries/personal hygiene items (including soap and shampoo)
 - g. Bath towel
 - h. Bathing suit
 - i. Notebook and pens
 - j. Alarm clock
 - k. Insect repellent
 - l. Medications as needed (e.g., allergies, motion sickness, prescriptions, etc)
 - m. Insurance verification and credit card in the event of accident or illness requiring medical attention. Trip insurance (accident) is available through most insurance agencies
 - n. Packed (or money for) lunch on day one (travel day)
 - o. Flashlight and/or headlamp (with spare batteries) or use light on your phone
 - p. Water bottle
 - q. Day pack (for day hikes)
 - r. Laptop
3. Optional
- a. Binoculars
 - b. Field guides
 - c. Small bedside light for reading
 - d. Musical instrument
4. General information
- a. A landline is available at GSMIT for emergencies. Cell phones rarely work in the national park.
 - b. Address: Great Smoky Mtn. Institute at Tremont
 9275 Tremont Road
 GSMNP
 Townsend, TN 37882
Emergency Tel: 865-448-6709 or 865-436-1294
5. Rules and regulations
- a. No student is to leave Tremont without the consent of the faculty supervisor.
 - b. Punctual attendance at all sessions is required.
 - c. Alcoholic beverages, non-prescription drugs, or firearms are not allowed (on common transportation carriers and/or at Tremont) and may result in termination of the course for student.
 - d. All Tremont rules and regulations will be observed by all personnel.
 - e. Non-conformance of the above rules will result in immediate, appropriate disciplinary action, which may include expulsion.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact [Student Care and Outreach](#); they will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services. UGA has several resources for a student seeking [mental health services](#) or [crisis support](#). If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit [BeWellUGA](#) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Accommodation Policy

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with the Disability Resource Center

(Voice: 706-542-8719 or TTY: 706- 542-8778 or web: <https://drc.uga.edu/>) and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

FERPA Notice

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the [registrar's explanation](#)

Use of AI for Coursework Policy

To ensure you develop and master the foundational knowledge and skills in this course, the use of generative AI (GAI) tools is strictly prohibited. This includes all stages of your work process, even the preliminary ones. This prohibition extends to AI writing tools like Grammarly and Wordtune, as well as GAI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Writesonic, Rytr, and Rtutor. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with the instructor before using it.

Background to the Smokies

The National Park Service was established in 1916 through the individual efforts of Stephen Mather, the first NPS director and the collective actions of other forward-thinking leaders, such as Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir and members of Congress. The NPS is a federal agency under the Department of Interior, which is the Department that also manages the Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management. However, national park territories have a different purpose from these other agencies. In the organic act which created the National Park Service, it reads: "The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reservations. . . by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." You, dear reader, are part of that "future generations" that the act of Congress referred to.

The National Park Service manages about 380 different areas as diverse as Blue Ridge Parkway, the Washington Monument, Gettysburg National Military Park, Canaveral National Seashore, Golden Spike National Historic Site, Lincoln Home National Historic Site, the St. Louis Arch (Jefferson National Expansion Memorial), Grand Canyon National Park, Mt. Rushmore National Memorial and Women's Rights National Historic Park, to name just a few examples. The "crown jewels" of our country are largely protected in our 52 National Parks. National Parks are established by acts of Congress. They are areas that typically cover a large area that contains a variety of resources and encompasses sufficient land or water to encourage adequate protection of the resources. Some of the most well-known parks include Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Everglades, Shenandoah, Big Bend, Rocky Mountain and Great Smoky Mountains. Just reading this list of names makes most of us proud to be Americans. A scholar once commented that the National Park idea is the best idea America ever gave to the world. It is sometimes heard that the "Government" is "locking-up" too much land. All of areas of the National Park system "protect" less than 2% of the land area of the mainland 48 states. Should we open places like the Grand Canyon or Yosemite for developers from Holiday Inns, McDonalds, Disney, Hilton, or Motel-6? They would be pleased to take them over, so that you would not have to pay taxes to support them. Food for thought. Should we let the "government" or "private development" manage our national parks? Are you willing to pay the taxes or user fees to assist in government ownership?

Great Smoky Mountains National Park was authorized by Congress in May of 1926, designated as a Biosphere Reserve in 1976 and designated as a world heritage site in 1983. It is comprised of 520,004 federal acres and 266 non-federal acres. It has the loftiest range east of the Black Hills of South Dakota and is one of the oldest uplands on earth. The Smokies have a diversified and luxurious plant life, often of extraordinary size. This mountain range escaped glaciation due to its southern location. The area was the home of native Americans, including the Cherokee tribe, whose story is one of the greatest tragedies in North America. William Bartram, the Southeast's first field natural scientist explorer came to the Smokies in the late 18th century. He

documented the culture of the Cherokee and the plant life of the region. Throughout the 19th century, the region was settled by farmers and tradesmen, driving the Cherokee out of Tennessee and North Carolina despite dozens of treaties from Washington granting rights to the land "forever." The idea of creating some kind of park in the Appalachian region was first proposed in 1899 and renewed in 1923. But establishing a national park in the Southern Appalachians required a different approach than in the West, where most parks were being created. Western parks were carved out of land already owned by the federal government as part of the vast public domain. But in the Smokies, 85% of the total acreage was owned by 18 timber and pulpwood companies, while the remaining 15% was divided among some 6,000 farmers and owners of homesites. In 1924, the Secretary of the Interior appointed a special committee to survey the entire mountain region for the best location for a national park. Finally, the committee reported that: "The Great Smoky Mountains easily stand first because of the height of the mountains, depth of the valleys, ruggedness of the area and the unexampled variety of trees, shrubs and plants." In 1926, legislation was enacted to create three national parks: Shenandoah, Smoky Mountains, and Mammoth Cave. On Sept. 2, 1940, the park was dedicated by FDR. (Note: this portion of the history was derived from the publications of Michael Frome.)