

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON • PE & REC • Outdoor Pursuits Program
PEO 392 - Backcountry Survival Syllabus

Course Description

This one-credit survival course is designed for outdoor enthusiasts who venture into backcountry areas during the cooler months of the year, or travel to areas that have winter-like conditions (e.g. higher elevations) at any time of the year. The course provides the knowledge, skills and practice essential to surviving in the cool, wet, windy climate of the Pacific Northwest. In addition to the obvious safety advantages, the skills and knowledge gained in this course is integral to increasing personal comfort in conventional outdoor activities.

The course consists of classroom sessions and a three-day outing. The classroom sessions prepare students for the outing. Topics include techniques for reducing the possibility of needing survival skills (i.e. how to avoid becoming lost and increasing the chance of being found), survival gear, travel techniques and route finding, the use and limitations of radios, cell phones, transponders, and GPS units, emergency shelter construction, a review of thermoregulation, heat sources including fires, stoves and chemical heaters, hydration issues, food and nutrition, preventing and treating hypothermia and cold injuries, and the capabilities and limitations of search and rescue groups.

Although the central focus of the course is on techniques appropriate for cool, wet, and windy conditions, a range of weather and site conditions is to be expected. At an elevation of over 3000', the early spring weather at our site in the Oregon Cascades can change rapidly. Sunny, summer like days can quickly change to heavy rain, and below-freezing temperatures with strong winds and blowing snow are not unusual. Safety in these conditions requires proper clothing and equipment and constant self-monitoring one's physical condition.

Prerequisites/Corequisites

PEO 285 Wilderness Survival AND PEO 351 Backpacking (or equivalent experience at the discretion of the course instructor)

Learning Outcomes

The Outdoor Pursuits Program emphasizes safe and responsible participation in outdoor activities. In addition to meeting the learning outcomes of prerequisite courses, upon completion of this course participants should be able to:

1. Identify the sites or zones likely to provide the best conditions for survival.
2. List the minimal clothing and equipment necessary for surviving an unexpected night out in the Oregon Cascades.
3. Erect/construct emergency shelters including a tarp or other minimalist shelter carried in a survival kit, and shelters from items available in nature.
4. Utilize what is available in the natural surroundings to provide insulation, warmth and comfort.
5. Identify the five mechanisms of heat loss and take steps to minimize heat loss from these mechanisms.
6. Light and sustain a fire in inclement weather.
7. Effectively use stoves, candles, and chemical heaters to facilitate survival.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of adequate hydration in keeping warm in a survival situation.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of generating heat from food sources in a survival situation.
10. Prevent and treat hypothermia and other cold injuries.
11. Utilize signaling devices effectively, and demonstrate an understanding of the merits and limitations of the various signaling devices utilized to attract the attention of backcountry travelers and/or search and rescue groups.
12. Maximize the chances of being found by a search and rescue group.

Evaluative Criteria

This is a P/NP course. Students enrolled for credit will be graded in the following areas. All of the following evaluative criteria must be met for a passing grade:

30% *Attendance and Participation*

- a. *Classroom* - attending the required sessions identified on the course schedule, being on time and actively participating in classroom sessions, and contributing to the group effort.
- b. *Backcountry Outing* - complying with OPP Outing Policies; maintaining a positive and supportive attitude; making an effort to be organized, efficient, and on time for all outing events; contributing to the group effort; and arriving at the meeting point for the outing with all of the required items of clothing and equipment.

40% *Competence* - must be demonstrated in the following areas:

Backcountry camping and survival skills - hydrating and eating at regular intervals; maintaining comfort while in a simulated survival situation, during teaching events, and while camping; practicing Leave No Trace (LNT) camping and travel techniques, implementing the behaviors, skills and techniques essential for safety during a simulated survival situation, lighting a fire in demanding conditions, and erecting a survival shelter.

30% *Final Examination* – a final examination examining the factors important to a successful survival experience. A score of 80% or better is required for a passing grade.

To be considered for a passing grade, participants must:

1. Attend and fully participate in ALL required classroom sessions specified on the course schedule.
2. Participate fully in the three-day outing.
3. Attain a score of 80% or higher on the combined evaluative criteria, including 80% or better on the final examination.

Outing Demands, Requirements, Expectations, and Policies

Surviving in cool, wet conditions using minimal clothing and equipment is never easy, and often very uncomfortable. Minimum gear requirements are strictly enforced, and participants are encouraged to use a set of gear and clothing that closely approximates a standard set of survival gear for a day hike. However, participants may take and use whatever equipment and clothing they feel is needed to maintain their health and comfort, and all participants are encouraged to return to base camp if any health risks develop or if the conditions become too uncomfortable. Leaders contact each participant at regular intervals throughout both nights, to provide assistance and advice, and to assist in returning to camp if this is desired by the participant or determined by the leader to be the safest course of action.

It's imperative that you understand what is required of you in terms of preparation, fitness, physical comfort, attitude, and conduct. MOST IMPORTANT! Safety is our first concern and must be yours as well. Participate in the outing only if you feel mentally and physically prepared and are willing and able to assume full responsibility for your own safety. Never assume that the leadership team knows everything, always make good decisions, or can solve every problem for you. Your safety depends on your alertness and good sense. We encourage you to maintain a questioning attitude! If you are unsure of something, ask!

A. Prior to participation in the outing component of the course you are required to:

1. Attend the required classroom sessions.
2. Read, understand, and sign the Statement of Risk, Assumption of Risk, and Release of Liability document, Health Information form, and Outing Policies document, allowing enough time to thoroughly read each document and bring any questions you may have to the course instructor. It is your responsibility to provide your instructor with information regarding injuries, surgeries, medications, or other special considerations that may affect your participation in this course.
3. Arrive at the outing departure point on time and with all of the required clothing and equipment. Gear and clothing requirements will be detailed during class sessions. To avoid loss of credit, fees, and the experience of the outing, make sure that you understand the

requirements and verify the acceptability of required items well in advance of the departure date. The Outdoor Pursuits Program maintains a limited supply of certain items for student use at no charge. You must provide your own equipment unless we happen to have the items you need. Rentals are available locally. You must also provide your own food. Transportation is covered in the cost of the course.

B. As a participant in the outing component of this course, you are expected to:

1. Monitor your health and comfort, eat and drink regularly, and inform your instructor if you become uncomfortable or exceed your limits of personal safety. Your enjoyment of the course will be improved by maintaining a positive attitude and by being mentally prepared for a new set of challenges each day.
2. Know and practice minimum impact camping techniques specific to the season and environment.
3. Refrain from using illicit drugs and alcohol, carrying firearms, and bringing pets of any kind. Our outing participation policies regarding alcohol, illicit drugs and firearms are "zero tolerance". Do not anticipate lenience or exceptions. Failure to abide by these policies may result in a permanent grade of "F" or "NP" in the course and and/or a formal complaint registered with the Office of Student Life.
4. Wear a seat belt AT ALL TIMES while riding in State vehicles.
5. Remember that you are participating in a tax-supported public program. Help us maintain a good image by being sensible in attire and behavior when near members of the public.

C. You will not be allowed to participate in the outing component of this course if you:

1. Miss any required classroom sessions.
2. Arrive at the outing with inadequate equipment or if, in the instructor's opinion, your participation (for whatever reason) could compromise your or the group's safety.

D. You participate at your own risk. **You are strongly encouraged to obtain health insurance prior to participation in the outing component of this course.** You may be asked to secure a physician's statement clearing you to participate in this course.

Additional Information

1. IMPORTANT! The three-day outing requires that you miss ALL other class sessions scheduled on the Friday of the outing. It is your responsibility to contact your professors/instructors well in advance of the outing to determine if your absence will be permitted. NOTE: Your professors/instructors are under no obligation to release you from your responsibilities in order to participate in this outing. Attending Friday classes and driving on your own to the outing location later in the day is NOT PERMITTED.
2. Course readings, articles and notes are available on the OPP website: <http://opp.uoregon.edu/bpk/backpacking.html>
3. A color map of the outing location is required for classroom sessions. The map will be made available by the course instructor.
4. Laptop and cell phone use (including text messaging) is prohibited during class sessions!
5. In compliance with University policies, an "I" can be given only when a relatively minor part of a course is not completed. Therefore, if you do not participate in the outing component, an "I" is not an option. If you cannot attend the outing, drop the course as soon as possible.
6. If participation is disallowed due to failure to meet the requirements for participation specified above, or because you chose not to participate in the outing for any reason, fees will **NOT be refunded**. Refunds are subject to the refund schedule established by the Registrar's Office.

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS / NOTES
MAY 14	Course demands/expectations/waiver & health disclosure Leader meeting #1	Course Syllabus
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MAY 21	Survival Equipment	Distribute equipment requirements in class
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MAY 28	Outing preparation Leader meeting #2	
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BACKCOUNTRY SURVIVAL OUTING – May 31 to June 02 – CUPOLA ROCK AREA		
MEET AT THE BONUS ROOM AT _____ A.M.		
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JUNE 5	Final Examination	Course Closure and Evaluations