

## ***Instructionally Related Activities Report Form***

SPONSOR: Dan Wakelee, Don Rodriguez

PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT: ESRM / Political Science

ACTIVITY TITLE: Yosemite Field Experience

DATE (S) OF ACTIVITY: October 9-11, 2015

Please submit via email to the IRA Coordinator along with any supporting documentation at [david.daniels@csuci.edu](mailto:david.daniels@csuci.edu) within 30 days after the activity. Thank you for your commitment to engaging our students!

### **A. ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- (1) PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY;
  - (2) HOW DID THE ACTIVITY RELATE TO A COURSE(S) AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES?
  - (3) WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE STRENGTHS OF THE ACTIVITY?
  - (4) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE/WERE THE ACTIVITY'S WEAKNESSES?
  - (5) HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE THIS ACTIVITY FOR NEXT TIME?
  - (6) WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROCESS?
  - (7) WHAT ARE STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE ACTIVITY? ATTACH STUDENT EVALUATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH FERPA RESTRICTIONS YOU MUST REMOVE ALL PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE STUDENT INFORMATION)
  - 8) GIVE A SUMMARY OF EXPENSES FOR THE ACTIVITY.
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### **B. ATTENDEE LIST- SUPPORTING DOCUMENT:**

In addition to the report form, *in a separate document*, attach to your email a list of attendees complete with each student major and grade level. This for IRA Committee reference only and will not be published on the IRA website. Include your name and the title of your IRA activity on the document.

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### **C.IMAGES FROM ACTIVITY:**

Finally, attach to your email up to 6 images demonstrating student participation (under 2 MB total) with captions/titles. Please attach these photos in .JPEG format directly to email. Thank you!

## **(1) PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY**

The activity involved students in the National Park (ESRM/POLS 341) class traveling by bus from CI to Yosemite to learn about the operation and resources in one of America's iconic national parks. Students were accompanied by instructors Don Rodriguez, Dan Wakelee and Russell Galipeau (volunteer instructor who is superintendent of Channel Islands National Park and former chief of natural resources at Yosemite). The group stayed at the UC Merced research station at Wawona. In the course of the weekend students met with a park staffer who uses GIS technology to map fire behavior, a representative from the park superintendent's office, the chief of interpretation, members of the bear team, nationally recognized historian and park ranger Shelton Johnson, and the park's restoration ecologist. In addition to meeting with park staff, students had several hours to hike around Yosemite valley and had a rare opportunity to visit the Mariposa Grove of sequoias to observe the largest restoration project in park history (the grove is closed to all public visitors until 2017 and students had to agree not to take any photographs as a condition of their visit).

## **(2) HOW DID THE ACTIVITY RELATE TO A COURSE(S) AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES?**

Course learning objectives include the following:

Describe, understand and analyze the struggle to balance competing social, political and economic interests impacted by the operation of parks, particularly in the context of the mission of the Park Service – Yosemite is a place where almost all major issues facing the park service are played out – students had an opportunity to talk with managers about these issues and to see the results of some of the decisions on major issues within the park.

Describe the role of scientific study within the park and the use of scientific data by decision makers – Students had opportunities to talk with park staff about the use and management of fire within the park, the management of wild life (particularly bears), and to observe a major restoration project in progress and talk with the restoration ecologist responsible for that project.

Describe and analyze the policymaking and administrative processes that impact the management of a national park – Students met with key managers to better understand how and why the park makes key decisions that impact visitors and resources.

Analyze the effectiveness of programs designed to attract and educate diverse groups in the park – Students had a firsthand opportunity to observe the interaction of park programs and visitors. They met with the chief of interpretation (visitor education) for the park and engaged in discussion about how the park makes itself relevant to different groups. Students had an opportunity to meet with Shelton Johnson who is a leader within the park service in communicating the history of minority groups (particularly African Americans) within national parks and Yosemite.

### **(3) WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE STRENGTHS OF THE ACTIVITY?**

The Yosemite visit give students to see how issues and concepts discussed in class play out in a real park setting. Students come away with a far richer understanding of both the resources in the park and the challenges involved in managing those resources. For some students it is their first visit to a national park and the first visit to Yosemite for a number of students. This experience changes student perspectives about parks and protected areas.

### **(4) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE/WERE THE ACTIVITY'S WEAKNESSES?**

The trip occurs over a long weekend. The amount of travel time required to get from CI to Yosemite significantly limits the amount of time in the park and the scope of activities that students can participate in during their time in Yosemite. Students have a compressed schedule that packs a number of activities into a short time and requires that travel within the park is limited primarily to Yosemite Valley, leaving no time for examination of the 90% of the park that is not as impacted by large numbers of park visitors. Students consistently indicate that they would like to have additional time to explore areas away from Yosemite Valley.

### **(5) HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE THIS ACTIVITY FOR NEXT TIME?**

The move to the UC Merced research station allowed much more flexibility in scheduling activities and substantially reduced lodging costs but it introduced more complexity in arranging for food and food preparation. A bigger issue is that the large charter bus is not able to travel up the final stretch of the road to the research station facilities – transportation arrangements, particularly at Wawona need to be re-structured for future trips. The limited time in the park is always an issue but a longer trip will limit student ability to participate by taking them away from campus for another instructional day.

### **(6) WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROCESS?**

The trip reinforces the value of visiting and experiencing the park in person. Students come to the trip with varying levels of experience in parks, but all come away amazed by both the physical experience of visiting the park and with a far richer understanding of the park as an organization and social institution.

### **(7) WHAT ARE STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE ACTIVITY? ATTACH STUDENT EVALUATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH FERPA RESTRICTIONS YOU MUST REMOVE ALL PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE STUDENT INFORMATION)**

Here are a sample of student journal entries related to the Yosemite experience:

The park staff enhanced my experience greatly. Every staff member was experienced and very

enthusiastic, their personal knowledge was priceless in comparison to never having heard such esteemed members of the NPS staff share with us. The only problem with the trip was that we were confined to the short time constraints and could not experience more of the park. In addition, the Sunday hike was a very privileged experience, and it was very humbling be allowed access to the site, worth the hike, to see first hand the challenges and opportunities presented there. The restoration ecologist was very knowledgeable and presented a great talk about the problems from the past, such as parking and cars in general. As well as the mitigation and restoration of the Mariposa Grove and future anticipations for how to manage future problems.

I really enjoyed our class trip to Yosemite. It was my first time visiting Yosemite National Park, and also my first time visiting a park other than Channel Islands National Park. I had a multitude of reactions to many of the different aspects of our trip. In many of my journal entries, I have said that each and every national park is special in it's own unique way and offers the people who visit something special and unique as well. Yosemite definitely does just that. It was awe-inspiring to see some of the beautiful rock formations that make Yosemite famous, El Capitan and Half Dome. Seeing these formations in pictures and videos my entire life, it was awesome seeing them in person. If anything could have made it better, it would have been to have water flowing from the many (dry) waterfalls we saw over our weekend there. I also really enjoyed all of the park staff that spoke to us. With a fire science background, I was really impressed with the two fire talks we had, especially our first one, involving fire and GIS in the park. Our final talk with Sheldon was the absolute best! His enthusiasm and knowledge was honestly out of this world. He has truly left his mark not only in Yosemite, but the entire National Park system.

It was really interesting to speak with Russell about Cook's Meadow and pick the brain of the scientists we had around us, and learn about the "family" of Yosemite. The part that hindered my experience, and I think a lot of the nerdy ESRM folks, was the lack of science in the park. I understand that the culture and history is just as important, but I also believe beautiful places seem more relevant when you understand how they came to be. For instance how a glacier formed El Capitan, and how the valley itself was created during this time. To understand why the waterfall was dry, for those who didn't know, would have been an awesome lesson of conservation, climate, and history.

All of the talks we had with park staff exemplified how passionate you have to be to work in a zoo like Yosemite. Working as a park ranger in Yosemite is definitely not something I would want to do, now that I know what it is like, but I commend them for their knowledge and sense of place.

As distracting as all of the people were in the valley, the vastness of Mariposa Grove made up for it. Talking with Sue, someone with whom us ESRMers shared more similarities to, was the highlight of the trip. Learning about the cultural, historical, political, and scientific workings of a restoration project was the most interesting and impactful part of Yosemite. I think it was the part of the trip that identified with the interdisciplinary nature of our class the most.

My first trip to Yosemite was unforgettable. The panoramic views of glacially carved canyons, thick forest, grassy meadows, bubbling rivers, and granite walls scraping the sky are carved into my brain for life. Yosemite's attractions range from wildlife, plants, and mountains. Our class had interactions with park interpreters, fire ecologists, wildlife biologists, park law enforcement, resource managers, park superintendents, and last but not least Shelton Johnson. These people laid out what the park's history and also what is in store for the future of Yosemite.

It was my first time in Yosemite. I was looking forward to this trip because I had heard stories of how beautiful Yosemite National Park was from my father. He described how everything was so beautiful and wildlife would roam free throughout the park. My reaction to Yosemite was I was amazed. Seeing the valley when we reached the end of the tunnel was majestic. I am one who loves to see nature and experience it. I may not know as much as an environmental scientist but I still love to see and experience the nature first hand. There were no words to describe how beautiful it was. As I am typing this, I am still picturing the valley in my mind. Even though I took pictures, no picture can replace the actual experience of being there. The scenery of the mountains had the biggest impact on me. I have never seen anything as tall and majestic as those mountains. I do wish we could have went on a nice hike in the outback. Seeing the valley from the top would have been great. This is even more reason for me to go back and take a trip there again. The interactions with the park staff enhanced my experience. If we had just went to the park and walked around, I would have not known anything. The talk about prescribed fires helped me understand why fires are important to the health of the parks. The talk with Sheldon helped me understand that there is culturally sensitive history at the park. They made the experience something worthwhile because it gave everything at the park a purpose and understanding. I hope the same interpreters are there because I will be lost the next time I visit Yosemite. All the employees of the park seemed so passionate and loved their job. I was glad to have my questions answered especially since I am hoping to become a law enforcement officer. Though I am not really considering a job with the national parks, it is still a possibility for the future since I am still young. Overall, this trip was such a great experience. Spending time with classmates and making new friends and meeting people I didn't know before in such a beautiful place made the trip even better. I wish it would have been longer. This trip has persuaded me to get some friends and plan a trip to go back for some more memories.

**(8) GIVE A SUMMARY OF EXPENSES FOR THE ACTIVITY.**

IRA funded expense:

Bus charter    **\$4,962.50**

Lab fee funded expenses:

UC Merced Field Station Housing	\$2,340
Food Costs	\$386.87

Total activity costs: \$7,689.37

**B. ON SEPARATE DOCUMENT, PLEASE ATTACH ATTENDEE LIST  
(PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFO REMOVED)**

**C. PLEASE INCLUDE UP TO 6 IMAGES AS ATTACHMENTS TO YOUR  
SUBMISSION**

### IRA Participants Roster

Acevedo	Lorely	Political Science	Junior
Blair	Brandon	ESRM	Senior
Casey	Sean	ESRM	Senior
Coty	Aspen	ESRM	Senior
Downey	Travis	Political Science	Senior
Fendi	Jeyla	ESRM	Senior
Forster	Evangeline	ESRM	Senior
Gomez	Nicholas	History	Senior
Gonzalez	Tanea	Math	Junior
Hidalgo	Emily	ESRM	Junior
James	Stephanie	Communication	Senior
Kelley	Ian	Political Science	Senior
Larrieu	Dustin	Psychology	Senior
Lee	Summer	Political Science	Junior
Lopez	Dulce	ESRM	Junior
Lysdale	Casey	ESRM	Senior
Mars	Rachel	Communication	Senior
McPherson	Hayden	ESRM	Senior
Newell	Aimee	ESRM	Senior
Nichols	Tyler	ESRM	Senior
Niendorff	Nathan	ESRM	Junior
Nolte	Hailee	Communication	Junior
Parrish	Shelby	Psychology	Senior
Pascal	Madeline	ESRM	Junior
Porras	Andrew	Communication	Senior
Pratt	Reily	ESRM	Senior
Ramirez	Karen	ESRM	Junior
Salin	Shaina	Communication	Senior
Salvio	Christopher	Sociology	Senior
Sandrich	Althea	Communication	Senior
Steele	Karissa	Psychology	Junior
Summers	Ryan	ESRM	Senior
Superak	Nita	ESRM	Senior
Tarrant	Cordell	Economics	Senior
van Heerden	Vanessa	Biology	Senior
Wispell	Jordan	Political Science	Senior



















