



The National Park Service Teacher Ranger Teacher Program



TRT Field Experience: Place-Based Education in the National Parks Summer Semester

School of Education & Human Development
University of Colorado Denver

Online Course
Instructors:
Credit Hours: 3
Email:

Course Background

As educators, we need to develop culturally responsive pedagogy for diverse populations in formal/informal settings. One way of doing so is to understand how learners are situated in different places. “Place” refers not only to the physical location and elements of a community, but the relationships that people have to these places, and the meanings attached to these relationships. Learners use these different attachments to places, their sense of place, to comprehend the range of subjects in a school curriculum (science, history, language arts, etc.) as well as their everyday experiences. A place-based education validates different ways of knowing the world, and recognizes that the subjectivities associated with sense of place are a source of strength rather than a hindrance to student learning. A culturally responsive pedagogy requires educators to engage in place-based education, where place becomes the context for inclusive curriculum and instruction. Thus, Place-based Education lends itself well to the National Parks.

Course Description

This is a stand-alone, 3-credit course developed to support TRTs in the TRT program. This course may also count as the **second** course in the University of Colorado Denver’s Place-Based Education certificate program. This course provides a field experience related to Place-Based Education through the National Parks. This allows students to understand how theory informs practice through reflections and real-world experiences utilizing Place-Based Education.

In this course TRTs will learn how to:

1. Develop **content knowledge** by:
 - Working and possibly living in a National Park
 - Researching content pertaining to the National Park TRTs are assigned to
 - Communicate knowledge through this course's online discussions
 - Applying content knowledge to the TRT's assigned National Park and the TRT's own classroom
2. Develop the understanding and skills to create a **final project** benefitting the National Park and the TRT's own classroom, community, and/or the general public that communicates the content knowledge learned by the TRT while in the program.
3. Develop an **understanding of Place-Based Learning** and the skills/strategies needed to implement it in the context of interdisciplinary K12 curriculum.
4. Engage in an online **learning community** of other TRTs to reflect, analyze and communicate the TRT experience.

General Themes to be addressed:

- The history of the National Parks
- The role of Place-Based Learning
- Content and pedagogical knowledge relating to historical, cultural and environmental systems of the National Parks

Meeting Structure

This course is taken online at the same time the TRT is working in their assigned National Park. The final project and all activities will be completed by the conclusion of the TRT program. The beautiful and challenging landscapes of the National Parks will provide the natural classroom for the TRT program. Teachers will spend 4-8 weeks in their assigned park as a Teacher Ranger. The park will offer an exciting place to study history, culture, geography, geology, botany, biology and environmental science. This opportunity provides the ultimate education experience in the company of like-minded teachers.

Required Readings and Supporting Materials

Primary Readings:

The readings include articles and book chapters that highlight different types of parks (historic, cultural, and natural) as well as Place-Based Learning, which is a method of experiential, hands-on teaching that applies to all parks. These readings will be provided in PDFs through the online course.

Cameron, C. M. & Gatewood, J. B. (2000). Excursions into the un-remembered past: what people want from visits to historical sites. *The Public Historian*, 22(3), 107-127.

Gruenewald, D. (2003). Foundations of place: a multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(3), 619-654.

Louv, Richard. (2008). *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*. New York, NY: Algonquin Books.

Smith, G. & Sobel, D. *Place-and-Community-Based Education in Schools*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Webb, M. (1987). Cultural landscapes in the National Park Service. *The Public Historian* 9(2), 77-87.

Additional Readings:

Additional readings may be required by each park. Also, TRTs will be researching and reading their own resources to help them complete their final project. These resources may include peer-reviewed articles, books, and first-hand accounts (journals, historic newspapers, etc.).

Additional Online Readings:

[History of the National Park Service/National Parks Historical Perspective \(1940\):](#)

A Brief History of the National Park Service (US Department of the Interior)
http://cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/kieley/index.htm

Common Ground Magazine NPS (fall 2009):

Discussion on *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*
<http://www.nps.gov/commonground/fall2009/65214.pdf>

Cultural Resources

National Park History and Culture: www.nps.gov/history

NPS Cultural and Historic Parks magazines:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/crdi/publications/pubs.htm>

Videos:

History of the National Parks

Burns, K. (2009). *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* [motion picture]. United States: PBS.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fU4fDYNpLI&list=PL0A66E9740FD81788>

Cultural Resources

Keeping National Parks Alive through Inclusivity and Diversity:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqTCr8zhUcw>

Description of Activities

Activity (Assignment) Points:

TRT's course grade will be based on points earned on each required activity. Any missing activity will result in a 0 for that activity. An activity is considered late after midnight (Mountain Time) on the due date. If an activity will be late due to a university recognized emergency or park duties, please notify the instructor **before** the due date to determine options for that activity.

Please note: We want you to be successful and support your TRT experience. If you experience park scheduling that conflicts with activity due dates, please contact your instructor as soon as possible to discuss options.

Activity Assessment:

All activities and the final project will be judged on the basis of completeness, evidence of graduate level skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) being applied, and overall quality. Specific evaluation criteria and descriptions will be available for each activity and the final project. **Although not required for this course** it is suggested that APA format be used when writing papers. A style guide can be found at this link: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Additional information can be obtained from the APA website at www.apastyle.org.

Your written activities must be prepared as follows:

- Prepare activities in Microsoft Word
- Save your work as a .doc file
- Submit your activity to the designated location (i.e. dropbox, discussion, doc sharing, email attachment, etc.) as determined by your instructor
- Include in the subject line the **name of the activity, your name, and section**
- If you do not have to Microsoft Word or cannot convert your document to Microsoft Word, please contact the instructor

Course Required Activities

Activity

Entrance Survey

PowerPoint Highlighting TRT's Park

Online Discussions (based on TRT experience and readings)

Project Plan

Final Project

Exit Survey

Entrance and Exit Survey: 20 pts total (10 pts per survey)

Each entrance and exit survey will record TRTs' expectations of the course, what they have learned, and will also serve as a reflection tool. TRTs will be able to track their growth in the TRT program through these surveys. The surveys are comprised of open ended questions that TRTs will complete and submit online. It will not be shared with other TRTs.

PowerPoint Highlighting TRT's Park: 20 pts

This PowerPoint presentation will have approximately 10 slides describing the TRT's National Park, Monument, Historic Site, etc. TRTs will briefly outline information on important natural, historical, and/or cultural aspects of their park. TRTs will also include what their duties are as a TRT in the park. PowerPoints should have a mix of text, pictures, etc. PowerPoints will be posted online and viewed by fellow classmates. This activity will serve to introduce TRTs to each others' parks, the diversity of the Nation Park system, and build a community of learners. (Notes: This activity should take about 1 hour. If it takes longer due to technical problems, the TRT should contact their instructor. The PowerPoint should be a small enough file that it can be emailed to the TRT's instructor.)

PowerPoint Grading Rubric

| Points | Criteria |
|--------|---|
| 10 | All of the appropriate natural, historical, and/or cultural aspects of the TRT's park are discussed with appropriate amount of details. Presentation is clear and utilizes varied media (i.e., pictures, video, documents, audio clips, etc.). |
| 8 | Most of the appropriate natural, historical, and/or cultural aspects of the TRT's park are discussed with appropriate amount of details. Presentation is mostly clear and utilizes some varied media (i.e., pictures, video, documents, audio clips, etc.). |
| 6 | Many of the natural, historical, and/or cultural aspects of the TRT's park are not discussed and/or do not have appropriate amount of details. Presentation is not clear and does not utilize varied media (i.e., pictures, video, documents, audio clips, etc.). |
| 4 | There is a lack of information. |

Online Discussions: 60 pts total (10 pts per discussion)

During each online Module, TRTs will be expected participate in the online discussion. The online discussion may include 1-2 topics (questions). TRTs are expected to respond to each topic. TRTs posts should exhibit depth of thought, connections to other readings and activities/projects, and employ critical analysis. Discussion posts will be graded based on the completion of the discussion, the depth of the reflection, and the quality of responses.

Online Discussion Rubric

| Points | Criteria |
|---|---|
| Unsatisfactory Contributor: Contribution in class reflects inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive; provide few, in any, insights; and rarely add constructive direction for the class. | |
| 1-3 | No participation in the main online discussion group. Not consistently reading and responding to materials and notes posted from your instructor or fellow students. |
| 4-5 | Acknowledging reading or receipt of a post with cursory responses. This would include responses like "I agree", "good point", or "can you tell me more," for example. |
| Adequate Contributor: Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful insights, but seldom offer a major new direction for the discussion. Arguments are sometimes presented, and are fairly well substantiated and sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished somewhat. | |
| 6 | Acknowledging and providing constructive statements; affirming your colleague's contribution, experience, or question. |
| 7 | Same as above, but with the addition of some content or new ideas to online discussion, primarily by asking extension questions. This is considered the minimal contribution, but does not qualify as substantial. |
| Good Contributor: Contributions in class reflects thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive; provide good insights, and sometimes direction for the class. Arguments, when presented, are generally well substantiated and are often persuasive. | |
| 8-9 | In addition to above; expanding the thinking of your colleagues, by contributing additional opinions, information, content, assessment/perspective, questions, or expertise (based on your experience) to inform or expand the understanding of the discussion. |
| Outstanding Contributor: Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive; provide one or more major insights as well as direction for the class. Arguments, when offered, are well substantiated and persuasively presented. | |
| 10 | Participating actively in the conversation at a level 6 <i>and</i> adding additional resources (i.e., examples, articles, citations, URLs, etc.) to expand learning. Starting additional threaded conversations/questions on related course topics to expand learning and discussion. |

Project Plan: 30 pts

The project plan will provide TRTs with a framework for thinking about the final project that will be completed by the conclusion of the TRT program. **This project must assist the TRT's Park in some aspect and must be approved by the Park before the plan is written by the TRT.** In this way students will have identified a question, research strategies, and data/information sources, which will assist them in creating a project with maximal impact both personally and for the National Park Service.

The prospectus must include the following sections:

1. Introduction-

What is the over-arching question of your project? (2.5 pts)

Why is the question important? (5 pts)

How will the question be answered? (5 pts)

Background information concerning the project (10 pts)

You must include at least **3** sources. Examples of sources are peer-reviewed articles, books, historical documents, and/or interviews.

2. Methods-

Specifically how will you collect and analyze your data/information to answer your project's question? (5 pts)

Justify your choice of sources & included a reference section. (2.5 pts)

In order to obtain full points, please answer each section completely and clearly. Each response should be thoughtfully presented. Critical thinking and analysis need to be present. The writing should be free (or nearly free) of errors.

Final Project: (70 pts)

The final project must be agreed upon by the TRT's assigned National Park and the TRT. The project should reflect the information presented in the project plan (including sources). The project may take many formats and creativity is encouraged. Rubrics for the final project will be developed individually by the National Parks for each TRT. The final project should be meaningful to the park and TRT.

The TRT program goals for the final projects are the following:

- Provide teachers with place-based learning experiences
- Provide access to the rich resources of the National Parks for inclusion into classrooms and schools
- Provide teachers with new knowledge and teaching skills related to the resources and themes interpreted in the National Park Service
- Provide parks with the expertise of teachers to inform and shape park education programs and services

Types of TRT Projects that Support Goals

- Junior Ranger activities/program development
- Summer camp activities
- Educational podcasts
- Teacher professional development
- Family programs
- America's Great Outdoors activities and programs
- Healthy People/Healthy Parks projects
- Review of park educational materials
- Common Core State Standards projects
- Applied STEM Education materials and activities
- National Writing Project/writing labs activities
- National History Day projects
- Working with Bureau of Indian Education schools
- English Language Learner projects/activities
- Incorporating the arts into NPS education programs
- Incorporating interdisciplinary approaches to NPS education programs
- Creating online connections to students
- Incorporating technology-based projects into NPS education programs
- Teacher developed webinars
- Networking with local schools and districts
- Applications for primary source content/availability
- Service learning project identification and organization

Total Points Possible: 200 points

Grading

NOTE: All Graduate Program courses must be successfully completed with a grade of **B - or higher**. In order to receive a course grade as indicated relative to the point distribution, all required activities and final project must be completed.

| Percent | Grade |
|----------------|--------------|
| 94-100 | A |
| 90-93 | A- |
| 87-89 | B+ |
| 83-86 | B |
| 80-82 | B- |

(Please note this grading scale is in percentages, not points. Thank you.)

Program and Instructor Policies

Workload:

This is a three credit hour class, which requires 45 contact hours. Graduate course guidelines indicate that for each contact hour, 2-3 hours of readings and activities are typical. **Most of these additional hours are achieved through the TRT's park, but TRTs should plan on 3-4 hours a week for course readings and activities.**

Netiquette:

One of the interesting aspects of on-line communication is that text without visual and aural cues is often misinterpreted. Try to be very clear in your language and void irony. Consider using emoticons, (e.g., ☺, :-O, ☹, etc.). Please make sure postings are relevant, advance the conversation, and are considerate of others in every aspect. It is inevitable that misunderstandings occur, but you are among colleagues in a safe space. If anyone writes something that confuses or upsets you, assume we are all people of good intentions and bring it respectfully to the person's attention by asking for clarification.

Rewrite:

TRTs are allowed one rewrite of their final project. This rewrite must be submitted with the original project accompanied by the instructor's comments and any feedback given by the TRT's peers. Rewrites of the final project **must be submitted no later than August 15th** so the project can be finalized by September 1st as required by the NPS.

Incomplete Policy:

The current university policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. Incomplete grades are given in situations where unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing the course and the remaining work can be completed the next semester. Your instructor is the final authority on whether you qualify for an incomplete. Please remember that incomplete work must be finished by the end of the subsequent semester or the "I" will automatically be recorded as an "F".

Plagiarism:

TRTs are to submit only their own, original work for evaluation and to acknowledge the work and conclusions of others. Please see the University policy for details: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/CLAS/Centers/writing/resources/Pages/plagiarism.aspx>

Withdrawals:

A withdrawal is always preferable to an Incomplete or not passing. To withdraw, please email cpe@ucdenver.edu or call 303-315-4985.

Disability Accommodations Policy:

The University of Colorado Denver is committed to providing appropriate accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who would like academic accommodations must register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in North Classroom 2514, Phone: 303-556-3450, TTY: 303-556-4766, Fax: 303-556-4771. Your instructor will be happy to provide DRS accommodations.

Student Code of Conduct:

Students are expected to know, understand, and comply with the ethical standards of the university. For more information please see the Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/standards/students/pages/default.aspx>

Personal Concerns:

If personal, work, or family problems arise that interferes with your ability to complete or continue this course, please contact your instructor immediately. We can work together to help you resolve problems with the course.

Expectations:

- ✓ Be respectful of people and their ideas.
- ✓ Be open to new learning and perspectives.
- ✓ Be accountable for raising and resolving issues that occur.
- ✓ Be prepared to participate in class discussions and activities.
- ✓ Be responsible by being on time with your activities, insightful about your comments, and active with your course readings.

In closing:

If you have any questions or concerns about this syllabus or the course, please contact your instructor immediately. We are here to help you succeed in this course and want this to be a very educative and exciting experience for you.



A TRT in action (courtesy of the NPS).

Module Schedule for TRT Summer Course

Please note that no dates are given.

This is because TRTs are beginning the TRT program on different dates throughout the summer.

| | Readings/Video | Topics | Activities |
|----------|--|---|---|
| Module 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: <u>The National Parks</u> • Online reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Common Ground</u> ○ <u>A Brief History of the National Park Service</u> | Introduction: Building a Community and the History of the NPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance Survey • PowerPoint Highlighting TRT's Park • Discussion |
| Module 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readings/research pertaining to your Park and Final Project | Developing Content Knowledge of the TRT's Park | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Plan • Discussion |
| Module 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cameron & Gatewood (2000) • Webb (1987) • Excerpt from <u>Last Child in the Woods</u> • Readings pertaining to your Park and Final Project | Continue Developing Content Knowledge of the TRT's Park; Exploring Historic, Cultural, and Natural Parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion <p style="text-align: center;">Continue working on your Final Project</p> |
| Module 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: <u>Keeping National Parks Alive Through Inclusivity and Diversity</u> • Online Reading: NPS Cultural and Historic Parks magazines • Readings pertaining to your Park and Final Project | Diversity and the National Parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion <p style="text-align: center;">Continue working on your Final Project</p> |
| Module 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpt from <u>Place-and-Community-Based Education in Schools</u> • Gruenewald (2003) • Readings pertaining to your Park and Final Project | Connecting Back to the Classroom: Introduction to Place-Based Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion <p style="text-align: center;">Continue working on your Final Project</p> |
| Module 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readings pertaining to your Park and your Final Project • Fellow TRTs' Projects (~2) | TRT Experience and Project Reflection: Where to go from here? | <p style="text-align: center;">Part I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete and post Final Project • Exit Survey <hr style="border: 1px solid green;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">Part II:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read fellow TRTs' Projects • Final Discussion |