

Culture and Environment, Sitka, Alaska

Anthropology 280

Sitka, Alaska

Instructor: George Gmelch

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This field course examines the relationship between culture and the environment in the unique island setting of Sitka, Alaska. You will learn about the region's marine and terrestrial environments, its occupation and use by the indigenous Tlingit Indians and by non-Native residents, and contemporary controversies surrounding the use of its natural resources – its fish, timber, and natural beauty. You will learn about Tlingit and Western views of nature and compare their ideas about stewardship and conservation. You will also learn about current conservation initiatives in the town. Wherever possible the emphasis is hands-on, experiential learning.

Readings (posted on Canvas)

Gmelch, George "Tale of Two Rivers: Culture, Ecology and Competition in an Alaskan Fishery"

Gmelch, Sharon and G. Gmelch "Studying Subsistence in Sitka"

Gmelch, S. Introduction to Tlingit (excerpt from *The Tlingit Encounter with Photography*)

Harper, Steven *The Way of Wilderness* (introduction)

McAndrew, Francis "The Natural Environment" (from *Environmental Psychology*)

Nelson, Richard *The Island Within* (selections)

Thornton, Thomas *Being and Place among the Tlingit* (selections)

Course requirements:

1. Field Journal and Assignments: You will keep a field journal in which you record on a daily basis your reflection and what you have learned from our guest speakers/films, fieldtrips, and the miscellaneous encounters you have with local people. Your journal will also include your field sketches. You will also do two short observational writing assignments.

2. Class Meetings. Always come on time and prepared. Read any assigned readings before class meetings and be ready to discuss. We will have a number of distinguished guest speakers, including scientists, environmental filmmakers, fishery people, and environmental activists, Please pay careful attention to what they have to say, take notes in your journals, and be inquisitive.

3. Individual Meetings: Everyone will meet with me individually during the trip to discuss your experiences and observations. I will ask you to read a few passages from your field journal.

4. Attendance and Participation: Unless you are sick, no absences are allowed. “To attend” means to be present and engaged whether in class or on fieldtrips and excursions. That is, active participation.

5. Assessment: Your final grade will be based on the quality of your participation in seminars and on fieldtrips, your field journal, and your writing assignments. There will also be an open-notebook final exam.

Learning Outcomes

1. You will learn about Southeast Alaska’s unique natural environment and how its human populations (Tlingit and non-Native) have historically interacted with that environment.
2. You will learn about subsistence practices and their importance to residents of this small, island Alaskan town.
3. You will examine how resource use and environmental issues enter the public arena for consideration and debate.
4. You will learn about the role and impact of cruise-ship tourism.
5. You will think critically about the range of practical, social, political, and ethical issues that shape how a population relates to and handles (e.g., exploits, protects) its natural resources.

Class Room/Fieldtrip Etiquette

- Remember that while we are in Sitka, you are a representative of USF – respectful and attentive behavior is expected at all times -- inside and outside of class and on fieldtrips.
- All electronic devices including cell phones, laptops (if you brought one) should be turned off at all times during class/workshops/fieldtrips.
- This course is an immersion course. The excursions, tours, walks/hikes, workshops, camping trip have all been carefully planned and are **all** part of the course, so you should not be texting or checking your social media accounts during them.
- Even though we are off-campus, University policies apply. Here are some possible issues:
 - 1) Being noisy and coming in late. We must respect dorm rules. No one outside of our group is allowed in the dorm rooms.
 - 2) If you are legally old enough to drink (21+), please drink responsibly and know your limits.
 - 3) Your safety is very important! When going out at night, make sure you are with other students and act responsibly. If you leave the campus with several other students, make sure that all of you get back to campus together. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Pay attention to other people and wildlife (bears may be in the area).

Daily Schedule

Except during the camping trip, on most days there is a morning session followed by lunch and then an afternoon session. We will also have 5 evening sessions. In general, the mornings are devoted to field trips, the afternoons to seminars, and the evenings to environmental films and Q&A with the filmmakers.

All meals – breakfasts, lunches, and dinners have been paid for by the program. Please try not to miss your meals.

July 22: Arrival and check in.

July 23: History and Culture

9 - Orientation

10 – 12: Sitka Walking Tour with Sitka Science Center director Lisa Busch

2-4 PM Sheldon Jackson Museum; introduction to Tlingit culture with curator Jackie Fernandez Hamburg. Field exercise in the museum.

7-9 PM Sitka conservation. Speaker ecologist Bethany Goodrich of the Sitka Conservation Society. She is a USF alum.

July 24: National Parks, Tlingit Culture

9:15 AM-noon – Sitka National Park, chief ranger Jessica Lange

2:00-4:30 PM: Language, Storytelling, Nature in Tlingit Culture with Chuck Miller

7 PM-9 PM: environmental filmmaker Ellen Frankenstein, Q&A and film: “Eating Alaska”

July 25: Fisheries and the Marine environment

9 – Noon: Aquaculture – Hatcheries and more with Bill Coltharp and Brian LeBlanc

1 – 3:30: Walk the Harbor- commercial fisheries and fisheries management with Dan Gray, ADF&G (walk to SSS) -

7 PM-9 PM – films; environmental filmmaker Liz McKenzie

July 26: Fisheries and Tourism

9- noon: Sitka seafood processing plant tour

Afternoon: Sitka scavenger hunt

7-9 PM the Sitka Performing Arts Center

July 27: Tongass National Forest; Tlingit Culture

All day: Harbor Mountain Hike with Debbie Miller and Richard Nelson

July 28: Subsistence Hunting Fishing, and Gathering

10-12 Sharon Gmelch - Sitka subsistence

Afternoon: Indian River Hike and ethnobotany

7-9 Film and cross-cultural fisheries and subsistence – Alaska and Newfoundland

July 29: Sitka Politics and Environment

10-12 former city manager Mark Gorman

Lunch

Afternoon: independent research / cruise tourism

7-9 film “14 miles” and Q&A with filmmaker Ellen Frankenstein

July 31: Native Arts

8:30-noon Sitka Fine Arts Camp Workshop

Lunch

Afternoon: free

7-9 pm in the Odess Theater -- Uncommon Music Festival Poetry & Performance with UMF Musicians

August 1: The Intertidal Zone; Subsistence

All day Boat trip to Kruzoff Island. Intertidal Survey with the Sitka Conservation Society

7-9 p.m. Alaska National Wildlife Refuge and life in arctic Alaska

August 2-4:

Camping at Stargavvin. Anthropologist and environmental activists Richard Nelson and Debbie Miller will be co-leading our field activities, fishing and hikes on this trip.
Hike, sketch, kayak, and salmon fishing

August 5: Wildlife Rehabilitation

Sitka raptor rescue center tour

Mt. Verstovia hike, field sketching exercise him

August 6: Exam

3 PM final exam

6 pm farewell dinner

August 7: Departure for home

*the schedule for field trips, class meetings, guest speakers, and evening documentary films will be adjusted for weather (e.g., we may reschedule a talk on a bright, sunny day to hike Harbor Mountain or Indian River trail).