



2023 May Term Course Descriptions

High School May Terms

Water in the West (9/10th Grade)

In this regional course we will explore the history and fate of water in the American West by examining how this arid region manages one of its most precious resources. The essential question that we will be diving into is, “How can we create a sustainable and equitable relationship with water?” The course includes a 100 mile, multi-day river trip down the Green River in Utah, where we will travel in canoes and study the waterways that constitute some of the West’s iconic river corridors. This course will also support student skills associated with reading, writing and drawing. Additionally, we will visit dams, meet with experts, and learn different perspectives when it comes to where we go from here in terms of managing and preserving water in the American West.

Finding Place: A study of Kino Bay (9/10th Grade)

An address, map, or geographic coordinate can determine our location, but a place is driven by the surrounding ecologies, geographies, and shared histories. In this course we will explore what it means to live in and belong to a landscape. We will travel to Kino Bay, Mexico to dive deep into a small community; learning about its history, culture, geology, and ecology. On our drive south, we will explore the interactions between local geomorphology and ecology as we drive through drastically different landscapes and climates. In Mexico, we will be staying on Prescott College’s Kino Bay campus, learning from their teachers and local experts. We will spend two nights camping on Isla Tiburon. There we will talk with Comaac elders and go snorkeling to learn about the marine ecosystem. We will meet with members of the local community, and learn about the history of Kino Bay. We will monitor sea turtles and birds, explore the intertidal zone, and hike through the desert ecosystem. Throughout it all, we will explore what it means to travel, how to get along in a small community, and how seeing a new place teaches us the most about ourselves and our own place.

Ancient Civilizations and Modern Development in Peru (9-12th Grade)

During the Peru May Term course, *Ancient Civilization and Modern Development in Peru*, we will explore two essential questions, “What are the effects of colonization of the Inca Empire that are experienced today by diverse communities in Peru?” and “How do those communities define what development should look like for them in the future?” Peru provides a unique lens into the relationship between ancient cultures and modern advances, contrasting the historical legacy of the Inca and the rise of 19th and 20th century economic development. The course includes an intensive cultural immersion trip to the region surrounding Cusco and various Quechua communities in the Sacred

Valley of Peru. Students will live, interact, and volunteer with various local families, spending a few days with a high school class, harvesting fava beans, corn and potatoes, and learning about medicinal plants. Additionally, they will spend several days exploring main archeological sites while learning about Incan history, culture, and Spanish colonization. Through the exploration of Peru's Inca ruins, Quechua communities, and bustling cities, we will discover the effects of development on cultures, ecosystems, and people. Through personal reflection, we will explore our own assumptions about South American history and culture, and then revisit these assumptions through our field experiences in-country.

Land of Ice and Fire: Field Science in Iceland (11/12th Grade)

It may be called Iceland, but it's full of hot rocks. And there's ice too. Iceland, on a geologic time scale, is the youngest country and is an excellent example of a land living on the edge, constantly changing and yet simultaneously holding strong to its roots. It's the perfect setting for students to challenge their skills as academics and travelers. Throughout our course we will be exploring our essential question: How does life adapt to harsh environments to colonize new land? We will explore this through our guiding questions: How do organisms colonize and adapt to harsh environments? Where does the energy come from to sustain an ecosystem on a subarctic island? How have humans influenced the ecosystems of Iceland? How are geological forces still influencing the ecosystems of Iceland? Through this we will be learning about the history, culture, and interdisciplinary scientific significance (geology, biology, chemistry, geography) that Iceland has to offer.

Development and Community Empowerment in Kenya (11/12th Grade)

The *Development and Community Empowerment in Kenya* May Term course is designed to explore the power of communities to transform and shape their own futures in an environment where the socio-political and economic dynamics can make it difficult to tackle issues of poverty. What are the responsibilities of wealthy nations to support the development of impoverished nations? What are our responsibilities as global citizens to support communities that are facing issues of poverty? What development models are most effective in confronting issues of poverty? The course will start with a study of the historical context of current issues in Kenya and what development opportunities communities and the nation have to confront issues of poverty. In addition to preparing for the trip itself, prior to leaving for Kenya we will raise funds to support a local service learning project. During our time in Kenya, we will be living in the town of Kijabe, about an hour and a half north of Nairobi. In partnership with the non-profit organization *Empowering Communities Globally*, we will be working alongside local Kenyan high school students on a development project defined by the local community. Students will experience cultural immersion while seeing what it takes for a local community to come together to confront their own issues of poverty. Since most people we will be with speak English, including students, this should be a wonderful and rare opportunity for students to make close connections and friendships with local people.

Middle School May Terms

Preservation: History (6/7th Grade)

What does the past teach us about ourselves? What responsibility do we have to preserve the past? This May Term course will explore how to identify and preserve historically and culturally significant places, structures, and objects. From both scientific and historical lenses, students will take a close look at how historians and archaeologists work. Students will start with a look at our own local history with an eye toward the indigenous groups who lived along the Front Range and the more recent history of westward expansion. The course will include a journey to the Four Corners area for a week of exploring the land, interacting with experts, and meeting the people who call the region home today. Throughout the course, students will also grapple with ethical issues surrounding archaeology and the preservation of the past. This class will dovetail with the *Preservation: Public Lands* course where students will broaden their scope and understanding of preservation work.

Preservation: Public Lands (6/7th Grade)

In this course, we will be learning about the various types of public land management in the United States, and how local, state, and the federal government seeks to balance preservation, recreation, development, and conservation. Students will learn the history of how the lands have become protected and preserved and what the government and various groups do to continue to preserve the land. Students will also work on building outdoor leadership skills. Throughout this course, students will grapple with the question, "How and why do governments maintain lands for public use?" Students will answer this question based on field experiences on our public lands. The class will travel to various BLM lands, State Parks, National Parks, and U.S. Forest Service land, with a focus on the Four Corners region of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona.

8th Grade Passages:

A tradition that goes back to the founding of Watershed School, 8th graders each year take part in a self-reflective journey and symbolic passage from middle school to high school and from childhood to adolescence. The purpose of our Rites of Passage program is to contemplate privilege by engaging with people of different cultures, situations, and socio-economic statuses. From these experiences, students work to develop personal awareness of one's own privilege and growth, and identify attributes they would like to possess and the steps needed to grow into this person. The course will include a 10-day trip to provide a myriad of opportunities for reflection and learning. Other course components include an overnight solo, hiking, and body and mind mindfulness training. The course will culminate in a passage ceremony with parents in attendance and participating.