

Whitewater River Guide School

WLD 140C

Wilderness Education

Course Syllabus & Description

Spring Quarter 2024

Instructor: Aaron Cavagnolo

Email: cavagnolo@hotmail.com

Cell phone: 650-387-0696

[Wilderness Education Website](#)

Any students needing accommodations should inform the instructor. Students with disabilities who may need accommodations for this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) early in the quarter so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented as soon as possible. Students may contact the DRC by visiting the Center (located in room A205) or by phoning 541-4660, ext. 249 (voice) or 542-1870 (TTY for deaf students). All information will remain confidential.

*One day's exposure to mountains is better than cartloads of books.
John Muir*

Date	Topics & Assignments
3/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome/Introductions • Create class expectations/format • Introduce basic personal gear (lifejacket, helmet, knife, whistle, proper footwear, cold water/cold weather gear) • Answer questions about gear and plan for the week • Introduce three knots and river log
3/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour warehouse • Load vehicles and head to the South Fork American River Lotus to Greenwood Creek • Basic Equipment Seminar (raft: design, care, maintenance; frames; oars and paddles, basic rigging) • Introduce Safety talk/paddle talk • On-river: paddle boats, practice paddle and boat weighting techniques (forward, back paddle, right and left turns, over right and left, get down, back on the job, stop), guide paddle techniques (draw, sweep, pry) and basic commands; basic river reading skills(shoot the V/tongue, cut the C) • lunch: food handling/leave no trace discussion • swimming: a rapid; underneath the raft, getting back in the raft • Set up camp and have cook crews • Evening lecture: student interpretive talk, learn a new knot, plan for the next day given by student lead guide for the next day
3/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run South Fork American River Lotus to Salmon Falls • Students give safety/paddle talks • Discussion to review reading on river surface features and river reading (color and sound, eddies and eddy fences, pillows, whirlpools and boils, waves(standing, breaking, diagonal, rooster tail, haystacks, stoppers), holes (frowning, smiling, horizontal, diagonal, pour over, keeper), horizon line, river left/right) • On-river: paddle boats, refine boat control, focus on ferrying (upstream/downstream), catching and leaving eddies • lunch: student interpretive talk, boat order/spacing discussion • swimming: catching eddies, flipping rafts in calm water • Evening lecture: student interpretive talk, learn a new knot, plan for the next day given by student lead guide for the next day

3/25

- Run South Fork American River Lotus to Salmon Falls
- Students give safety/paddle talks
- Discussion to review river etiquette
- On-river: paddle boats, continue refining boat control, focus on using the river to move the raft (eddy turns, angle to waves, backing off waves)
- lunch: student interpretive talk, repair kit/gear maintenance discussion
- swimming: flipping rafts in current, rescuing swimmers with a raft
- Evening lecture: student interpretive talk, learn a new knot, plan for the next day given by student lead guide for the next day

3/26

- Run the South Fork American River Chili Bar to Camp Lotus
- Students give safety/paddle talks
- Activity: Rigging oar/paddle combination rafts
- On-river: oar/paddle combo rafts, practice rowing techniques (double oar turns/pivots, oar shipping, pushing, pulling, portage / bicycling, hysiding with oars, watching your downstream oar)
- lunch: student interpretive talk, first aid kit/sat phone/evacuation discussion
- swimming: throw bags, rescuing swimmers with a raft
- Evening lecture: student interpretive talk, learn a new knot, plan for the next day given by student lead guide for the next day

3/27

- Running the North Fork American River
- Students give safety/paddle talks
- Discussion: strategies for safe river running (scouting rapids, hazards, looking ahead/what's around the bend, knowing river level and class)
- On-river: Running harder rapids.
- lunch: student interpretive talk, discussion of wraps/perches
- swimming: rapid swim
- Evening lecture: student interpretive talk, professional guide ethics discussion, plan for the next day given by student lead guide for the next day

3/28

- South Fork American River day 1 of 2 (conditions permitting)
- Students give safety/paddle talks
- Activity: Rigging gear rafts
- On-river: gear rafts, oar paddle combo, cataraft. Refine rowing techniques.
- On-river: gear rafts, oar paddle combo, cataraft. Refine rowing techniques. Running harder rapids.
- lunch: student interpretive talk, leading hikes
- swimming: picking up swimmers, we will see what happens!
- Setting up a river camp (tying off boats, organizing a fire line, setting up tarps, filtering water, organizing the kitchen, port-a-potty)
- Evening lecture: student interpretive talk, scenarios, plan for the next day given by student lead guide for the next day

3/29

- South Fork American River day 2
- Students give safety/paddle talks
- Activity: Rigging gear rafts
- On-river: gear rafts, oar paddle combo. Refine rowing techniques, oar/paddle captaining techniques.
- lunch: student interpretive talk, wrap kit introduced
- swimming: picking up swimmers, we will see what happens!
- Activity: cleaning after a trip (coolers, groover, wetsuits, fixing gear, etc.)
- Evening lecture: student interpretive talk, plan for the next day given by student lead guide for the next day, discussion what kind of guide to you want to be/what opportunities are out there

3/30

- South Fork of the American River
- Students give safety/paddle talks
- Discussion: strategies for safe river running (scouting rapids, hazards, looking ahead/what's around the bend, knowing river level and class)
- On-river: oar paddle combo, paddle boats. Refine guiding techniques.
- lunch: student interpretive talk,
- swimming: picking up swimmers, we will see what happens!
- Activity: cleaning after a trip
- Closing

Please note that the schedule of class topics and assignments are liable to change due to river flows, ability levels, weather and a myriad of influences. We expect to address all the topics, the order may change.

WLD 140C – Whitewater Rafting Guide School

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Objectives of Course

This course is designed to prepare students to be commercial rivers guides. Students will learn the skills to run single and multi-day raft trips in oar and paddle rafts on class III rivers. Topics students should understand by the end of the course include: safe river travel, hydrology, geomorphology, reading water, paddle/rowing skills, guide skills, river stewardship, group organization, advanced boat maneuvers, guide commands, giving a safety talk, loading and rigging boats, equipment maintenance and repair, camp etiquette and procedures, and safety and rescue techniques.

Student Outcomes

1. Gain confidence in their decision making ability.
2. Confidently lead a raft down a class III river.
3. Know how to work as part of a team to run a river safely.

Criteria for Evaluation

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes. Please notify me in advance if you will be absent. Unexcused absences will result in a lowered grade. Credit for the class is jeopardized after three or more unexcused absences.

Class Participation: Due to the experiential nature of this class, students are asked to **experience** the course material be it discussions, problem solving, physical activities and exchange of feedback. Sensitivity and attentiveness toward each group member's experience as well as the group's progress as a whole will be the responsibility of each group member.

Assignments:

- **Journal/river log** on your personal feelings of each day as well as basic logistical facts of the day (river, flow, craft, weather, incidents)
- **Interpretive Presentation** should be around 5 to 10 minutes and keep the group entertained.
- Giving **Safety/paddle talks**
- **Quiz**
- **Rigging Rafts**

Late Work Policy:

Late work will not be accepted.

Dropping the Class:

Students are responsible for dropping the class by the appropriate dates given in the Schedule of Classes. See Admissions & Records for clarification.