

SOC 934: Our National Parks

Independent Study Online Course Syllabus

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Number of Graduate Semester Units: 3 units
Target Audience: K – 12th grade teachers
Course Access: <https://connect.fresno.edu>

Course Description

Step into a journey through the awe-inspiring world of America's National Parks! Often called "America's best idea," these remarkable places are more than just beautiful landscapes—they are living classrooms filled with history, geology, and stories that define our nation's heritage. This course is designed with educators in mind, offering an engaging exploration of the National Park Service's history, preservation efforts, and cultural significance. Through captivating texts, immersive videos, and a wealth of online resources, you'll uncover the breathtaking wonders of the parks and the powerful narratives that make them treasures of our nation.

As you complete this course, you'll develop integrated lessons for your students aligned to state, district, or national standards, including the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, and the Next Generation Science Standards. By the end of this course, you'll have a toolbox of resources and lessons to inspire your students and foster a deeper appreciation for the beauty and importance of America's National Parks.

Note: Required book must be acquired separately.

Required Texts and Course Materials

For this course, you have two great options for selecting your course text. *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* by Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan is the companion book to the resource exploration and videos you'll encounter in Module 4. It provides a richly illustrated narrative on the origins and evolution of the national park system, bringing its history and cultural significance to life. Alternatively, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks* by Richard West Sellars offers a deep dive into the challenges and policy shifts in managing these treasured landscapes. Best of all, Sellars' book is available for free online. Both texts provide valuable insights, so you can **choose the one** that best fits your interests and learning style!

Book Option 1: Burns, K., & Duncan, D. (2009). *The national parks: America's best idea*. Alfred A. Knopf. ISBN: 978-0307268969. <https://www.amazon.com/National-Parks-Americas-Best-Idea/dp/0307268969>

Book Option 2: Sellers, R. W. (1999). *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*. Yale University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0300075786. <http://www.amazon.com/Preserving-Nature-National-Parks-History/dp/0300075782>. This book is also available for free online: <http://www.georgewright.org/sellers.pdf>

Canvas: This course will be delivered totally online. Canvas is a web-based learning management system (LMS) that provides students access to online resources, documents, videos, assignments, quizzes, forums, etc. Canvas is easy to learn and has a user-friendly interface.

Online Resources: Relevant online resources that support the course content and encourage further investigation will be available throughout the course assignments. Active hyperlinks are utilized throughout the course and will link to the appropriate information when clicked. These include videos, podcasts, worksheets, online activities, journal articles and other resources.

Course Dates

Self-paced; students may enroll at any time and take up to one year, from the date of registration, to complete assignments. Students may complete assignments in no less than three weeks for a 3-unit course (one week per unit).

National Standards Addressed in This Course

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

[*The National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment*](#), were revised in 2010 and developed by a Task Force of the National Council for the Social Studies. The revised standards, like the earlier social studies standards published in 1994, continue to be structured around the ten themes of social studies.

1. Culture
2. Time, Continuity, and Change
3. People, Places and Environments
4. Individual Development and Identity
5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
6. Power, Authority and Governance
7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
8. Science, Technology, and Society
9. Global Connections
10. Civic Ideals and Practices

Standards within each one of the thematic strands may be addressed in the content of this course.

Next Generation Science Standards Framework for K-12 Science Education Connection

While the focus of this course aligns with the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, the study of the National Parks connects consistently with Next Generation Science Standards particularly within the Disciplinary Core Idea of [Life Sciences \(LS\)](#).

As you develop standards-based experiences for your students through the assignments in the course, you may want to include how the NGSS are addressed.

Common Core Standards (www.corestandards.org)

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The goal of this initiative is to develop a common core of state standards in English-language arts and math in grades K-12. The point of this effort is simple: improving teaching and learning to ensure that high school graduates in every part of the nation have the knowledge and skills they need for college or a career. The Common Core Standards are both research and evidence-based as well as internationally benchmarked. These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school fully prepared for college and careers.

While math and English language arts teachers are directly charged with Common Core implementation, teachers in other content areas are also being called to implement the Common Core State Standards.

Continuing Education Student Learning Outcomes (CE-SLO)

CE-SLO 1	Demonstrate proficient written communication by articulating a clear focus, synthesizing arguments, and utilizing standard formats in order to inform and persuade others, and present information applicable to targeted use.
CE-SLO 2	Demonstrate comprehension of content-specific knowledge and the ability to apply it in theoretical, personal, professional, or societal contexts.
CE-SLO 3	Reflect on their personal and professional growth and provide evidence of how such reflection is utilized to manage personal and professional improvement.
CE-SLO 4	Apply critical thinking competencies by generating probing questions, recognizing underlying assumptions, interpreting and evaluating relevant information, and applying their understandings to the professional setting.
CE-SLO 5	Reflect on values that inspire high standards of professional and ethical behavior as they pursue excellence in applying new learning to their chosen field.
CE-SLO 6	Identify information needed in order to fully understand a topic or task, organize that information, identify the best sources of information for a given enquiry, locate and critically evaluate sources, and accurately and effectively share that information.

Course Student Learning Outcomes (C-SLO)

Student Learning Outcomes for This Course By the end of this course student will be able to:	National Standards Addressed*	CE-SLO Addressed**
1. Develop a chronological list of historic events that have significantly affected the development of the National Park Service.	(2) Time, Continuity and Change	1,2,4
2. Explain the natural and historic preservation role of national parks in the development of the United States.	(6) Power, Authority, and Governance (10) Civic Ideals and Practices	1,2,4
3. Identify the major issues facing the National Park Service.	(6) Power, Authority, and Governance	1,2,4

	(5) Individuals, Groups, and Institutions	
4. Identify the outdoor recreation and education opportunities provided by the National Park Service.	(3) People, Places, and Environments	4,6
5. Identify and analyze grade-level appropriate resources related to the National Park System.	Multiple Themes	4,6
6. Synthesizing what you have learned through the content of the course, apply grade level, state or district history learning standards to develop integrated lesson plans and activities with other subjects including geography, math and the creative arts.	Multiple Themes	1,2,4,6
7. Assess and reflect upon teaching practices and the classroom environment in relation to the course content by responding to focus questions.	Multiple Themes	3

* Please refer to the section on **National Standards Addressed in This Course**

** Please refer to the section on **Continuing Education Program Student Learning Outcomes**

Topics, Assignments, and Activities

Module Title	Module Assignments and Activities	Points Possible
Home Page	- Welcome Video - Course Syllabus - Policies and Procedures - Introduce Yourself Forum	
Module 1: Getting Started	1.1 Discussion: Introductions - Learner Profile Survey	10
Module 2: Standards-Based Instruction	2.1 Discussion: Standards-Based Instruction 2.2 Assignment: Applying Standards-Based Instruction to the National Parks	10 50
Module 3: The Story of America's National Parks	- Read Selected Text 3.1 Assignment: The Story of America's National Parks Timeline 3.2 Discussion: The Story of America's National Parks	50 10
Module 4: America's Best Idea	4.1 Assignment: America's Best Idea Video Reflection 4.2 Discussion: America's Best Idea Resources	50 10
Module 5: National Parks Virtual Field Trips	5.1 Assignment: National Parks Virtual Field Trip 5.2 Discussion: National Parks Virtual Field Trip Reflection	50 10

Module 6: Assessing Knowledge of the National Parks	6.1 Assignment: The National Parks Assessment 6.2 Discussion: The National Parks Assessment	50 10
Module 7: The National Parks Bibliography	7.1 Assignment: Our National Parks Annotated Bibliography 7.2 Discussion: Sharing National Parks Resources	50 10
Module 8: Integrated Unit	8.1 Assignment: Integrated Unit 8.2 Discussion: Sharing Lesson Plans	100 10
Module 9: Final Course Reflection	9.1 Discussion: Final Course Reflection	10
Course Wrap-up – Grading and Evaluation	- Final Reflection Forum - Course Evaluation - Course Completion Checklist - Grade Request / Transcript Request	
TOTAL POINTS		490 points

Grading Policies, Rubrics, and Requirements for Assignments

Grading Policies

- Assignments will be graded per criteria presented in the course rubrics.
- A = 90-100% and B = 80-89%, (anything below 80% will not receive credit.)
- The discernment between an A or a B letter grade is at the discretion of the instructor based on the quality of work submitted (see course rubrics).
- Coursework falling below a B grade will be returned with further instructions.
- All assignments must be completed to receive a grade and are expected to reflect the quality that teacher-training institutions require of professional educators. If completed assignments do not meet this standard, students will be notified with further instructions from the instructor.

Grading Rubrics

Grade	Percent	Description	Rubric
A	90-100%	Excellent	Meets all course / assignment requirements with significant evidence of subject mastery and demonstration of excellent graduate level professional development scholarship.
B	80-89%	Very Good	Adequately meets criteria for all course/assignment requirements - demonstrates subject competency with very good graduate level professional development scholarship.
NC	Below 80%	Unacceptable	Does not meet the minimum criteria for all course/assignment requirements and demonstrated little, if any, evidence of acceptable graduate level professional development scholarship.

Writing Requirements

- **Superior:** Writing is clear, succinct, and reflects graduate level expectations. Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task. Maintains a consistent point of view and organizational structure. Includes relevant facts, details, and explanations.

- **Standard:** Writing is acceptable with very few mistakes in grammar and spelling. Addresses most parts of the writing task. Maintains a mostly consistent point of view and organizational structure. Includes mostly relevant facts, details, and explanations.
- **Sub-standard:** Writing contains noticeable mistakes in grammar and spelling. Does not address all parts of the writing task. Lacks a consistent point of view and organizational structure. May include marginally relevant facts, details, and explanations.

Lesson Plan Requirements

- **Superior:** Instructional goals and objectives clearly stated. Instructional strategies appropriate for learning outcome(s). Method for assessing student learning and evaluating instruction is clearly delineated and authentic. All materials necessary for student and teacher to complete lesson clearly listed.
- **Standard:** Instructional goals and objectives are stated but are not easy to understand. Some instructional strategies are appropriate for learning outcome(s). Method for assessing student learning and evaluating instruction is present. Most materials necessary for student and teacher to complete lesson are listed.
- **Sub-standard:** Instructional goals and objectives are not stated. Learners cannot tell what is expected of them. Instructional strategies are missing or strategies used are inappropriate. Method for assessing student learning and evaluating instruction is missing. Materials necessary for student and teacher to complete lesson are missing.

Instructor/Student Contact Information

Throughout the course participants will be communicating with the instructor and their classmates on a regular basis using asynchronous discussion forums. Students are provided with instructor contact information in the event they want to make email or phone contact. In addition, students are encouraged to email or phone the instructor at any time. Students will also receive feedback on the required assignments as they are submitted.

Forums

Participation is an important expectation of this course and all online courses. Online discussions promote reflection and analysis while allowing students to appreciate and evaluate positions that others express. While students may not be engaging with the same students throughout this course, they will be expected to offer comments, questions, and replies to the discussion question whenever possible. The faculty role in the discussion forum is that of an observer and facilitator.

Coursework Hours

Based on the Carnegie Unit standard, a unit of graduate credit measures academic credit based on the number of hours the student is engaged in learning. This includes all time spent on the course: reading the textbook, watching videos, listening to audio lessons, researching topics, writing papers, creating projects, developing lesson plans, posting to discussion boards, etc. Coursework offered for FPU Continuing Education graduate credit adheres to 45 hours per semester unit for the 900-level courses. Therefore, a student will spend approximately 135 hours on a typical 3-unit course.

Services for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are eligible for reasonable accommodations in their academic work in all classes. In order to receive assistance, the student with a disability must provide the Academic Support Center with documentation, which describes the specific disability. The documentation must be from a qualified professional in the area of the disability (i.e. psychologist, physician or educational diagnostician). Once documentation is on file, arrangements for reasonable accommodations can be made. For more information and for downloadable forms, please go to <https://www.fresno.edu/departments/disability-access-education>.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

All people participating in the educational process at Fresno Pacific University are expected to pursue honesty and integrity in all aspects of their academic work. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be handled per the procedures set forth in the Fresno Pacific University Catalogue and Handbook - <https://handbook.fresno.edu/graduate/academic-policies>

Technology Requirements

To successfully complete the course requirements, course participants will need Internet access, can send and receive email, know how to manage simple files in a word processing program, and have a basic understanding of the Internet. Please remember that the instructor is not able to offer technical support. If you need technical support, please contact your Internet Service Provider.

Getting Help with Canvas: If you need help with Canvas, please contact the FPU Help Desk by phone: (559) 453-3410 or email: helpdesk@fresno.edu. Help is available Mon-Fri 8:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Final Course Grade and Transcripts

When all work for the course has been completed, students will need to request their final grade by accessing the form at ce.fresno.edu/grade-request. Once the instructor receives the request and posts their final grade, students will receive an email communication from the University. Please allow at least two weeks for the final grade to be posted before you order your transcripts online.

University Policies and Procedures

Students are responsible for becoming familiar with the information presented in the Academic Catalog and for knowing and observing all policies and procedures related to their participation in the university community. A summary of university policies may be found on the university website at <https://www.fresno.edu/departments/registrar-office/academic-catalogs>.

Fresno Pacific University Student Learning Outcomes (FPU-SLO)

FPU-SLO 1	Oral Communication: Students will <i>exhibit</i> clear, engaging, and confident oral communication – in both individual and group settings – and will critically <i>evaluate</i> content and delivery components.
FPU-SLO 2	Written Communication: Students will <i>demonstrate</i> proficient written

	communication by <i>articulating</i> a clear focus, <i>synthesizing</i> arguments, and utilizing standard formats in order to <i>inform</i> and <i>persuade</i> others.
FPU-SLO 3	Content Knowledge: Students will <i>demonstrate</i> comprehension of content-specific knowledge and the ability to apply it in theoretical, personal, professional, or societal contexts.
FPU-SLO 4	Reflection: Students will <i>reflect</i> on their personal and professional growth and <i>provide evidence</i> of how such reflection is utilized to manage personal and vocational improvement.
FPU-SLO 5	Critical Thinking: Students will <i>apply</i> critical thinking competencies by <i>generating</i> probing questions, <i>recognizing</i> underlying assumptions, <i>interpreting</i> and <i>evaluating</i> relevant information, and <i>applying</i> their understandings to new situations.
FPU-SLO 6	Moral Reasoning: Students will <i>identify</i> and <i>apply</i> moral reasoning and ethical decision-making skills, and <i>articulate</i> the norms and principles underlying a Christian worldview.
FPU-SLO 7	Service: Students will <i>demonstrate</i> service and reconciliation as a way of leadership.
FPU-SLO 8	Cultural and Global Perspective: Students will <i>identify</i> personal, cultural, and global perspectives and will employ these perspectives to <i>evaluate</i> complex systems.
FPU-SLO 9	Quantitative Reasoning: Students will accurately <i>compute</i> calculations and symbolic operations and <i>explain</i> their use in a field of study.
FPU-SLO 10	Information Literacy: Students will <i>identify</i> information needed in order to fully understand a topic or task, <i>explain</i> how that information is organized, <i>identify</i> the best sources of information for a given enquiry, <i>locate</i> and critically <i>evaluate</i> sources, and accurately and effectively <i>share</i> that information.