

Pilgrimage on the Appalachian Trail

RSTD 338

Summer, May 16-31, 2021

The course requirements are to conduct an ethnography and keep a journal while hiking for two weeks. Upon returning from the hike each student will write a paper related to the research done on the trail. The paper is due in the first week of August.

Itinerary

May 15, Sunday:

We will leave CNU at 5:30am on Sunday, May 15, meeting in parking lot A next to the parking garage, behind the Ferguson Center. Be there at 5:30. We will drive to Beauty Spot, near Erwin, Tennessee. We will spend the first night at Beauty Spot.

May 16, Monday:

We start hiking North on the Trail the morning of the 16th. The AT is a wilderness trail and there are very few places where cell phones work. If you bring a MP3 player, IPOd, or other music-playing device, you will have to leave it in the van during the hike. You may have your cell phone for emergencies not for music. Our first hike is about 10 miles. We will camp in an old apple orchard and discuss our first interaction with the wilderness.

May 17, Tuesday:

We hike north, about 10 miles to Ash Gap. The rigors of the hike will be the focus of this day's discussion.

May 18, Wednesday:

We hike north, about 10 miles to Bradley Gap after traversing the Roan Highlands. About 4 miles into the hike we will resupply at the van parked at Carvers Gap.

May 19, Thursday:

We will hike north, about 8 miles to Mountain Harbor Hostel. We will be discussing liminality and communitas in the evening at the shelter. Mountain Harbor has a food truck and you may purchase hot food there. We will gather up all the vans and drive to Dennis Cove.

May 20, Friday:

We will day hike from the camping to Laurel Falls, the largest volume falls on the AT. Depending on weather, we may day hike from the falls to a trail head parking near Hampton, TN. Weather permitting we will have a swim in Watauga Lake on the AT near the trail head parking. We will then go to a farm field on the AT near Shady Valley and Camp.

May 21, Saturday:

We will rise early in order to drive to the Channels Natural Area and secure parking for a day hike up to the Channels. We will spend the day up there. We will then go to Damascus, resupply and find camping along the AT just outside of Damascus. We will also adjust the van parking.

May 22, Sunday:

Hike from Damascus Camping to Saunders Shelter, about 10 miles, less if we camp closer to the shelter.

May 23, Monday:

The second day out of Damascus we may camp at Lost Mt. Shelter. We will only walk about 6 miles this day. We will take a long break on Laurel Creek and intersect with the Virginia Creeper Trail. We will continue our evening discussions.

May 24, Tuesday:

The third day out of Damascus we camp on Whitetop Mountain, a hike of only 5 miles, but an elevation gain of more than 2000 feet. We will now be over 5000 feet above sea level. We will be exposed to a unique and fierce weather pattern at this altitude. We will focus out discussion on the wilderness and its effect thus far.

May 25, Wednesday:

We walk 8 miles, descending to Elk Garden and then ascending to Mount Rogers, Virginia's highest mountain. We are now in a fir and spruce forest. We spend several days near Thomas Knob Shelter at Mount Rogers, which is near Grayson Highlands State Park. There is a meadow between Thomas Knob Shelter and Rhododendron Gap where we will encounter a herd of wild ponies. From here we will do day hikes and spend some time reflecting on the journey. Each morning and evening we will have discussions. Finally, we will exit the trail at Grayson Highlands State Park on May 31, where we will be able to shower before the ride home. Showers at the park will cost \$5, and they do feel great for the ride home.

May 26-29, Thursday-Sunday:

Camp in the Grayson Highlands

May 30, Monday:

Hike 2 miles to the parking and drive home.

