

HNRS 308
The Art & Science of Wilderness Survival
University of Montevallo
Fall 2020
Dr. John R. Bawden

Credit: 1 hour

Class Time/Place: Monday 12-12:50, UMOM 103

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Office Hours: MW 9-12, 1-3, UM on Main 305

Course Description: You find yourself lost in a snowy forest, tropical island, or broiling desert. What survival skills will you need as they relate to water, shelter, fire, food, navigation, and mental focus? This multidisciplinary course presents different perspectives on the topic of survival. Most classes will begin with a basic problem such as “making fire” or “getting clean water.” The course is meant to be fun. We will use the survival premise to explore the human condition and practice skills essential for surviving in the wilderness.

Required Text

Towell, Colin. *The Survival Handbook*

ISBN-13: 978-0744021813

Course Assessment: Participation (50%), Presentation (30%), Final Exam (20%)

Course Withdrawal Deadline: The last day for students to withdraw from a course and receive a grade of “W” is October 30.

Participation: Students are expected to discuss the assigned readings. Missing more than three unexcused classes will result in an “F” for the course.

Disclaimer: I reserve the right, after written announcement, to change course requirements or the method of assessment. Students must not pick a survival skill that requires expert knowledge (e.g. foraging for wild mushrooms, trapping animals, etc.)

Presentations: Students will learn about wilderness survival in the classroom and through hands on experience. For our end of the semester presentations, each student will select two survival skills (e.g. fire-making, shelter construction, water purification, spear fishing, celestial navigation, etc.) and speak to the class for approximately 5 minutes about their forays into the art and science of wilderness survival. You should be ready to answer the following questions:

- 1) Why did you pick the survival skills you did?
- 2) What happened and what did you learn?
- 3) What would you do differently if you had to repeat the experience?
- 4) Did an academic discipline or preexisting knowledge base inform your activity?

Final Exam: Students will develop a survival plan about a challenging survival situation with immediate and long-term goals based on the environment and the circumstances.

Distance Education Policy: Students who need to complete course requirements away from campus are responsible for submitting a short reflective paragraph about each week’s assigned readings. Presentations can be submitted online as a video or written statement. The final exam is online for everyone.

Course Schedule

Week 1 - August 24

Course introduction

Why imagine survival scenarios and learn survival skills?

Read: Towell, *The Survival Handbook*, 4-13

Week 2 – August 31

Assessing one's environment, finding and treating water

Read: Towell, *The Survival Handbook*, 26-39, 184-201

Week 3 – September 7

HOLIDAY

Week 4 – September 14

Fire, knots, cordage, and shelter

Towell, *The Survival Handbook*, 118-181

Week 5 – September 21

Foraging and hunting

Towell, *The Survival Handbook*, 202-229, 280-299

Week 6 – September 28

Weather, critters, and getting found

Towell, *The Survival Handbook*, 78-83, 236-243, 300-305

Week 7 – October 5

Natural navigation and first aid

Towell, *The Survival Handbook*, 64-94, 258-279

Week 8 – October 12

Survival in film

Watch: Excerpts from *Castaway*

Week 9 – October 19

Survival in literature

Read: Jack London, *To Build a Fire* (e-reserve)

Week 10 – October 26

How U.S. Army Rangers train for survival situations

Towell, *The Survival Handbook*, 50-51, 92-93, 128-129, 172-173, 214-215, 244-245

Guest: Dr. Jim Day

Week 11 – November 2

The psychology of group survival

Read: <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20150128-how-to-survive-a-disaster>

Guest: Dr. Betsy Richardson

Week 12 – November 9

Survival and sustainability at the global scale

Read: "Introduction," Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, pgs. 10-18

Guest: Dr. Susan Caplow

Week 13 – November 16

Student presentations

Week 14 – November 23

Student presentations

Week 15 – November 30

Final exam