

HNRS 308
The Art & Science of Wilderness Survival
University of Montevallo
Spring 2022
Dr. John R. Bawden

Credit: 1 hour

Class Time/Place: Mondays 11-11:50, UMOM 103

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

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 under emergency circumstances. Most classes begin with a basic problem such as making fire or getting clean water. We will use the survival premise to explore the human condition and practice the skills of bushcraft.

Required Text

Towell, Colin. *The Survival Handbook* (ISBN-13: 978-0744021813)

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

Thoreau Cabin Workshop: Gather at the Thoreau Cabin (University Lake) on for an afternoon of bushcraft. Date TBD.

Withdrawal Deadline: The last day for students to withdraw from a course and receive a grade of “W” is March 17.

Participation: Students are expected to discuss the assigned readings. 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).

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.

Course Schedule

Week 1 - January 10

Course introduction

Why imagine survival scenarios and learn survival skills?

Hunter-gatherers, our expert survivalist ancestors

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

Week 2 – January 17

HOLIDAY

Week 3 – January 24

Assessing one's environment, finding and treating water

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

Week 4 – January 31

Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape

Guest: Naval Commander Dick Ritz

Week 5 – February 7

Fire, knots, cordage, and shelter

Towell, *The Survival Handbook*, 118-181

Week 6 – February 14

The psychology of group survival

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

Read: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44791998>

Guest: Dr. Melissa Shepherd

Week 7 – February 21

Foraging and hunting

Guest: Dr. Deborah Lowry

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

Week 8 – February 28

Weather, critters, and getting found

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

Week 9 – March 7

Survival in film

Watch: Excerpts from *Castaway*

Week 10 – March 14

Natural navigation and first aid

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

Week 11 – March 21

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

SPRING BREAK

Week 12 – April 4

Survival in literature

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

Week 13 – April 11

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 14 – April 18

Student presentations

Week 15 – April 25

Student presentations