



2024 May Term Course Descriptions

High School May Term Courses

Guatemala: The Politics of Asylum Seekers and Spanish Language Immersion (9-12th)

(.5 Social Studies/ .5 Spanish Credits)

Why are people from Latin America seeking asylum, and what should and can the U.S. do to address the situation? This course will explore the modern history of Guatemala, including the recent Guatemalan Civil War and its impact on social issues and problems, politically, economically, and culturally, that still challenge citizens of the country today. This course will further explore U.S. Foreign Policy (historically and through a contemporary lens) in Latin America, human migration, and refugeeism relative to the Civil War and to contemporary U.S. politics. Additionally, this course will provide 50 hours of intensive, one-on-one, in-country language instruction and possible homestays with Guatemalan families.

Rock and Road (9-12th)

(1 Geology Credit)

In this course, students will explore and experience the diverse landscapes, environments, and solid earth features of the Colorado Plateau. While visiting locations bound by active tectonics and shaped by desert processes, students will develop and use rock climbing and field geology techniques to investigate a range of geologic processes. Students will be responsible for preparing reports on and synthesizing scientific literature on topics related to the sites visited and for presenting this information to their peers. They will keep a detailed field notebook over the course and will learn to make detailed and incisive qualitative observations and interpretations about geologic features from the field. This course includes technical rock climbing, hiking with a heavy pack and camping, and will require students to step out of their comfort zone on a regular basis.

Finding Place: A Study of Kino Bay (9-10th)

(.5 Science/ .5 Leadership Credits)

An address, map, or geographic coordinate can determine our location, but a place is driven by the surrounding ecologies, geographies, and shared histories. In this course, we will explore what it means to live in and belong to a landscape. We will travel to Kino Bay, Mexico to dive deep into a small community and learn about its history, culture, geology, and ecology. On our drive south, we will explore the interactions between local geomorphology and ecology as we travel through drastically different landscapes and climates. In Mexico, we will be staying on Prescott College's Kino Bay campus, learning from their teachers and local experts. We will spend two nights camping on Isla Tiburon. There we will talk with Comaac elders and go snorkeling to learn about the marine ecosystem. We will meet with members of the local community, and learn about the history of Kino Bay. We will monitor sea turtles and birds, explore the intertidal zone, and hike through the desert ecosystem. Throughout it all, we will explore what it means to travel, how to get along in a small community, and how seeing a new place teaches us about ourselves and our own place.

From Dynasties to Dragons: The Stories of Việt Nam (11/12th Grade)

(1 World History Credit)

The long, storied history of Việt Nam dates back nearly 5,000 years. Its rich, fertile landscape provides a home to Indigenous and migratory populations whose lives are deeply connected to its 2,000 miles of coastline, various rivers and deltas, steep mountain chains, and dense jungles throughout the country. In its quest for independence from colonial powers and constant thwarting of foreign invasions, Việt Nam has established itself as a country whose fighting spirit has lasted millennia. Not until the fall of Saigon in 1975 was it ever considered one country. While it has worked to build up that national identity over the past 50 years, its confluence of diverse populations and ideologies makes its unification a constant work in progress. In this study of history and culture, travel from North to South will take us on an arduous journey to deeply understand the narrative of Việt Nam from many perspectives. As a country always on the move, similarly, our travel through Việt Nam will provide insight into the landscape, its people, their history, and the many struggles that inform its modern-day identity. While Việt Nam continues to share its complex story on a global stage, the real question remains: *What story will you tell?*

Please be advised that this is a physically challenging trip due to the nature of the trip's movement, the varied terrain, and the geographical climate. Students interested in taking the Vietnam course will need to fill out [this application](#) in addition to selecting it on the May Term Selection Survey.

Land of Ice and Fire: Field Science in Iceland (11/12th Grade)

(1 Science Credit)

In this science-centered course, we will focus our attention and studies on adaptation and resilience. We will examine how flora, fauna, and people have strived to survive in a land of volcanoes, glaciers, and sub-arctic conditions. Students can expect to delve into a mix of ologies— geology, volcanology, glaciology, biology, anthropology— as a means to best understand Iceland. A lot of our travels will be along the southern coast where we will have access to geysers, geothermal vents, glacial lagoons, dormant volcanic craters, bird cliffs, black sand beaches, and more. We will interact with local biologists, historians, and scientists. Our group will have the opportunity to conduct field science during our stay at [Skálanes Research Center](#) on the fjords on the northeastern coast. Students will have the option to build on the work and data that Watershed students and alumni started in 2022 or design their own research project. The course promises to challenge the students as scientific thinkers and hone the skills needed to be a global citizen.

Middle School May Term Courses

Wild Things (6/7th Grade)

How can wildlife, particularly large-bodied predators, cause problems for humans? How can humans negatively affect the needs of their neighboring wildlife? In this May Term course, students will grapple with these questions through a focus on mountain lions, bison, grizzly bears, and wolves. What is our history with these animals and how have we come to understand and manage them? For the travel portion of this course, students will visit Teton Science School in Jackson, WY to learn the history, science, policy, and culture surrounding wolf reintroduction and grizzly management in

the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. When students return to Boulder, they will apply their learning to consider the future of wolves in Colorado. With “paws on the ground” in 2024, students will predict the impact of wolf reintroduction here and work to offer solutions to our essential question: *How can humans best co-exist with large-bodied predators and wildlife?*

8th Grade Passages:

A tradition that goes back to the founding of Watershed School, 8th graders take part each year in a self-reflective journey and symbolic passage from middle school to high school and from childhood to adolescence. The purpose of our Rites of Passage program is to contemplate privilege by engaging with people of different cultures, situations, and socio-economic status. From these experiences, students work to develop personal awareness of their own privilege and growth, and identify attributes they would like to possess and the steps needed to grow into this person. The course will include a multi-day trip to provide a myriad of opportunities for reflection and learning. Other course components include a solo, hiking, and body and mind mindfulness training. The course will culminate in a Passages Ceremony with parents in attendance and participating.