ARTS&SCI/ISCI 3IE1 / Interdisciplinary Experiences: "A Celebration of Winter as Place"

Instructors: Bob Henderson and Patrick Byrne

Course Description and Objectives

Winter is the misunderstood season. We will explore winter as a fundamental expression of Canadian identity through the lenses of history, geography, and literature. While travelling by snowshoes and skis, and of course sitting around the fire, we will examine key stories and characters in our Canadian understanding of winter, including Franklin, wendigos, Sam Magee, and Grey Owl. This exploration will also include the ‘idea of North’ and the Norwegian ‘friluftsliv’ approach to winter outdoor life. The central goal is to embrace the winter season as a “place” in our personal psyche and Canadian consciousness.

To do this we must be active in a thriving winter place where we are engaged in winter chores of chopping wood for our fires, drawing water from our ice hole and clearing roofs of burdensome snow. We will learn the key winter activities of snow shoeing, cross country skiing, building a snow shelter (Quinzee) and setting up a wall tent wood stove camp.

Readings:


Assignments and Evaluation:

- Telling a northern winter human history story around the fire / hearth OR sharing a winter interpretative natural history moment in the field.
- A 1200 word paper. A journal entry of a memorable moment.
Itinerary:

Depart McMaster, Friday January 17th at noon for Smoke Lake, Algonquin Park.

Friday evening: welcoming ceremony on the lake, discussion of winter living, evening moving in chores.

Saturday:

- Visits by Craig Macdonald, historian and winter travel skills expert and/or Chris Blyth, field biologist
- Snowshoe hike
- Winter stories and interpretation shared
- Late afternoon solos
- Evening sauna
- Discussion on winter as place, readings shared from list above. Some of these will be required pre-trip readings

Sunday:

- Cross country ski tour of Algonquin east gate trails (lessons included)
- Visit Benita – winter lodge in Algonquin and area artist, Don Standfield working in local materials.

Monday Morning: Return to McMaster

Cost per person – $60.00