

THE STEWARDSHIP OF PUBLIC LANDS: POLITICS AND THE YELLOWSTONE ECOSYSTEM

FACULTY SEMINAR IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK • MONDAY, AUGUST 4 — SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 2014

How do colleges and universities design courses and programs to help undergraduate students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to become thoughtful, engaged citizens?

The American Democracy Project (ADP) is seeking new strategies to answer that question. One of the programs we have developed is *The Stewardship of Public Lands*.

The key question of this initiative is: How are competing but equally legitimate interests about public lands resolved in a democracy?

For the past nine summers, faculty and administrators from AASCU campuses have spent a week together studying political disputes in Yellowstone National Park.

The first year, 2005, we studied wolf re-introduction. Twenty-six (26) faculty members from 19 campuses spent a week in the park, first studying the biology and the politics of wolf re-introduction; however, the most innovative part of the program was when we traveled outside the park to talk to citizens and activists on both sides of the issue in order to understand the controversy from their point of view. At the end of the weeklong program, we considered ways that faculty might develop programs on their own campus that focused on (1) national public resource issues such as wolf re-introduction and/or (2) local public resource issues such as oil drilling on national seashores, wind turbines in state parks, and restoration efforts in wetlands.

For the last nine summers, we expanded the focus of the program to examine the entire Yellowstone region in a seminar entitled *Politics and the Yellowstone Ecosystem*. In this program, we spend six (6) days in Yellowstone National Park in a combination of classroom and field activities, examining four key political controversies: bison, wolves, snowmobiles and grizzly bears. We begin the week examining the science and history of the controversies, listening to scientists and park rangers. At the end of the week, we interview

local citizen stakeholders on both sides of the issues, including political activists, business people, ranchers and other citizens.

The goal of this project is to develop new strategies and new approaches that colleges and universities can use to help undergraduates become thoughtful, informed and engaged citizens. In a world too often filled with bitter partisan politics, this non-partisan project seeks to move beyond verbal attacks and confrontation, providing students with new models that promote understanding and resolution. In a political environment where special interest groups tend to push people to polarized positions, we seek common ground.

The program begins late afternoon on Monday, August 4th and ends at noon on Saturday, August 9th. The program will be held at Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel in the northern part of Yellowstone National Park, just below Gardiner (Mont.). The cost of the program is \$1,395, which includes five (5) nights individual room lodging at Mammoth Hotel (each participant will have a separate hotel room or cabin); all instruction and seminar materials, AV rental, classroom rental; in-park transportation; and a number of meals, including reception and dinner the first night, lunch Tuesday and breakfast Wednesday. Family members or guests are welcome to come to Yellowstone with the faculty participant. Space does not allow for guest participation in the full program. However, family members and guests may attend some classroom lectures, a few field trips, and evening films and presentations.

For more information on this program or registration materials, please contact:

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