

Our National Parks

Tues. 9:30-11:30 Smith – Dewey Hall

Participants will explore the National Park system through individual study and then lead discussions on **thematic elements** of the collective parks, using personal experiences, internet search and available literature. Pictures can be an important element of many discussions. Both natural, historical and cultural locations are open for discussion.

No pre-read required. Familiarization of park system names/locations is helpful. Time may be allotted to view participants' personal photographs from park visits and class may dive more deeply into individual locations of the Park system. Reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_areas_in_the_United_States_National_Park_System

Topic Suggestions

- **Iconic vistas**
 - Yosemite's Glacier Point, Grand Canyon's overlook, Yellowstone's geysers, Grand Tetons, Acadia's sea cliffs, Crater Lake, Mesa Verde, waterfalls . . .
- **Prominent geology**
 - Canyons, mountains, thermal , badlands, caves, volcanoes, dunes, petrified trees . . .
- **Significant flora**
 - Redwood & sequoias, Olympic's rain forest, desert flowers and cacti, grasslands . . .
- **Wildlife, protection of endangered species, dealing with invasive animal species**
 - Grizzly bears, bald eagles, bison, bighorn sheep, Everglades pythons, mussels . . .
- **Historic lodges**
 - Old Faithful Inn, Volcano House, Majestic Yosemite Hotel, Phantom Ranch . . .
- **Logistics of visiting parks**
 - Armchair visit from home, full service tour with lodges, RVs/camping, car trip/motels . . .
- **The least-visited national parks**
 - Big Bend, Dry Tortugas, Isle Royale, Great Basin, Gates of the Arctic . . .
- **Historic places of the Park system: (35) Memorials, (117) Monuments, Historic sites, etc**
 - Mt. Rushmore, Washington Monument, Wright Brothers, Vietnam Veterans . . .
- **Recreational activities**
 - Bird watching, hiking, rafting, horseback riding, photography . . .
- **Must-do park tours**
 - Grand Canyon by mule or raft, Carlsbad Caverns by elevator, Glacier's Going To The Sun Road . . .
- **Dangers**
 - Weather, wildlife, lava flows, crime, traffic, terrain . . .
- **How the parks have changed over time**
 - Yosemite's Firefall, public bear-feeding, infrastructure, appropriate historical presentations . . .
- **Notable challenges**
 - Funding, climate change, invasive species, fires, increased visitors, traffic, infrastructure . . .
- **Park system management and operation**
 - Parks, Monuments, Memorials, Forests, Historical Sites, Preserves, BLM lands, National Seashores . . .
- **Politics and current activity**
 - Dept. of Interior, privatization, new parks/monuments, how chosen . . .
- **The Civilian Conservation Corps and the park system**
 - History, impact (e.g. buildings, roads, employment)