National Parks: a SWOT Analysis of our Next Century

OSHER 848-001
Dates: Wednesdays, 1/20/16 – 2/24/16
Times: 1:30 – 3:00 PM
Location: Commander's House, Fort Douglas
Instructor: Dean Reeder, dreeder@gmail.com, 202-286-1465

Course Overview

The course will consider the System of National Parks from 40,000 feet as well on the ground in individual park units. It will enlist students to take the perspective of co-owner/investors, taking the first step of a strategic planning exercise: situation analysis. Given the Congressional mandate to promote informed, responsible visitation--preserving park experiences for future generations--students will plot a preferred vision for the next century. The course will combine three elements: lecture and interactive discussion, guest speakers, and a featured “park-of-the-week” to be drawn from the 410-unit national park system. This element is expected begin exploration of the hidden gems and thematic diversity available as park experiences.

Recommended reading (Available in public libraries and Amazon, among other booksellers):

- To Conserve Unimpaired: The Evolution of the National Park Idea
  - Robert Keiter
- Canada's National Parks - A Celebration
- Desert Solitaire
  - Edward Abbey
- The Case of the Indian Trader
  - Paul Berkowitz
- “Death in...” Books
  - Choose from these featured park units:
    - Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Big Bend

Weekly Schedule:

January 20:
- Introductions
- Course preview
- Focus group exercise
January 20 (continued)

• Situation analysis (Part 1)
  o System overview
  o Organic Act
  o Park of the Week

January 27

• Situation analysis (Part 2)
  o Visitation
  o Visitor spending
• Guest presenter: Robert B. Keiter
• Park of the week

February 3

• SWOT analysis
  o Rationale, purpose and setting centennial stage
• SWOT Session #1: Strengths/Weaknesses
• Park relevance: the role of partnerships
• Guest panel: Marty Ott, Courtland Nelson
• Park of the Week

February 10

• SWOT Session #2: Opportunities/Threats
• Changing a park designation
• Guest presenter: Paul Roelandt
• Park of the week

February 17

• Competitive analysis
• Reading list
• Guest presenter: Kurt Repanshek
• Park of the week

February 24

• The Next 100 Years
  o Climate change impacts
  o The ideal park system
    ▪ Maintain the duality of promotion/enlightened visitation?
    ▪ Unimpaired for five future generations
• Guest speaker: Brooke Williams (invited)