2019 Freshmen Minicourse Catalog

1. Bay Area Animal Adventures
2. Brazilian Capoeira
3. Exploring Marin
4. Introduction to Backpacking
5. Histories and Mysteries
6. Let the Feast Begin
7. River Otter Ecology
8. Sailing the SF Bay
9. Service Learning

Bay Area Animal Adventures

Do you love animals? Have you ever wanted to learn more about the animals that are all around us in the San Francisco Bay area? This minicourse will explore the many ways (expected and unexpected) that we encounter animals in Northern California, as well as the profound and sometimes surprising relationships we develop with them. We will observe animals both at work in human environments (such as farms) and in their natural environment (in protected areas such as nature reserves) in order to understand our own human-animal interactions, both as individuals and as a species.

Our visits to human-centered environments will provide opportunities to discover the role that animals play in Bay area food production and to experience firsthand sustainable farming practices that aim to protect animals, the environment, and workers. Our visits to animals in their natural environments will allow us to investigate the challenges of preserving natural habitats in an increasingly artificial and populated region.

Throughout our week together, we may visit farms, wildlife rescue centers, zoos, and wildlife preserves. We will likely work with local naturalists, as well as with professionals who train working animals, such as Guide Dogs for the Blind. There will be a service component, and we will end with an art-based reflection on your learnings.

Most days, we’ll begin around 8am and end by 4:30pm or so. Animal-loving students, get ready to have some fun together and learn a lot along the way!

Leaders: Marcos Garcia and Nicole Stanton
Number of students: 14
Estimated cost: $350
**Brazilian Capoeira**

Brazilian Capoeira is a non-contact martial art developed in Brazil centuries ago by slaves as a way to prepare for rebellion while masking their training from the slave masters as "simple singing and dancing." Through this class, students will 1) practice basic capoeira technique; 2) learn the basics of instrumentation (percussion) and singing in Portuguese; and 3) watch films to study the development of capoeira, the history of slavery in Brazil, and how capoeira is used today as an escape from poverty.

As a break from physical activity, we have daily drum circles, so sign up if you like playing music!!! We will also be enjoying delicious Brazilian snacks, such as pão de queijo (cheesy bread) and brigadeiros (truffles).

No experience required. For students interested in continuing with capoeira, classes are available in San Rafael ([www.abadamarin.org](http://www.abadamarin.org)) at the Body Vibe Studio on Anderson Dr and in SF ([abada.org](http://abada.org)) in the Mission.

Still not sure? Check out this [video](#) to see some of the cool stuff you can learn...

Leaders: Daniel Colon and Gerardo Molinari
Number of students: 14
Estimated cost: $400

**EXPLORING MARIN – Getting to Know Marin's Environmental Diversity**

As Bay area residents we have a luxury that many in the world do not have – we have a world-class set of national and state parks literally on our door step. How familiar are you with the trails and sights of Marin County? How much do you know about local foliage, fauna and wildlife? This minicourse is designed to give you an up-close understanding of the environment that surrounds us.

Each day we will be exploring a different facet of Marin's environment. We will open our week ascending Mt. Tamalpais and learning about the microclimates of Marin County. We will then engage in service with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservatory around trail restoration. We will follow this up with a creek cleanup (in kayaks!) and/or other conservation projects in the area through the Gallinas Watershed Council. We will end our week with a surfing excursion in Bolinas. During our adventures we will learn about our ecosystem, protection of water and soil, prevention of erosion and water pollution, wildlife conservation, how public access is protected, and the general history of the area.

This minicourse will also include some time for self-reflection and sharing with the group, as well as some significant exercise. You will need a daypack, broken-in hiking boots, rain-gear (which we hopefully won’t need), and a good level of fitness for this minicourse.
Leaders: Ian Hodges and Kevin Rees  
Number of students: 14  
Estimated cost: $275

Introduction to Backpacking in Pt. Reyes

This course is open to 9th graders with all levels of outdoor experience but will cater to first-time and novice backpackers. We will have Monday, Feb. 23rd to go on a visioning day hike, plan our meals, and get our bags packed. The next day we will load up the vans and head to the Pacific Plate, the wildly lovely Point Reyes National Seashore. You'll need to be in reasonable shape as our route will cover up to 7 miles per day with significant elevation changes, all with a backpack full of gear and food. We'll be outdoors, rain or shine (though let's all hope for some sun), so you'll need an adventurous spirit, a good sense of humor, and a willingness to get dirty.

We will stay in the park for 3 nights across two campsites, learning outdoor skills including how to light backpacking stoves, cook in the wilderness, set up temporary shelter, identify native plants, and much more. We'll stay the first night a short hike in to Sky Camp with a view over the rest of the park. The next morning we'll break camp and hike to Wildcat Camp, right on the ocean, where we can explore Alamere Falls, a waterfall right on the beach. On the third day we'll explore the south district of the park in an epic day hike. On Friday morning, we'll hike back to Bear Valley. MA can help out with some gear, if you need to borrow any.

Leaders: Leslie Beach  
Number of students: 8  
Estimated cost: $150  
Dates- Monday Feb. 25th on campus 9-3:30  
Tuesday Feb 26th - Friday March 1st – Backpacking

History and Mysteries: Discovering our past to build our futures

This minicourse is designed for students who enjoy innovating and creating projects from scratch. We will gather data, sort, and create photographic images, do voice over, interview, and create amazing stories! This year the focus is to build, through the use of modern technology, the foundation of our campus audio-virtual tour.

We will select and work with various audio-visual software. We'll search and choose the best option to accomplish our task. We will spend a day exploring UC Berkeley campus to learn
about and experience their audio tour design. If weather permits, we will also do some of the audio-walking tours offered in the Bay Area.

This minicourse is for people who want to contribute and be part of the MA legacy.

Leaders: Rebecca Abbey & Anayansi Aranda-Yee
Number of students: 8
Estimated cost: $85

Let the Feast Begin

Come cook and eat with us during Minicourse week! Guided by Chefs of the Epicurian staff and MA teachers, you will be learning about world cuisine and cuisine techniques. You will also learn the different tasks, roles, and responsibilities in the kitchen. Over the week, we will be sharing some of our culinary treats with some of the local community based organizations as a way of giving back. Each morning, you will cook and taste savory and sweet dishes, and will also prepare your own lunch and many deserts. Afternoons will be dedicated to exploring and discussing topics around food and sustainable food consumption and habits. At the end of the week, you will test your knowledge and will challenge the other cook apprentices in an “iron chef” competition!

Leaders: Chef Lise Eisenberg, Chef Faubert Levasseur, Carinne Lemaire, and Yinshun Wang
Number of students: 14
Estimated cost: $300

River Otter Ecology Project: Fun in the Field for Freshmen!

Do you want to spend minicourse hiking, kayaking, and doing science outdoors? Think you have an interest in studying environmental science, ecology, or field biology? Then join the River Otter Ecology Project for a week of explorations and projects at sites such as Bass Lake, Walker Creek, and Tomales Bay! This is a rare opportunity to work closely with a director of an environmental non-profit engaged in studying and protecting one of the region’s most significant mammals. The North American river otter (Lontra canadensis) is a charismatic watershed ambassador that had once been largely eliminated from the SF Bay Area by the mid-twentieth century. As a sentinel apex predator species that uses every part of a watershed, from headwaters to the ocean, their return to our watersheds indicates a hopeful change in conditions and can encourage continuing wetland restoration and conservation. Yet, very little is known about river otter population, health, behavior, and ecology within our watersheds. That’s where you come in! We will spend the week looking for river otter track and sign, collecting/processing DNA samples, identifying prey samples, checking wildlife cameras,
helping with native wetland restoration. If you want to be outside in beautiful places doing really interesting work, this is the minicourse for you!

Leaders: Stori Oates and Megan Isadore
Number of students: 9
Estimated cost: $425

SAILING SAN FRANCISCO BAY

Ever look out at the bay and wonder what it would feel like to be out there on a sailboat, wind in your hair, not a care in the world? Well, here’s your chance to find out. Spend 5 days in the capable hands of the experts at the Point Richmond Yacht Club and learn to sail on the San Francisco Bay. We’ll start with an introduction to boating and on-land drills of basic sailing skills, then move onto maneuvering a 2-person FJ sailboat through the water, learning how to work the main sail and jib, tack, and move the boat upwind. From there, the sky (more like the Bay)’s the limit. We may cap off the week with a sail out on the Bay on a much larger sailboat where we can put our new skills and knowledge to the test.

No previous sailing experience is necessary. Experienced sailors welcome, too.

Leaders: John Hutchinson and Ellie Beyers
Number of students: 14
Estimated cost: $500

Service Learning

Barack Obama said:
[This change] cannot happen without you, without a new spirit of service, a new spirit of sacrifice. So let us summon a new spirit of patriotism; of service and responsibility where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves, but each other.

In this Minicourse we will answer the (former) President’s call to service and we will work with children at Elementary Schools in San Rafael. Every day we will be with the children in their classrooms working on reading, art, math, music, and P.E. The teachers will ask you to lead small group-work, help with art and classroom projects, organize papers and books, lead games on the field, and more. This Minicourse is for you if you enjoy being with kids and you wish to learn about issues regarding public schools.

Bonus: elementary school children love being around High School students, and you may become their new best friend, or their newest idol.

Note #1: Light physical activity is required; we will be walking to and from the school, approximately 1 mile each way. (2 miles per day)
NOTE #2: Because we will be at elementary schools, there is a dress code for this Minicourse: “Students must avoid clothes that are too revealing or that contain offensive graphics.” You must be willing to add layers or change your clothing if we ask you to do so. If you will not be able to adhere to this dress code for 5 days, please do not sign up for this minicourse. If you have questions about this, please talk to us in person.

Leader: Pilar Góngora + María Guadalupe Muñoz
Number of students: 18
Estimated cost: $20 (covers snacks and materials as needed)