

Press Release

Contact:

Robert S McPherson

435.678.8140

bob.mcpherson@usu.edu

Unique Three-Week Navajo Summer Experience Offered Through USU Eastern San Juan

You can read about the rituals and traditions of a Navajo sweat lodge, but there is nothing quite like sitting inside one. That personal knowledge is what you gain through the Navajo Summer Experience program under the instruction of Utah State University history professor and award-winning author Robert S. McPherson.

It's a 12-credit-hour program offered only this May 7-25 at USU Eastern's San Juan campus. It is a one-of-a-kind course for participants to gain hands-on experience by interacting with Navajo people. It combines classes and field work, including an introduction to the Navajo language by an instructor with texts specific to the Four-Corner locale.



The program, which is Pell Grant eligible, is ideal for teacher recertification, undergraduate students in disciplines such as American Studies, Museum Studies, Folklore, Recreation Resource Management and Parks and Recreation. It is also beneficial to non-college students who work in professions related to Native Americans. The course provides a solid cultural foundation for Anglo teachers in the southeast region of Utah who are new to the area and for those in social service professions working with Native Americans.

Successful completion of the three-week course earns participants one half of the credits needed for the Native American Studies Program Certificate. This certificate provides either a lower or upper division undergraduate requirement in Native American Studies. It is complementary but not limited to degrees in history, anthropology, American studies, and general studies. Students pursuing this certificate receive a broad base for understanding various aspects of the Native American experience and helps them prepare for work in national and state parks, Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service, cultural resource management, tribal governments, archaeology, humanities and social sciences, education and law.

In addition to classroom work in Blanding, Utah, participants will travel nearly 1,000 miles around the region that includes visits to Navajo Mountain, Monument Valley and other key sites in the Four Corner area. They will learn, through direct experience, traditional Navajo arts and crafts, mythology, skills for daily life, and historical and contemporary Navajo issues. Included in the course is a one-day float trip down the San Juan River to study Navajo sacred geography, Ancestral Puebloan ruins and discuss related mythology.

The total cost of the three-week program is \$2,700. This includes 12 credit hours of instruction (nearly as many credits as a full semester of college), travel costs, including the river trip, and food and lodging for two of the three weeks. During the week of field work, participants will not be charged for lodging and meal costs will be shared to keep expenses to a minimum.

A minimum of 18 students is required for the course to carry. Enrollment is on a first-come, first-serve basis with a 22-student cap. To enroll, or if you have questions, please contact McPherson directly at: bob.mcpherson@usu.edu or by calling 435.678.8140. Enrollment closes April 16, 2012. No down payment is required to hold a seat but those interested in participating are highly encouraged to contact McPherson as soon as possible to help him gauge interest and response rate.

McPherson has authored several dozen publications and 10 books, the majority of them focusing on the Navajo people. Among a number of awards and recognition of his scholarly work of Native Americans, he is winner of the 2009 Utah Book Award for nonfiction for his book, “Comb Ridge and Its People” by USU Press. He is former vice president of the College of Eastern Utah where he began teaching for the San Juan Campus in 1977.

