

ANTH 3330. Special Topics: Rites of Passage: Anthropological and Experiential Perspectives¹

Location: SMU-in-Taos, Carson National Forest
Professor: Neely Myers, PHD
Guest Instructors: Nancy Wiens, PHD; Albert Mitugo, MSc

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers students both an academic exploration of ancient and modern rites of passage across cultures and their meaning for people as part of human adaptation, healing, and flourishing. We will explore the anthropological theory and methods that inform classic, visual, and modern anthropological studies of rites of passage. Students will also have the opportunity to experience their own wilderness rite of passage that will be thoughtfully designed by them in collaboration with the main instructor (Dr. Myers), a wilderness rites of passage guide (Dr. Wiens), a safety specialist (Albert Mitugo), and their classmates.²

This travel course has 2 components: Academic Course Work and the Wilderness Rite of Passage. We will spend six days engaged in academic course work at the SMU-in-Taos campus, followed by four days engaged in the Wilderness Rite of Passage in a more remote campsite at SMU-in-Taos and in Carson National Forest. We will then return for a final During coursework, students will learn more about the diverse range of Rites of Passage used to mark life transitions (birth, death, puberty) across cultures, including in the American Southwest. Using course readings about four common stages of a rite of passage--severance, threshold/liminal, reincorporation, and integration--the students will think through how they will personalize their own experiential rite of passage during wilderness time to prepare for their own rite of passage from college into young adulthood.

Course meetings prior to the commencement of the experiential Wilderness Rite of Passage will help participants prepare. All students will travel as a group to a wilderness area in Carson National Forest, about an hour from the Taos campus. They will have been prepared to choose whether or not they will participate in three traditional "challenges by choice:" no food, no shelter, and no companionship. Each of these elements of the Wilderness Rite of Passage can be amended to meet particular student needs, e.g. food in order to take medications or other health needs, a tent to adjust for conditions in nature, and interaction with the three instructors, who will be in the field with students to provide needed support of any kind. No camping or backpacking experience is needed, and all participants will receive training in wilderness safety as part of the course.

Centrally, the course will seek to facilitate students' discernment of their life purpose at this important juncture between college and young adulthood. We will encourage students to reflect on this experience from numerous perspectives: personal and communal, interior and exterior, social, ecological, and spiritual. The course aims to give them a chance to reflect intentionally

¹ Currently being proposed to UGC as an independent course so tags can be added to it.

² Importantly, neither the academic nor the practical elements of this course are 'playing Indian.' Rather, the responsible, interdisciplinary use of anthropological and ritual studies scholarship on wilderness rites of passage accents the racial, ethnic, and religious contextualization of the practical rite in the wilderness. This class will avoid cultural appropriation and instead uphold a comparative, experiential approach that encourages students to create a rite of passage that is meaningful for them, drawing on their own traditions.

on their experiences at SMU and to help empower them to become the worldchangers they came here to be. Reflection work on the four stages of their rite of passage will be carried out in group projects with their peers to build a sense of *communitas* and reintegration that anthropologists have found to be so central to rites of passage around the world. We hope they will leave the course with a lasting bond with their fellow participants.

Note for Students Regarding Application Process

This course is available by instructor approval only. Please email Professor Neely Myers (namyers@smu.edu) a reflective statement (2-3 single-spaced pages, 12 point font, Times New Roman) about your intention in taking this course and participating in an experiential wilderness rite of passage prior to the deadlines for enrollment in this class. Please focus on these questions: Is there anything specific that you intend to ask yourself or try to mark in your life during this course? Are there any life transitions you are undergoing or celebrating or preparing to undergo and how might this course help you with those transitions?

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1) For Proficiency, Human Diversity. 1a. [proposed for credit Summer 2019]

1a. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical, cultural, social, or political conditions of identity formation and function in human society, including the ways in which these conditions influence individual or group status, treatment, or accomplishments.

→ This requirement will be assessed by your grade for the **Reading Responses** to the Rites of Passage readings, which will speak to the ways rites of passage shape identity formation, including the historical, social and political elements of rites of passage across human cultures.

2) For Proficiency, Oral Competency. 1 and 2 [proposed for credit Summer 2019]

1. Students will be able to select, organize and use appropriate evidence or information to suit a specific or targeted audience.
2. Students will be able to use appropriate vocal and visual cues to deliver a presentation to a specific or targeted audience.

→ This proficiency will be assessed through the grade on the **Reintegration Presentation**. On the final day of the course, students will share the story of their own rite of passage with the class in a 30-minute presentation of their experience. They will choose appropriate audiovisual materials to guide listeners through their story.

BASIS OF FINAL GRADE³

- 1. Attendance and Participation, including Group Projects and Solo Time. 50%**
- 2. Reading Responses. 20%**
- 3. Safety Quizzes. 10%.**
- 4. Journal during Course. 10%**
- 5. Reintegration Presentation. 10%**

³ If approved by UGC, group projects and Solo Time will be 40% of grade and 10% will be for the rites of passage bibliogra

1. Attendance and Participation. 20%.

Please attend class and participate regularly. I expect excellent attendance. Students who wish to be excused from class due to a religious holiday must inform the Professor by 9 AM on the first day of class. No exceptions. Participation means engaging in course discussions and projects to the best of your ability.

Four group projects will be assigned after more has been learned in class about each of the four stages of rites of passage across cultures. These projects will involve reflection and discussion of the stages in light of course materials with an eye towards helping students understand and plan their own severance, threshold, reincorporation, and integration experiences. Participation in each project will constitute 10% of your final grade.

2. Reading Responses. 20%.

On days that we have assigned readings, students will write a reading response that connects course readings to class themes and their own life experiences and expectations for their own upcoming rite of passage.

3. Safety Quizzes. 10%.

To minimize risk, students will be quizzed on safety trainings offered during the course. Students will be assessed on a Pass/Fail basis. Students will not be able to leave for the wilderness site that have not passed their safety quizzes.

4. Reflections Journal during course. 10%.

This will be a continuation of your pre-coursework journal. Please continue to write reflections during the course based on prompts given in class. Again, I will not read these journals, but will look over them during the last day of class to give you a grade of credit/no credit. I hope that you will take these home and cherish them as a way to mark and remember your experiences in the severance, threshold, reincorporation, and integration stages of your journey.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making

up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to adhere to the University Honor Code. Students who do not will receive a 0 on the assignment in question. If a student is caught engaging in academic dishonesty on more than one occasion, further disciplinary actions will be sought. The definition, set by SMU students, appears below:

We, the students of Southern Methodist University, with the approval of the Provost and the Dean of Student Life, establish the Honor Council to uphold the standards of academic integrity set forth in the Honor Code. Acts punishable under the code include, but are not limited to the following:

ACADEMIC SABOTAGE *Intentionally taking any action which negatively affects the academic work of another student.*

CHEATING *Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.*

FABRICATION *Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.*

FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY *Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of the Honor Code.*

PLAGIARISM *Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise.*

BOOKS FOR PURCHASE

Teresa Pijoan, Pueblo Indian Wisdom: Native American Legends and Mythology. Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2000.

Foster, Steven and Meredith Little. The Trail to the Sacred Mountain: A Vision Fast Handbook for Adults. Big Pine, CA: Rites of Passage Press, 1984. (Provides an overview of global traditions related to Wilderness Rites of Passage, as well as useful information like Packing Lists, safety information, and other practical advice).

All other readings will be available on the course website.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Pre-Course Recommended Activities

April 1: Begin Rite of Passage Journal: Keep a journal that focuses on your excitement, fears, concerns, things you anticipate, and question related to your upcoming Wilderness Rite of Passage. Begin 1 April and write once per week, even a few words about what is arising in you. I will not read these journals. The benefits from your attentiveness to this process will nourish your wilderness journey into the next year.

On-Site Assignments

Tuesday, June 4: Student arrival on campus—welcome to SMU-in-Taos!

Wednesday, June 5: Introduction to Rites of Passage (63 pages)

- *Morning (8-12)*
 - Turner, Victor. 1967. "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage," Forest of Symbols, pgs. 3-19

- Stevens, Jr., Phillip, 1991/2011. Play and Liminality in Rites of Passage: From Elder to Ancestor in West Africa. Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 237-257. 2011 (ed.) *Anthropology of Religion: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*. 4 volumes. London: Routledge.
- Morinis, Alan. "The Ritual Experience: Pain and the Transformation of Consciousness in Ordeals of Initiation," *Ethos* 13 (1985), 150-174. [Ethos is the flagship journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology.]
- Grimes, Ronald L. "Introduction," Readings in Ritual Studies. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996. Pgs. xii-xv.

Thursday, June 6: Cross-Cultural Rites for Adolescents: Anthropological Classics (~90 pages)

- *Morning (8-12)*
 - Ortiz, Alfonso. 1972. The Tewa World: Space, Time and Becoming in a Pueblo Society, University of Chicago Press. Selected passages TBA. (~30 pages)
 - Richards, Audrey. 1956. Chisungu: a girls' initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia. London, England: Faber and Faber. Selected passages TBA. (~30 pages)
 - Herdt, Gil. 1981. Guardians of the Flutes. Volume 1. Idioms of Masculinity. University of Chicago Press. Selected passages TBA. (~30 pages)

Friday, June 7: Rites of Passage Today (~62 pages)

- *Morning (8-12)*
 - Whitehouse, H., Lanman, J. A. (2014). The ties that bind us: Ritual, fusion, and identification. *Current Anthropology*, 55(6), pp. 674-695. (21 pages)
 - Eberhardt, Nancy. 2009. "Rite of Passage or Ethnic Festival? Shan Buddhist Novice Ordinations in Northern Thailand." *Contemporary Buddhism* 10 (1): 51–63. doi:10.1080/14639940902968913 (12 pages)
 - Turner E. (2012) Rites of Passage: Communitas in Times of Change. In: Communitas. Contemporary Anthropology of Religion. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. Pp. 167-196. (29 pages)
 - In-class Film: *Inside an Apache Rite of Passage to Womanhood* (20 minutes)

Monday, June 10: Severance Stage

- *Morning (8-12)*
 - Reading: Teresa Pijoan, Pueblo Indian Wisdom: Native American Legends and Mythology, select two stories to discuss in class (~40 pages)
 - Severance Stage Group Project
 - Severance Stage Group Discussion and Project

Tuesday, June 11: Threshold Stage

- *Morning (8-12)*
 - Severance Stage Group Discussion and Project, continued
 - Foster, Steven and Meredith Little. The Trail to the Sacred Mountain: A Vision Fast Handbook for Adults. Big Pine, CA: Rites of Passage Press, 1984. (~40 pages) [This reading offers background on a long tradition of Wilderness Rites of Passage around the world and ideas for personalizing one's own rite of passage.]

Wednesday, June 12: Preparing for a Wilderness Rite of Passage: New Mexico Ecology, Environmental Sustainability, and Staying Safe

- *Morning (8-12), Guest Lecturer: Albert Mitugo*
 - Flora and Fauna in New Mexico, Guest Lecturer: Albert Mitugo
 - Wilderness Safety Workshop, Guest Lecturer: Albert Mitugo
 - Ecology and Environmental Sustainability in the Southwest, Albert Mitugo
 - Safety Quiz 1

Thursday, June 13 (8 contact hours)

- Travel to Carson National Forest (~1 hour), set up base camp and map solo sites, review safety protocols
- Story Circle and Discussion
- Story Circle reflection in Journal
- Safety Quiz 2 (on-site)

Friday, June 14 through Sunday, June 16

- Solo Days, Threshold Stage, Wilderness Rite of Passage

Monday, June 17

- Rest (morning)
- Return to campus (evening)

Tuesday, June 18-Wednesday, June 19

- Reincorporation Stage Group Project continues at on-campus campground
- Integration Stage Discussion at on-campus campground
- Return to main campus to prepare for departure

Thursday, June 20

- **Reintegration Presentation Day and Celebration**

Friday, June 21

- Student travel day

APPENDIX I. About the Instructors

Overview of Course Faculty

The various components of the course requires one full-time faculty member and two guest instructors. The full-time faculty, Dr. Myers, is responsible for academic coursework, insuring that Student Learning Outcomes are met, enforcing University Policies, and all student assessment. Dr. Wiens, an experienced wilderness rite of passage guide, will lead the experiential component of the course, the Wilderness Rite of Passage. The third, Albert Mitugo, will train students in wilderness safety procedures and then support student safety during our time in the backcountry. All three instructors will be present for the wilderness part of the trip

Course Faculty Bios

Neely Myers, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at SMU where she is in her fifth year of teaching for the Anthropology majors and Biomedical Minors, as well as the Health and Society majors. Her research expertise lies at the intersections of psychological and medical anthropology, and focuses on cross-cultural experiences of mental health, mental illness, and well-being. She has extensive experience engaging in ethnographic

research projects with diverse communities in the United States and northern Tanzania. Her publications include a scholarly monograph and over 20 articles and book chapters related to anthropological studies of mental health and mental health care. In the summer of 2017, Dr. Myers joined Dr. Nancy Wiens for her course on Wilderness Rites of Passage at Wake Forest University. Dr. Myers is now apprenticing with Dr. Wiens to become a Wilderness Rites of Passage guide. Until she has completed her apprenticeship, Dr. Myers will rely on Dr. Wiens to lead the students for the experiential component of the course. Dr. Myers will be responsible for the academic components of the course as well as being the leader of the group.

APPENDIX 2. SAFETY PLAN

Note: This safety plan has been vetted by the Office of Risk Management and SMU's legal department. Both are fully on board and supportive of this plan and appropriate waivers and insurance forms will be available in time for this course to take place.

Safety Plan for Rites of Passage Class

SMU Students will be participating in a class that they sign up for voluntarily for course credit in Anthropology. The class will be capped at 10 students to maintain an instructor to student ration of ~3:1, which is well above the industry standard.

Prior to enrolling in the course, students will be pre-screened through a Letter of Intention for the course. The pre-screen is intended to make sure that students are mature, responsible and in a good place mentally and physically for taking this course. We will also collect medical information to make sure they are mentally and physically ready prior to engaging in wilderness time.

This note is included in the syllabus to explain the pre-screening process for students:

“This course is available by instructor approval only. Please email Professor Neely Myers (namyers@smu.edu) a reflective statement (2-3 pages) about your intention in taking this course and participating in an experiential wilderness rite of passage prior to the deadlines for enrollment in this class. Please focus on these questions: Is there anything specific that you intend to ask yourself or try to mark in your life during this course? Are there any life transitions you are undergoing or celebrating or preparing to undergo and how might this course help you with those transitions?”

Students will also be provided with a Packing List, designed by our Wilderness Guide and Albert Mitugo, that will include weather-specific required clothing and gear. Any gear or clothing that students cannot provide for themselves will be sought out by the instructors prior to arrival at the Taos campus so that all students have the right gear on arrival. We will double-check this gear prior to departure for the wilderness.

The course will include:

- 3 days of academic coursework on-campus
- 1 day of on-campus work preparing for the mental elements of the rites of passage (e.g., setting an intention for the rite of passage)
- 2 days of coursework on-campus work on safety preparation (on-site and off-site) with Albert Mitugo and Nancy Wiens (pre-departure and on departure day, ~8 hours total)
- 4 days/nights off-campus for the Wilderness Rite of Passage in the Carson National Forest

- 2 nights camping on-campus at the on-campus campground

This course will take place at the SMU-in-Taos campus and at the Cabresto Lake Camping Area in Carson National Forest. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/carson/recarea/?recid=44116> Albert is very familiar with the Cabresto Lake camping area and believes it will be perfect for keeping students safe while offering them enough privacy to have a “solo” experience.

Off-Campus Safety Plan for Cabresto Lake

We will secure a camping permit for this federal wilderness area (Cabresto Lake) in advance of the course. The site can sleep 14 people. There are paved and gravel roads to Cabresto Lake that we can safely travel with a SMU-approved 12-passenger, high clearance van to transport students. Albert Mitugo and Neely Myers will drive the van. Albert is certified through SMU for Engaged Driving and Neely will do the training prior to the course. If an extra vehicle is needed, we will rent a fully-insured, high clearance SUV for the off-campus time. The van (and SUV, if needed) will remain at the parking area throughout our time in the wilderness. It will be a five to ten-minute walk to the campground where we will set up our base camp.

Base camp will be stocked with weather-appropriate SMU Outdoor equipment rentals of tents, sleeping bags, and sleeping pads. We will also bring SMU chef-prepared food for all participants during the time we are there. Sleeping bags will be able to keep students warm in conditions up to zero degrees (although we anticipate much more temperate weather). Base camp will also include two “in-reach” devices that work on the satellite network so that we can call local authorities as needed even if the cellular networks are down or inaccessible.

Students will be invited to leave the base camp to set up solo sites within shouting/whistling distance of base camp and/or each other and participate in “challenges by choice.” These three challenges are: no food, no companionship, and no shelter for four days. Rites of Passage traditionally include four days of solo time for students to have a transformative experience.

Solo sites include a tarp shelter constructed by the student (a triangle or lean-to shape), a bottom tarp or hammock for keeping the ground dry (or hanging off the ground), a sleeping bag, a backpack with appropriate clothes, biodegradable hygiene materials, trash bags for hauling out trash, emergency energy gel or granola bars, and 4 gallons of water (1 gallon for each day). Students will be shown how to keep items dry. They may also bring books, art supplies, and writing materials. All electronic devices will be locked in the van at base camp.

Students will be given a pre-departure (on-campus) and on-arrival (at base camp) safety training to orient them to backcountry conditions. Topics covered will include: gear check for appropriate mandatory clothing and gear, basic first aid, the buddy system process, reading the weather, reading the clouds, procedures for extreme weather conditions or wildfire, animal dangers (although encounters with wildlife are not anticipated to be more likely or more dangerous than on the SMU-in-Taos campus in this area, we want them to be prepared), and “leave no trace” practices that protect the local ecology.

As part of their grade, students will participate in a safety quiz to encourage retention of the material. After administering the safety quizzes and filling in any gaps that seem evident in students’ retention of materials, the instructors will have a checklist and will be required to check off that they believe each individual student is ready for their solo time before they are allowed to leave base camp.

During solo time, all of the solo sites will be within shouting/emergency whistle distance of base

camp and each other. Everyone will be asked to wear emergency whistles on their wrists so that they can make enough noise to get help in most instances.

If there is an emergency, all students can be easily summoned to base camp by the instructors playing a drum.

For solo time, students will also be provided with laminated 3x5 index cards to carry with them with basic survival information, for example, the process to “Stop the Bleed” and the “Lightning Drill Position.”

These cards can go in their emergency kit. All students will have an “emergency kit” that includes energy gel, antibiotic ointment, bandaids, a small flashlight, a compass, a Swiss Army knife, and a second whistle. We will also provide them with a weather-protected map of the solo area with everyone’s solo site marked on the map.

Possible risks include:

1) Students wandering off.

We have a buddy system in place that requires each student to walk to a rock pile that is between their site and the site of their buddy who is closest to them and change the rocks in the pile (e.g., move them from the shape of an x to the shape of an o). One person will change the rocks in the morning and the other in the afternoon. While avoiding contact with each other to keep their “challenges,” this will enable students to make sure their buddy is checking in at least once per day to change the rocks. If the person comes and sees that their buddy has not moved the rocks, they will immediately proceed to that person’s solo site to see if they are there. Students are supposed to leave a note at their solo site about where they went under a rock under their tarp-protected sleeping area. The buddy should find the note and go straight to base camp to let us know a person is not at their solo site and has not checked in. At this point, all students will be summoned to base camp with a drum to help search for the student. While this has never happened in the Wilderness Rites of Passage instructor, Dr. Wiens’, 25 years of guiding people ages 18 to 70 during Solo Time, we feel it is important to make this plan very clear in case it does happen.

In addition, every evening, Albert Mitugo will do a “binocular check” to make sure the students are back at their sites. He will be discrete so as not to interrupt them, but will make sure that he can see that they are in their places. Albert is sure that the terrain around Cabresto Lake is conducive to such a check. If we cannot see them with binoculars, we will silently visit their site as needed.

Finally, one of the instructors will be walking around the area several times each day to listen for distress whistles and keep an eye out for other day-use hikers and fisherman, etc., so that they can let them know what we are doing as needed and keep them from disrupting the students during their Solo Time.

2) Sexual assault.

Sexual assault is an important safety concern. The risk of sexual assault at Cabresto Lake is similar to the risk at the SMU-in-Taos campus. We are making sure that the solo sites of each student are within whistling/shouting distance to the sites of buddies and base camp. Students will be asked to respect each other’s physical/sexual space and privacy during the course. Students will also be asked to wear the distress whistle on their wrist at all times to alert leaders and buddies if there is an issue.

We are also pre-screening students to insure that students going into the wilderness are serious about enjoying a life-changing and mature experience in nature.

There is a possibility that outsiders will enter the wilderness area, and the instructors will be roaming the area frequently to keep an eye out for others and ask them to respect our privacy during this time. Given that this is a remote wilderness site with no other permitted camping available nearby, there is not likely to be any one else in the area at night.

3) **Illicit Drug and Alcohol Use.**

Drugs and alcohol are strictly forbidden. The instructors will ask any student caught in possession of drugs and alcohol during the backcountry time to leave, and appropriate authorities will be contacted as necessary. Given the risk of fire, students will also be asked to refrain from smoking any nicotine products.

4) **Weather.** Prior to leaving for the trip, weather will be monitored for any extreme weather conditions. The Instructors' Manual will include a Wildfire Plan, Lightning Drill, and a checklist of what to do in Hypothermic Conditions. Any time the weather seems too extreme, the instructors will tell the students they must return to their tents at base camp. In addition, if weather conditions are too extreme or there is a wildfire in the area, instructors will use the on-site van to take students back to campus.

Instructor's Manual

We are creating an Instructor's Manual related to safety for this course that will be used to offer the safety trainings. This is for our reference, and also to offer future instructors guidance on how to run the course. The manual will include safety directions, a packing list to provide to students, directions for assembling the emergency kit, the information to be printed on the laminated 3x5 index cards for students, and information about area-specific risks around Cabresto Lake.

The Instructors' Manual will also include phone numbers, addresses, and driving directions for: SMU Office of Risk Management, Dallas Police Department, the Taos Police Department, the Holy Cross Hospital in Taos (for minor emergencies) the University of New Mexico Level 1 Trauma Center in Albuquerque (for life-threatening emergencies), the SMU-in-Taos campus police, and leaders of the SMU-in-Taos campus. One manual will be kept on-site and one will be locked in each vehicle on-site at all times.

Liability Waiver

We will have a legal waiver available to students that is approved by SMU Legal and are currently in conversation with Susan Howe to make this possible. These waivers will be on files prior to the commencement of the course.

Health Insurance and Release of Medical Power of Attorney

Students participating in SMU-in-Taos are required of have health insurance and a signed medical release. These are kept at SMU-in-Taos as part of all students' files and we will make sure that they specifically enable the instructors of this course have permission to seek medical treatment for students in case of an emergency.

Nancy Wiens, PhD, M.Div. has been an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) since 1991 and a Spiritual Director since 1997. From 1993-1995, she trained with Steven Foster and Meredith Little (whose works we read in this course) who are also known as the grandparents of the Modern Rite of Passage, at the School of Lost Borders. For the past 25 years, Dr. Wiens has led dozens of wilderness rites of passage across the United States, from Kauai to North Carolina (including with college students at Wake Forest University in 2017 and at the University of the Redlands), to initiate and mark transitions with people from 17 years old into their 70s, Nancy also mentors apprentices to become Wilderness Guides and has been a member of the international Wilderness Guides Council since 1995 (see: <https://www.wildernessguidescouncil.org/>). Her Ph.D., received in 2007, focused an interdisciplinary lens on Christian theology, spiritual studies and natural science. Dr. Wiens is also certified in Wilderness First Aid. Dr. Wiens will assist with the safety needs of the students, and will be responsible for leading the experiential component of the course.

Albert Mitugo, M.Ed. earned a Master's in Educational Leadership from SMU in 2011 and has over 20 years of experience in outdoor experiential education. He has been running the SMU Outdoor Adventure Program for the last 10 years. Albert views the outdoor environment as a change agent for many students on and off campus. Albert has racked up over 180 weeks in the back country (wilderness) during his outdoor career, often in very remote places. He is very familiar with the wilderness areas around Taos (including the Carson National Forest where we plan to go) because he has used the area many times as the outdoor classroom for students he trains in leadership. He is a certified level one group facilitator, a current Wilderness First Responder (80 hour certification in wilderness emergency medical response) and a current American Red Cross Instructor. Albert will be in charge of training students to be safe, as well as the student safety expert for the team while we are in the backcountry.

We will travel to a site that is within 60 miles of the SMU-in-Taos campus and the city of Taos. Albert Mitugo, a certified Wilderness First Responder and Nancy Wiens, certified in Wilderness First Aid, and Neely Myers (SMU Faculty Member) will both be on-site around-the-clock during our time off-campus. Safety training prior to departure for students, on-site safety support at base camp during our time in the wilderness, having a satellite phone on-site for emergencies, having a van on-site, back-up equipment and supplies (including food and water), detailed maps of the camping area and solo sites, and a buddy system during solo time, are all details of the plan we are developing.