Disney Ecology

Interim 2021

Study environmental conservation and sustainability at Walt Disney World!!!!!
Since the inception of the Walt Disney Company nearly 100 years ago, Disney’s entertainment themes and business practices have frequently intersected with issues of environmental conservation and sustainability. Many of Walt Disney’s early films and television shows, both animated and live-action, were about nature and wildlife, a practice that continues today in Disneynature movies. Over the last 25 years the Disney Conservation Fund has provided more than $85 million for research and conservation efforts.

The construction and operation of large theme parks has involved many land-use issues in diverse environments such as a California city (Disneyland) and Florida swamp land (Walt Disney World), including considerations of water resources, energy, transportation, waste disposal and recycling, and nature reserves. For example, 1/3 of the area of Walt Disney World has been set aside for wildlife conservation. Many themes and attractions of some of Disney’s theme parks (e.g., Animal Kingdom and EPCOT, or the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) are specifically focused on conservation and sustainability. More broadly the attractions at the parks explore related concepts such as progress, innovation, technology, communications, transportation, food production, cultural diversity, and global citizenship.

This course will allow students to explore the values and practices of Walt Disney World related to conservation and sustainability and to integrate their experiences in the parks and on campus class sessions to further develop their own environmental worldviews. The schedule for the course will include 8 days in the Disney Parks, 2 travel days, and approximately 6 days of class on campus. Students will be assessed based on a journal documenting their reflections on park experiences, a final integrative essay, and a final group project reported to the class.

DisnE[y]cology Highlights

- Spend 2 days in each of Walt Disney World’s 4 main parks:
  - Magic Kingdom
  - EPCOT
  - Animal Kingdom
  - Hollywood Studios

- Stay at a Disney resort (4 persons per room)

- Eat on a Disney dining plan

- Use Disney’s transportation system

- Special Tours: Behind the Seeds at EPCOT and Wild Africa Trek at Animal Kingdom

- Cost per student: $3000 (estimate)
  - Final price and itinerary may vary based on prices at time of booking
  - Includes all travel, lodging, park admission, special tours
  - Other personal travel costs are extra

- Instructor: Keith Grasman, Department of Biology, kag4@calvin.edu

- If interested, please email your name, major, class level, gender, and interest level to Prof. Grasman to join the list of potential students.

Interest Levels: Very High - THE course I’m planning to take for Interim 2021. High - One of two courses I’m considering. Medium – One of a few options I am considering. Low - Likely to take a different course, but I want to learn more about this one.