

**Course Syllabus Fall 2025**  
**OEAC 1285 Whitewater Kayaking I**  
**Northwest College Department of Outdoor Education**

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T/Th 11:00-12:00 / 2:25-3:40pm

**Course Catalog Description**

This course introduces fundamental skills for basic whitewater kayaking. It is designed for students with little or no previous whitewater kayaking experience and emphasizes safety, use and care of equipment, reading water and basic paddling skills.

**Course Content & Information**

***This course requires hands-on study of educating others in the use of the outdoor environment within our region. Students will be actively engaging in land-based and/or water-based learning activities and will need to provide their own transportation to and from the learning activity site(s). Students may take their own vehicle or travel with someone else to meet the instructor at the required time in the specified location(s). However, if students choose to ride with someone else, a liability waiver will be provided to the student driver and passenger(s) to sign prior to departure.***

This course will meet in the classroom and in the field. The course is dependent on the weather. If the weather is not good, we will not kayak on the river/outside. This is for the safety of everyone in the class. It is also dependent on the condition(s) of the river. We will only kayak on the river if the river flow (i.e. amount of water) is within a reasonable and safe amount. If it is deemed unsafe by the course instructor, we will not kayak on the river. This will not affect your grade as it is outside your, or your instructors, ability to control the river, water, and environmental conditions.

Along with classroom time, our plan is to spend at least 1 day at the pool and one on the flat water (more if we can/need), then head to the river section. That can change based on things outside of our control such as issues with the pool, weather etc. for the flatwater and so on.

We will use the USBR and USGS federal river flow data to determine the CFS (cubic feet per second) river flow as a gauge for the condition of the river. That information, plus any observations by the course instructor will be used to determine if we will be able to be on the river. You may also check the current water levels at:

[http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wy/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=06282000&PARAMeter\\_cd=00065,00060](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wy/nwis/uv/?site_no=06282000&PARAMeter_cd=00065,00060) - Scroll to bottom

[http://www.usbr.gov/gp/hydromet/dayfile\\_form.html](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/hydromet/dayfile_form.html) - type SRBB in station code to find Cody

[http://www.usbr.gov/gp-bin/arcweb\\_bbr.pl](http://www.usbr.gov/gp-bin/arcweb_bbr.pl)

**NORTHWEST COLLEGE UNIVERSAL SYLLABUS INFORMATION**

<https://nwc.edu/academics/syllabi/universal-syllabus-information>

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Demonstrate the proper use of kayak equipment and the basic techniques of paddling the white water kayak.

Demonstrate safe practices during kayaking.

Demonstrate proper basic kayaking paddle strokes.

Ability to self-rescue through the “Wet Exit”.

Describe river terminology and appropriately describe the different parts of a river.

Be able to identify river hazards and features such as a hydraulic, strainer, wave, downstream V, etc.

### **Topics to be covered:**

- Paddle Strokes and Technique

- Equipment for Kayaking

- Concepts of Paddling

- Flat Water Maneuvers

- White Water Maneuvers

- Clothing and Gear

- Safety and Rescue

- River Hydrology and Understanding River Dynamics

- Rapid/River Classification

- River Running Skills

- Bracing and Stabilization

### **Kayak Philosophy Summary:**

Kayaking on whitewater rivers combines challenge, athleticism, excitement, and problem solving.

Rivers are dynamic, involving a mix of quiet and fast-moving water and variable currents, some of which flow upstream. Even on a fairly simple level, rivers demand a constant awareness on the part of a kayaker to react to their changing moods and temperament. This interplay of physical and mental effort, all of which takes place in a healthy outdoor environment, makes the sport of kayaking an immensely satisfying and rewarding activity.

### **Outing Demands, Requirements, and Policies:**

The outing component of this course is conducted on the “Willwood” section of the Shoshone River, south of Powell. We may on occasion also kayak on the Shoshone River in Cody or between Powell and Cody, or the lower stretch of the Clarks fork below the canyon to Edelwiess, but those are in rare instances. Temperatures may range from sunny and hot to cloudy and cool. We will not be on the water if the environmental conditions are deemed inappropriate by the course instructor based on safety of the class and students. The Recreation Equipment Co-Op has paddle tops and a few wetsuits if you would like to check them out, but you are mainly responsible for clothing for yourself.

There will be no running drinkable water while we are on the river, so you will need to provide water and food for yourself that you can take in the kayak with you. Food and water will not be provided as part of the course. We should not be on the water more than a few hours however.

You are encouraged to **NOT** bring your phones, keys, wallets or anything else of value with you as there is a good possibility of losing it on the water. If you have prescribed medication, your instructor is not responsible for yourself administration of it, but MAY be able to help you find an adequate location to store that medication.

Safety is our first concern and must be yours as well. Participate in the outing only if you feel mentally and physically prepared and are willing and able to assume full responsibility for your own safety. Never assume that the leadership team knows everything, always make good decisions, or can solve every problem for you. Your safety depends upon your alertness and good sense. We encourage you to maintain a questioning attitude. If you are unsure of something, ask!

If you are **AT ALL** concerned about your physical or mental ability to participate, talk to your instructor and Primary Care Provider (PCP). You are encouraged to receive a physical or letter from your PCP stating you are in good condition to participate if you are **AT ALL** concerned.

Kayaking is a physically and mentally demanding activity and requires constant concentration and alertness. While participating in this course, you will need to be able to continuously paddle your kayaking for extended periods of time which means adequate cardiovascular fitness (paddling up to 30 minutes without stopping), have physical flexibility to fully rotate, bend, flex, sit and squat, carry your kayak and equipment to and from the water (kayaks can weigh up to 100lbs), ability to hear commands of your instructor while on the water and ability to see the water, rapids, classmates and instructor while on the river.

The course instructor will use their discretion on deciding which boat each student should have, including the use of the inflatable kayaks. The final decision is with the course instructor (with input from the Program Coordinator if necessary), but this **DOES NOT** indicate that you will be 100% successful or not flip your kayak while you are kayak. That is part of the sport and will happen regardless of the boat you use.

In order to participate in the field, or river/open water portion of the course, you will be required to pass a written exam covering whitewater kayaking safety, risk management, and basic kayak information before you will be allowed to participate in the field portion of the course on the water. Failure to take the test and/or pass will result in your not being able to participate and will adversely affect your grade. We will have a skills rubric/"check list" of skills you will also be required to pass in order to participate in the river/open water portion of the class. This requirement is for your safety and the safety of the other members of the course. This skills test will take place during the final period of time at the pool.

In order to participate in PEAC 1285 Kayaking, you should be able to pass the Level 4 Skills for the American Red Cross swim level skills test. (See Below) We **WILL NOT** test you on these skills, but by taking this course, you acknowledge that you have read the Red Cross Level 4 Skills required and are able to pass the skills list at Level 4 and all levels below level 4. It is your responsibility to test yourself or have a Red Cross swim instructor assess your swimming ability to meet Level 4. (See skills listed below.)

#### **Prerequisites and Physical and Environmental Demands Statement:**

1. This course is taught partially in the field and requires that students come to class ready to participate. Students should have no unusual fear of water and be able to swim at the intermediate level. Students will be required to carry all equipment to and from the river. Kayaking can be potentially dangerous and all precautions will be taken. Students who do not follow safety guidelines will be asked not to participate. Possibly injuries can include, but are not limited to: hypothermia, dehydration, underwater entrapment, bruises, scrapes and cuts. Students will be provided with all equipment necessary including kayak, paddle, life jacket,

helmet, and spray skirt. If you own your own equipment you may use it with instructor's consent.

2. **Prior to Participation in the pool session(s) and river/water portion of the course, you are required to:**
  - a. Attend the required classroom sessions before the pool and river portions
  - b. Read, understand and sign the Liability Waiver and Medical Form allowing enough time to read each document and bring any questions you may have to the course instructor. It is your responsibility to provide your instructor with information regarding injuries, medications, or other special considerations that may affect your participation in this course. BE SURE to complete the medical form completely without leaving any information out.
  - c. Arrive at the Recreation Co-Op in the Fab Annex building on time and with all of the required clothing and equipment. If we are planning to leave at a certain time, 3:00pm for example, please plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early to load all equipment.
3. **As a Participant in the river/water portion of this course, you are expected to:**
  - a. Monitor your health and comfort, eat and drink regularly, and inform your instructor if you become uncomfortable or exceed your limits of personal safety. Your enjoyment of the course will be improved by maintaining a positive attitude and by being mentally prepared for a new set of challenges each day
  - b. Refrain from using illicit drugs and alcohol, carrying firearms, and bringing pets of any kind. Northwest College has a zero tolerance for illicit drugs and alcohol. When we are off campus for class, ALL college policies are still in effect. Failure to abide by these policies may result in a permanent F in the course and expulsion.
  - c. Wear a seatbelt AT ALL TIMES while riding in a college vehicle.
4. **You participate at your own risk. You may be asked or required to obtain a physician's statement declaring your ability to participate in this class if you have any concerns or the college has any concerns due to current or past medical issues you have/have had for your safety and the safety of the class.**
5. When we are in the field on the river/water, it may be during a time you have other classes. It is **YOUR** responsibility to inform our instructor(s) you will be missing their class before the day we leave and make up any coursework, assignments, or assessments ahead of time. Your instructor for this course is **NOT** responsible for informing your instructors in other classes and **CANNOT** intervene with your other course instructors to gain permission for your absence from their class.
6. You are responsible for all equipment you use during this class. Any loss or damage will be your responsibility to take care of including replacing any equipment if deemed necessary by the instructor/program coordinator/college administration unless it was due to an incident outside of your control. Any incident will be determined by the instructor/program coordinator/college administration.
7. This course will include strenuous exercise in the form of carrying kayaks and equipment to and from the Recreation Co-Op, kayak trailer, pool, lake, river put in and river take out. Whitewater kayaking is a physically demanding sport that requires fitness. You will be sitting

in your kayak for multiple hours and continuously paddling. If you are unsure of your physical condition for the course you should see your doctor to get approval for participation. By participating, you acknowledge you are in appropriate physical the conditioning required to fully participate without prior knowledge of physical or medical conditions that might limit you. You are encouraged to talk to your course instructor, but any concern on medical/physical conditioning requires approval from your doctor.

8. Your personal physical condition is a key factor is your ability to successfully kayak. Any medical condition must be discussed with the course instructor, who reserves the right to refuse participation due to your personal, and the groups safety. Any physical/mental/psychological condition or limitation must be discussed with the course instructor, who reserves the right to refuse participation due to your personal, and the groups safety.
9. The environment we will kayak in on the water will potentially, if not extremely likely be cold. The water in the river is typically much colder than the air. A general rule for hypothermia and water states that If the air temperature + water temperature is < 100 degrees, hypothermia is a possibility. When we are able to know the water temperature and air temperature, and it is near, at, or just below the 100 degree mark, we will make a decision on whether we will kayak that day. There are wetsuits and paddle tops in the Recreation Equipment Co-Op available to students to help stay warm and students are encouraged to use them.
10. There will be times you will be in the water and may get cold, we will do everything in our power to prevent the possibility of hypothermia, but it is your responsibility to recognize the symptoms and seek help as well as inform your course instructor if you are concerned you might have a concern about your health, safety and/or well-being during class. It is however a potential risk.
11. There will be times when you are potentially on the water without an instructor immediately next to you. There are a number of students on the water at one time. The instructor is responsible for each and every one. If you have any concerns about: the course, time on the water, your personal abilities or safety concerns, risks associated with the class, environmental conditions such as weather, water levels, whitewater, etc., please contact the instructor prior to class days on the water or in the pool.

#### **Basic Rules to Follow (Golden Rules):**

1. When kayaking, you must ALWAYS wear an appropriate and correctly fitted kayaking helmet and U.S. Coast Guard approved lifejacket.
2. Have shoes in the boat or on your feet so when you are out of the boat on shore you can walk with protected feet.
3. If there is a swimmer (someone that is out of their boat) everyone should yell "SWIMMER" to be sure the instructor(s) know.
4. Everyone else should move to the shore and wait until the swimmer is rescued.
5. When you get in your kayak, **CHECK** that the grab loop of your kayak skirt is outside the kayak, check the person next you as well that theirs is. Do this **EVERY** time you get back in your boat.
6. When you flip upside down in the water

- a. "Kiss The Deck"- lean as far forward as possible with you forehead on the boat deck or skirt. This allows the helmet to protect your head and neck and your lifejacket to protect your back.
  - b. Pull your skirt and get out of the boat.
  - c. Hold onto your paddle if at all possible. You will need it to get down the rest of the river.
  - d. Hold onto your boat if you can, it floats well.
  - e. **DO NOT STAND** in the water. Even 6 inches of water has enough force to push you face down in the river.
  - f. Listen for commands from your course instructor. If no one is around, try to swim to shore without walking on the bottom. If you are in the middle of a rapid, float face up with your toes out of the water down-stream to protect you from hitting rocks and boulders. Attempt to swim to shore after you are through the rapid.
7. In the event of a lightning storm, your instructor will make a decision on what is the safest thing to do. Likely it will be to move to shore, spread out and assume lightning position squatting on your skirt or life-jacket until the storm is past.

## **Hypothermia Information:**

### General Comments

Most mild-moderately hypothermic patients are managed effectively in the field and do not require evacuation.

### Symptoms for Hypothermia

With mild hypothermia- Body Core Temperature 95 degrees:

- Shivering.
- The "umbles":
  - inability to perform complex tasks ("fumbles").
  - confusion, apathy and sluggish thinking ("grumbles").
  - slurred speech ("mumbles").
  - altered gait ("stumbles").

The person being able to eat and talk and usually complaining of feeling cold.
- With moderate hypothermia:
  - worsening of the "umbles."
  - uncontrollable, violent shivering.
  - confusion or unusual behavior.
  - impaired judgment.

With severe hypothermia- Body Core Temperature 90 degrees:

- Person stops shivering.
- Increasing muscle rigidity.
- Worsening mental state, moving from stupor to coma.
- Decreasing pulse and breathing that become difficult to detect (but are still present).
- Semi-consciousness or unconsciousness.

- Person stops complaining.
- A core temperature lower than 90°F

### Treatment for Hypothermia

1. Change the environment and find shelter. Replace wet clothing with dry clothing and add wind and waterproof layers. Move patient gently.
2. Add insulation under and around the patient. Consider a hypothermia wrap for moderately and severely hypothermic patients. Add external heat sources and well-insulated heat packs at armpits, neck, groin, hands, and feet,
3. Encourage exercise if the patient is alert and able. Allow shivering in a dry, insulated environment.
4. Give warm, high calorie, non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic liquids and encourage the patient to eat a meal, if they are alert and able.
5. For a severely hypothermic patient, administer warm, humidified oxygen, if available. Assist ventilations for 5-15 minutes prior to movement.
6. Avoid chest compressions unless pulselessness is confirmed. CPR in a hypothermic patient with pulselessness confirmed may be extended past the 30-minute guidelines.

Resources- Provided by the National Outdoor Leadership School and Wilderness Medicine Institute

<http://blog.nols.edu/2016/03/02/debunking-hypothermia-myths/> - NOLS Blog

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gOW8ZaYqHA> - Dr. Gordon Giesbrecht (Professor, B.P.E.

Program - Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Studies)

American Red Cross- Wilderness and Remote First Aid

## **Red Cross Swimming Levels**

### **Requirements to Pass Each Level**

#### **To Pass Level 1 - "Water Exploration"**

Fully submerge face  
Release cramp  
Supported kicking on back  
Supported kicking on front  
Walk 5 yards in chest deep water, alternating arms  
Supported float on front  
Supported float on back  
Walk 5 yards in chest deep water, maintaining balance  
Bubble blowing  
Put on a life jacket on deck and enter shallow water  
Learn water safety rules  
Reaching assists without equipment  
Enter and exit water independently using ladder, ramp or steps  
Bounce up and down in chest deep water 10 bounces

#### **To Pass Level 2 - "Primary Skills"**

Hold breath and fully submerge head for 3 seconds  
Assist non swimmer to feet  
Step from the side into chest deep water and recover to a vertical position  
Get out from the side of pool  
Supine float or glide, unsupported, and recovery  
Level off from a vertical position  
Rhythmic breathing with or without support  
Orientation to deep water  
Prone float or glide, unsupported, and recovery  
Flutter kick on front  
Flutter kick on back  
Finning on back  
Back crawl arm action  
Combined stroke from front, using kick and alternating arm action  
Combined stroke on the back, using kick and choice of arm movement

Turnover, front to back  
Float in life jacket with face out of water  
Perform reaching and extension assists from deck  
Retrieve objects  
Become familiar with rescue breathing

#### **To Pass Level 3 - "Stroke Readiness"**

Retrieve object, eyes open, no support  
Bob, submerging head completely  
Bob in water slightly over head to travel to safe area  
Bob to standing depth  
Dive from side of pool from kneeling and compact positions  
Learn safe diving rules  
Tread water  
Jump into deep water wearing a life jacket  
Reverse direction while swimming on back  
Coordinate arm stroke for front crawl with breathing, breathing to the side  
Prone glide with push off  
Supine glide with push off  
Reverse direction while swimming on front  
Coordinate back crawl  
Elementary backstroke  
Learn how to open airway for rescue breathing  
H.E.L.P. position  
Huddle position  
Jump into deep water from side of pool

#### **\*\*To Pass Level 4**

Deep water bobbing  
Floating  
Rhythmic breathing/rotary breathing  
Front crawl with rotary breathing, 25 yards  
Back crawl, 25 yards  
Breaststroke on back, 5 yards  
Elementary backstroke, 10 yards  
Scissor kick for sidestroke, 10 yards  
Turning at the wall  
Stride and standing dives  
Tread water, 2 minutes



**Grading and Evaluation:**

The assessment of student learning outcomes will be done through demonstration and practical skill testing. Grades will be based primarily on participation and attendance, secondary on ability to use skills learned. If the student attends both classes and fully participates

50 points- written test

50 points- skills test

100 points- attendance to outdoor sessions

**Grading Scale:**

A – 100-90%

B – 89-80%

C – 79-70%

D – 60-69%

F – Below 60%

**Waiver and Medical Form:**

Students' will be required to complete a Northwest College Medical Questionnaire and Informed Consent/Liability Form prior to taking part in this course. The Waiver and medical form are accessible at <http://www.smartwaiver.com/v/nwcclass>. You will not be permitted to kayak during classroom times or in the field without these forms completed.

**Special Instructions**

This course is taught primarily in the field and requires that students come to class ready to participate. Students should have no unusual fear of water and be able to swim at the intermediate level. You should bring a towel, swimsuit, Polypro and/or fleece clothing to class as the days on the river will be chilly. Students will be required to carry all equipment to and from the river. Kayaking can be potentially dangerous and all precautions will be taken. Students who do not follow safety guidelines will be asked not to participate. Possibly injuries can include, but are not limited to: hypothermia, dehydration, underwater entrapment, bruises, scrapes and cuts. Students will be provided with all equipment necessary including kayak, paddle, life jacket, helmet, and skirt. If you own your own equipment you may use it with instructor's consent.

**Required Equipment List for Pool and River Sessions****WHEN IN THE POOL ALSO INCLUDE:**

- Kayak
- Paddle
- Life jacket
- Spray skirt
- Socks
- Shoes
- Bathing suit for pool and river sessions
- Water towel

**WHEN ON THE WATER OUTSIDE OF THE POOL:**

- Shoes
- Helmet
- Life jacket
- Kayak spray skirt
- Kayak
- Paddle

- Socks for wearing inside the kayak is not wearing shoes while in the kayak- prevent blisters from the plastic.
- Bathing suit for pool and river sessions
- Insulating base layer- polypro, wool, polyester, NOT COTTON!!
- Sunscreen
- Water towel
- Sweater and dry clothes to change into after water sessions
- Snack
- Something to keep glasses on head if you wear them
- **FOOTWEAR is essential- old tennis shoes, water socks, wetsuit booties, NO FLIPFLOPS!**
- If you have any questions about your personal list, you should contact the instructor.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Northwest College is dedicated to removing barriers and opening access for students with disabilities in compliance with ADAAA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. It is the student's responsibility to make an appointment with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Coordinator to provide documentation of a disability (whether it is psychiatric, learning, mobility, health related, or sensory) and to inquire about accommodations for courses each semester. To contact the DSS Coordinator, call 754-6135 or stop by the Student Success Center located in the lower level of Colter Hall.

\* There will no use of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs allowed at anytime during this course.

## **KAYAKING COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b><i>Course Segment</i></b>	<b><i>Topics / Skills</i></b>
<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Introduction, Review of Syllabus Introduction to kayak equipment Introduction to River Systems</i>
<i>Session 2</i>	<i>Kayak safety, staying safe on the river, basic rules of kayaking. Class spent at the aquatic center.</i>
<i>Session 3</i>	<i>On the River.</i>
<i>Session 4</i>	<i>On the River.</i>

## **COURSE/SYLLABUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT FORM**

### **PEAC 1285 Beginning Kayaking**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print your name) acknowledge that I have read this course syllabus and fully understand all that is written within. If I have any questions concerning the syllabus or the class, I will be responsible for asking the course instructor prior to the class taking place on the water or in the pool.

I understand that kayaking is a physically demanding activity and will follow all rules set out in the course syllabus and by the course instructor during class. Failure to follow and/or understand these rules are grounds for not being allowed to participate on the water portions of the class or dismissal from class altogether, resulting in a failing grade for the course.

I understand there are physical demands such as carrying equipment to and from the pool/put-in and take-out sites, kayaking in general is physically demanding and that I am capable of a high level of physical activity. If I have any question about my physical ability or health for the class, I will speak with my doctor before participating. I also understand that the course instructor has the right to assign kayaks to students based on their professional opinion of what is the best suited kayak for each individual, including the use of inflatable kayaks.

Kayaking requires balance and flexibility. I understand that my personal balance and flexibility will determine a lot in how effective and quick I am at learning to kayak. Some of the things that influence your balance and flexibility, as well as overall performance due to health, include: height and fitting in the kayak and size of kayak, weight and distribution of weight (the more weight you have on the upper half of your body, the more likely you are to flip when kayaking), higher age generally results in less flexibility, diet, or medical conditions such as asthma, auto-immune disorders, etc.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the course syllabus, have asked for any clarifications or questions about the course (or will ask them as soon as I have them) and agree to all points listed in the course syllabus.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian if under 18 years old