

Living Learning Community Syllabus

Living Learning Community Outdoor Learning Community Academic Year 2024-2025

LLC Advisor(s) Dr. Carol Smith and TBD from Campus Recreation and Wellness (supported by Dr. Evan Small)

Department(s) Department of Education and Wellness

LLC Location: First Floor Virginia

Living Learning Community Description

The OLC provides opportunities for students to explore co-curricular and curricular interests in outdoor experiential education and outdoor adventures, both on and off campus. The OLC will involve both curricular and co-curricular experiences and a student mentorship component to provide pathways for engagement during a student's time at Elon and beyond. These pathways could include students from Adventures in Leadership, student employment through Campus Recreation and Wellness, or a major declaration in Outdoor Leadership and Education.

Living Learning Community Student Learning Outcomes

Living-Learning Communities (LLCs) provide students with a sense of belonging in a community of their peers united by a common interest. By engaging in this LLC, students will:

1. Participate in intellectual, personal, and social growth activities within a collaborative and integrative (academic, social, and residential) environment.
2. Apply academic, professional, social, cultural, and/or wellness skills/knowledge through experiences, reflection, and synthesis outside of the classroom.
3. Participate in mentoring relationships with faculty, staff, and/or peers outside of the classroom.

Outdoor Learning Community Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will identify opportunities for engagement with adventure-based learning programming while at Elon and beyond.
2. Students will develop a greater sense of empowerment and self-efficacy through planning and leading outdoor adventure programs.
3. Students will enhance their learning through intentional connections between learning community programming, linked academic courses, and co-curricular interactions with faculty, staff, and students.
4. Students will demonstrate the ability reflect on experiences critically, honestly, and thoughtfully, and apply those reflections to situations in other aspects of their lives.

There is a strong connection between the OLC and the Outdoor Leadership and Education major and minor under the Dr. Jo Watts Williams School of Education, as well as all Experiential Learning and Outdoor Adventure (ELOA) programs under Campus Recreation and Wellness. The students in the community utilize OLE/ELOA's knowledge in planning their projects and reflections. In order to strengthen the academic connection, the students are encouraged to register for a linked course taught by an OLE faculty member (OLE 2250, unless a different class is required of them for other reasons such as leadership fellows, honors, etc).

The OLC residents and student leaders also incorporate faculty and staff into the various programs they develop. These events could be trips, advocacy events, documentary screenings, educational sessions, etc. Campus Recreation and Wellness student staff interact with the OLC in a variety of ways. These interactions expose OLC members to a wide variety of faculty/staff and introduce them to resources across campus.

Since the OLC is housed in the Historic Neighborhood, there are many opportunities to partner with the neighborhood association or other members of the community. Members of Historic could be invited to OLC programming or trips. The RA on the OLC floor is an ideal connection to the rest of the neighborhood.

Students will gain a greater awareness of and understanding for experiential education methodologies and adventure-based learning pedagogies. Through participation in OLE/ELOA programming, OLC members will gain a greater sense of resilience and self-efficacy, as well as an ability to advocate for theirs and others' needs. The OLC will provide opportunities for residents to develop a 'culture of reflection' and equip them with the skills and habits needed to reflect on and make meaning from their experience. OLC residents also will have opportunities to develop technical skills relating to a variety of outdoor activities and will have a greater knowledge of ways in which they can engage in these activities during their time at Elon.

OLC Syllabus Objective One:

Students will identify opportunities for engagement with outdoor experiential education programming while at Elon and beyond.

Action Steps for Objective One:

- Select one theme per month per semester in order to intentionally plan activities. These themes guide the selection process for what activities the community participates in.
- Identify and plan three or four activities/trips per month based on the theme. Current OLE/ELOA programs can be utilized in addition to planning projects for OLC members only. At the beginning of the semester, OLC upperclass mentors will take a greater role in planning these activities, while helping to develop planning and leadership skills in OLC members. Eventually, OLC residents will assume responsibility for planning and helping to lead these activities.
- Students will also be introduced to local leaders and organizations in the OLE field through participation in the OLE monthly symposium series and other community-based events. Community members could include staff from the Haw River Trail, the outdoor education coordinator for the City of Burlington, and others. These community members can be great opportunities to both network and share expertise in their field.

- Students will be formally introduced to the OLE minor/major through the linked course and will have opportunities to learn about ELOA (including hiring for Elon Outdoors, Adventures in Leadership, and Elon Challenge positions) through their ELOA mentors.

Objective Two:

Students will develop a greater sense of empowerment and self-efficacy through planning and leading outdoor adventure programs

Action Steps for Objective Two:

- Early in the semester, students will participate in an extended Elon Challenge program that will introduce them to content around group dynamics and facilitation.
- OLC upperclass mentors will guide residents through building relationships, exploring strengths within the group, and identifying opportunities for future involvement. Facilitators will initially plan trips and activities for the community while also giving OLC residents the opportunity to develop skills in logistics, planning, and facilitation. OLC staff will seek to create an environment in which residents are able to practice skills without fear of judgement and are able to gain feedback in order to improve.
- In the spring, OLC members will be responsible for planning all community activities. This will allow them the chance to demonstrate their knowledge and leadership abilities within the community.

Objective Three:

Students will enhance their learning through intentional connections between learning community programming, linked academic courses, and co-curricular interactions with faculty.

Action Steps for Objective Three:

- Students will participate in a linked course (OLE 2250) for the fall or spring. Content from this class will be continued through discussions and regular meetings with the OLC. This course will be taught by one of the OLC advisors so residents are able to develop a different relationship with that faculty member.
- OLC members will be encouraged to identify and attend relevant cultural calendar, organizational, or departmental events each semester. These could include documentary screenings, speakers, Coffee Klatches, etc that relate to environmental conservation, active learning, group dynamics, facilitation, etc. OLC members could also develop events in partnership with the Eco-Reps, SPARKS, or other relevant organizations.
- OLC members will be encouraged to invite faculty, staff, or community partners to present concentrated educational information about a theme-related topic during community dinners (two per semester).
- OLC members will participate in a 'common reading' program within the community which will create a shared experience, connection to theme and content, and a continued series of conversations in both curricular and co-curricular settings. Examples of readings could include "Into The Wild", "Wild", "127 Hours", "A Walk in the Woods", "Silent Spring", "Last Child in the Woods" or others.

Objective Four:

Students will demonstrate the ability reflect on experiences critically, honestly, and thoughtfully, and apply those reflections to situations in other aspects of their lives.

Action Steps for Objective Four:

- Reflection is a key component of any experiential education activity and will be incorporated in many ways throughout the OLC. Residents will be asked to reflect on their experience and growth through reflective writing and group discussions.
- OLC residents will be asked to discuss and reflect upon challenges to the outdoor education field, including an increase in the desire for drilling/deforestation and increasing plans for pipelines across natural areas. OLC members will also have opportunities to address social justice topics as they appear in OLE programming, including a national trend of lower participation by people of color, LGBTQIA people, and others with marginalized identities.
- OLC residents will have the opportunity to partner with EcoReps, Sierra Club, or other organizations and engage in advocacy work related to their involvement in the natural world.
- In the spring semester, OLC residents will be guided to reflect on their experience in the fall and how they can utilize their knowledge to plan events in the spring and begin to think about learning transfer to their second year at Elon.