



Apprentice Program Semester Overview

This document is meant to advise interested applicants of what to expect during a typical semester as an apprentice at the High Mountain Institute. It includes an overview of the wilderness, academic, and residential experience.

Wilderness

Apprentices spend a brief amount of time on campus before heading into the field for a training trip. During the Fall Semester, this is an eight-day backpacking trip in the Sawatch or Collegiate Peaks, and during the Spring Semester it is a six-day winter camping trip in addition to day trips to the local ski resort and the backcountry. During this time, apprentices get a sense of the wilderness skills progression as it is taught on expeditions at HMI. They practice teaching the HMI wilderness curriculum, improve their navigation skills, and hone their basic camping techniques. After the training trip, meetings will occur for a week before the students arrive.

Orientation and Expedition Prep

Students arrive and are on campus for only three days before the first expedition. They are oriented to HMI schedules, classes and expectations and then pack and prepare for the field.

First Expedition

This 14-day trip takes place in mountain ranges near Leadville in the Fall Semester, and in the canyons of Utah in the Spring Semester. Expedition groups typically consist of 10 students and four instructors (two faculty and two apprentices). These instructor teams all function in their own unique ways, but for the most part the teaching, leading, cooking etc. will be split among all members of the team. During each travel day, the group is split into multiple hiking groups which allow students to practice their navigation and leadership skills in smaller groups. Faculty and apprentices are divided according to comfort level and experience (ie. after a few days, if apprentices are comfortable and competent at map reading, they may hike alone with 3-5 students). In camp, students are divided into tarp groups with three to four students sleeping and cooking together while the instructors have their own tarp group.

Second Expedition

Service Trip (Fall Semester only): As the aspens begin to turn gold, we head out for the second expedition. HMI has a partnership with the Forest Service which allows us to maintain trails leading to highly impacted peaks in the area (Mt. Massive, Mt. Elbert, Yale and Harvard Peaks). Expedition groups travel to a base camp where they live for 4-5 days during the duration of their trail work. Once work is done, groups begin a 5-6 day backpacking trip similar to the first expedition.

Winter Trip (Spring Semester only): In preparation for the winter expedition, students are taken to our local ski hill, Ski Cooper, for a week of telemark ski instruction from faculty and apprentices. The winter expedition looks and feels different from the first expedition. For one, the environment is very new to the students and they require a lot of oversight. Also, there is more physical work to be done. For our winter homes, we pile snow, let it settle, and then hollow



it out into a shelter known as a quigloo. We then mound more snow and carve it into countertops and seating areas for a kitchen. Because this all takes so much time and energy, we stay in these snow villages for a couple of days at a time and explore the local terrain. We eat a lot, make a good deal of hot drinks, and run around in the snow playing goofy games to keep warm. If you've never been winter camping before this may seem intimidating, but you'll get the hang of it.

**You do not need any previous winter camping or telemark skiing experience to be a part of the spring semester.*

Final Expedition

The final 10-day expedition takes place in the canyons of Utah for both the Fall and Spring Semesters. Students are given more responsibility and ownership of the trip. They may get to hike and camp alone depending on the group and the terrain. Instructor teams are typically one or two apprentices and one faculty.

Solo

As the last week of school unfolds, students have a solo experience. Located several miles from campus, the solo experience places students on their own for roughly 12 hours in the fall and 26 hours in the spring. Students are given simple necessities of food, water, and a small tarp during this time. With few distractions, students are asked to contemplate their HMI Semester and write a "Full Circle", a reflection-based speech given by each student at the final community gathering. Apprentices help to oversee the solo experience, as there is round-the-clock adult oversight and presence. Additionally, apprentices are present during the Full Circle gathering. Hearing students articulate the power of their time at HMI is a strong reminder to apprentices that they have had a positive impact on students' lives.

Academics

After the first expedition, classes begin on campus. There are five 90-minute class periods a day, two before lunch and three in the afternoon, in addition to two periods on Saturday. Some subject areas have multiple sections and on average apprentices can expect to be in class 8-12 periods a week. This makes for long academic week, but it is necessary since we miss some class time while we are on expeditions. We do, however, teach English, history, science, and wilderness in the field. Each apprentice works with the faculty member in their subject area to determine their role in the classroom. Most apprentices progress from a week or two of observation, to teaching small amounts of information (10-30 minutes), and then increase to a full class period about half-way through the Semester. Eventually, some apprentices may take on a section or unit of class. Ultimately it is between the apprentice and the faculty mentor to decide what works.

Apprentice Seminar meets two periods a week to discuss educational theory. We start by addressing multiple learning styles in the classroom, then move into designing practical curriculum, and finish with a discussion about the value of place-based and experiential education. In addition, the Apprentice Coordinator meets with apprentices individually each



week to discuss the academic, wilderness, and residential experience as well as next steps after HMI.

Residential

Students begin their day with faculty-led morning exercise (running, games, yoga), followed by breakfast and chores. Each day there is both a Faculty on Duty (FOD) and an Apprentice on Duty (AOD). Each apprentice is AOD roughly one day per week based on a rotating schedule. This means cooking breakfast, monitoring study hall, sleeping in your student cabin, overseeing chores the following morning, and having a general presence on campus. Other duties may include answering the phone, administering medications, and/or taking a student to the doctor.

A few times a week apprentices are involved in activity blocks. Activities may include Nordic skiing, swimming, knitting, yoga, tutoring at the local school, dog walking, salsa dancing, cheese tasting, soccer, jam sessions, and biking---just to name a few! After class on Saturdays the FOD and AOD, in addition to a rotating apprentice, oversee students chopping wood and going to town. On Saturday nights they help students plan authentic fun such as '80s bowling, a talent show, or prom. On Sundays during the Fall Semester, faculty and a rotating apprentice plan various activities such as climbing, a train ride, or a mine tour. During the Spring Semester we ski on Sundays until after the winter expedition.

Roughly ten students share a rustic cabin heated by wood and lit by solar panels. Apprentices act as cabin heads for each of the five student cabins. Cabin meetings occur once a week to discuss cabin expectations and to help students develop a positive living environment. After cabin meeting, apprentices sleep in their respective cabins (there is an extra bed in the cabin's common area). The other six nights of the week, apprentices share living quarters in our three-story West Building. Students use bathroom and laundry facilities on the first floor while apprentices share bathrooms and common area facilities on the second floor, and sleep in two large open areas on the third floor.

Other aspects of the HMI Semester

Project Day (one day during the Semester when the community comes together to work on various projects around campus), community meeting (every few weeks the community gathers over lunch to discuss community development), Parents' Weekend, a week-long Thanksgiving or spring break, and other community meetings and events.

When apprentices are not in class or involved in the residential responsibilities listed above they take time to get off campus and visit the local coffee shop or recreate in their beautiful backyard.

This document holds a lot of information and is by no means exhaustive, yet hopefully it will give you a sense of what to expect during a semester at HMI.