A Call for Participants for Seminars in Advanced Interdisciplinary Learning (SAIL):

*Wilderness in the Anthropocene*

A two-year faculty seminar with onsite portion from July 7–16, 2017, at Coe College’s Wilderness Field Station, Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness

*Applications must be received on or before December 16, 2016.*

**Overview**

*Wilderness in the Anthropocene* will allow interdisciplinary teams of ACM faculty from five colleges to explore the biology of wilderness, its place in our art and mind, and its place in current society. This will be the sixth and last in a series of Seminars in Advanced Interdisciplinary Learning (SAIL), organized by the ACM colleges and funded through a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This two-year seminar will include a 10-day onsite portion at Coe College’s Wilderness Field Station located at the edge of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness near Ely, Minnesota (see [http://www.coe.edu/academics/fieldstation/fieldstation-faq](http://www.coe.edu/academics/fieldstation/fieldstation-faq)).

SAIL offers a unique opportunity for ACM faculty to approach complex topics from different disciplinary perspectives, combining both specialist and non-specialist roles. It enables faculty participants to create a small learning community and use their experiences to create new, multidisciplinary courses and/or modules on their campuses for students at advanced levels. The goals for SAIL are twofold:

- Provide ACM faculty an intensive short-term “study-away” opportunity embedded in a learning community, enabling both the exploration of a topic from multiple disciplinary perspectives in connection to a specific site and the subsequent development of curricular projects; and
- Foster the development of innovative, integrative curricular resources or modules that will enhance the ability of junior-and senior-level undergraduates to analyze complex problems from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

**“Wilderness” as Thematic Focus and Setting for Onsite Learning**

When every inch of the earth and its climate have been affected by humans, what does “wilderness” mean? Some environmental theorists argue that wilderness itself is a contemporary cultural construction; a product of modernization and an antidote to it. Given the gravity of human impact on the earth, others argue that “Nature is dead.” Still, human beings continue to seek out what Thoreau called “the tonic of wildness.”

*Wilderness in the Anthropocene* asks:

- What places do wilderness, the wild, and nature have in our communities and campuses today?
- What is the value of wilderness to a liberal arts education?

The Wilderness Field Station (WFS) operated by Coe College near Ely, Minnesota, is a one-of-a-kind setting for exploring the theme of wilderness. Set on remote Low Lake, the station is a natural outdoor lab for learning and a gateway to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. From the Field Station, participants can paddle from lake to river to bog to beaver pond, examining the interactions of plants and animals with their environment with limited human influence.

Though wild, however, the area has a long human history, raising questions about what makes it a wilderness. For example, the WFS is 30 minutes from Ely, Minnesota, where an international mining venture proposes to open a mine upstream from the Boundary Waters to mine for precious metals. This has exacerbated divisions among various parties with deep-seated views about the mine’s
possible benefits and costs, raising urgent and timely questions about how communities use and view wilderness.

The mining company case study illustrates the possibilities of inter-disciplinary inquiry planned for the seminar. Geology explains why precious metals exist close to the surface that make this an ideal place to mine. Chemistry helps us understand the potential dangers to the water posed by sulfide mining, and biology helps uncover the threats to the ecosystem. Physics explains the engineering challenges of the project. Economics reveals why this project might be either financially viable or destructive. International relations helps explain why a firm from Chile is involved and where the funds are coming from. Political science explains how different property rights and governance systems get established and their varied impact on outcomes. Social sciences give us tools to study the ways in which the local community is torn over this project along ethnic and class lines. Arts and humanities explore the ways individuals and communities express their relationship to a wilderness area under duress from extractive industry.

By entering, learning about, and writing about the Midwest’s one great wilderness, and conversing with those who make their living there, seminar participants will grapple with the question “what is wilderness?” They will take part in overlapping interdisciplinary, team-taught modules – in boreal ecology, environmental writing, and environmental social science. They will travel by canoe in the Boundary Waters for several days to experience this wilderness themselves. For this seminar, the topic is the site, and vice versa.

Following the onsite portion of the seminar, each participant will create curricular resources on a topic related to the seminar that advances his or her teaching interests. The seminar will provide material for new curricula investigating the intersection of conservation, identity, and society, including interdisciplinary courses or modules such as Urban Ecology, Wilderness in Art and Literature, or Environmental Citizenship.

Wilderness in the Anthropocene will be led by a faculty team composed of Jesse Ellis, Assistant Professor of Biology and Director of the Wilderness Field Station, Coe College; Chris Fink, Professor of English, Beloit College; and Pablo Toral, Professor of International Relations and Environmental Studies, Beloit College. The Leadership Team encourages applications from teams of faculty who offer different points of view and angles of approach to the topic, in order to ensure a fruitful and critical engagement with the Boundary Waters as a context for learning about and understanding the complexity of wilderness.

A Note to Interested Faculty about the Physical Demands of Seminar Participation at the Wilderness Field Station

Coe College’s Wilderness Field Station (WFS) is a rustic yet comfortable, lakeside setting at which Coe runs its summer field courses. It is a half-day’s paddle from the million-acre, federally-designated Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and wholly within the Superior National Forest.

Although a central feature of the seminar will be a four-day paddle trip into the Boundary Waters, the seminar will accommodate both beginner and seasoned canoeists. The key is that each participant be willing. The Leadership Team is experienced in taking beginner canoeists and campers into the wilderness and will provide a canoeing primer. Beginner canoeists will also be paired with more seasoned paddlers to start.

The WFS will provide lodging, food, and the canoes and camping equipment (e.g., sleeping bags, tents, packs and cooking gear) needed for canoe camping while exploring the Boundary Waters. Participants will need to bring their own outdoor clothing and assorted necessaries like flashlights.
Funding and Support

• The Mellon grant will fully fund economy travel to and from the site, as well as lodging, meals, and local travel during the seminar for all participants.
• Each participant will receive a $2,500 honorarium following (1) full participation in the work of the onsite portion of the seminar, and (2) the completion of a curricular project, both expected to be completed in the 2017-18 academic year.

Seminar Composition

• In addition to the three-person leadership team, the seminar group will include twelve ACM faculty members, in multi-disciplinary teams of three.
• Participation from each college is limited to three people (including the members of the leadership team).
• Teams should consist of three faculty members from a single institution, each from a different disciplinary division. Such a team will maximize the impact of the seminar on the home campus, promote collaboration across disciplines, and provide the broadest base of expertise for the seminar group.
• Proposals should show how team members would collaborate in the design and implementation of their proposed curricular innovation.
• Faculty rank is open, but the seminars will be especially helpful for mid-career faculty in a position to develop new, multi-disciplinary expertise in the topic and new curricular innovations on their home campuses.
• Applications from individuals or pairs of colleagues will not be considered.

Selection Process

The SAIL Steering Committee is composed of three ACM Deans who will choose the strongest applications based on their potential for both contributing to and learning from the seminar. The Committee will look for a clearly articulated vision for using the seminar to design and test multi-disciplinary curricular innovations for students on the applicants’ home campus. Committee members will also consider the applications as a whole to select a group that represents a broad range of disciplinary expertise.

Participant Requirements and Expectations

• All seminar participants must be available for the full duration of the onsite portion – arriving on Friday, July 7th and departing on Sunday, July 16th, 2017 – and take part in all scheduled activities during the seminar.
• All participants must be able to commit to the preparatory and follow-up work. Release of the honoraria will be contingent on the completion of curricular projects.
• Prior to the site visit: Participants will be consulted by the Leadership Team on the design of the seminar and will be expected to complete preparatory reading and writing assignments.
• After the site visit: An important outcome of the Seminars will be new courses, sequences, or modules for helping upper-level undergraduates make connections across disciplines and cultures, and to synthesize the work of their disciplinary majors. While campus-specific procedures and schedules may preclude projects from being fully implemented in academic year 2017-18, participants are expected to deploy pilots or create detailed designs for implementation and to submit required reports to ACM detailing their progress. Participants will post their projects online in a form that will allow other faculty to use and build on them.

For more information, visit www.ACM.edu/SAIL-2017 or contact ACM Vice President and Director, Faculty Development and Grant Programs, Brian Williams (bwilliams@ACM.edu).
Application Instructions

Wilderness in the Anthropocene

Submit your completed application, including all attachments, via the online system at http://projects.ACM.edu.

Applications must be received on or before December 16, 2016

Application Elements

- Submit an online application at http://projects.ACM.edu responding to the prompts set out below
- Upload a curriculum vita for each team member
- Upload a letter of endorsement from your academic dean -- for the team as a whole

The online application consists of both team and individual portions. Please submit a single application from the whole team, responding to the following prompts.

TEAM:

- List the name, college, title, and disciplinary division of each of the three team members.
- Is each of you available to be onsite for the duration of the onsite portion of the seminar, arriving on July 7th and departing on July 16th, 2017?
- What potential curricular elements or projects (courses, modules, etc.) for juniors and seniors do you anticipate using the seminar to develop on your campus following the onsite portion of the overall seminar?
- In what ways will the expanded knowledge gained from the onsite portion of the seminar be used to help integrate instruction across disciplines and engage colleagues who would be relevant to this initiative?
- How are the three of you suited to accomplish the curricular integration you aim to accomplish?
- What is the history of collaboration you have, with one another and with other faculty?
- How do you anticipate working together in this seminar, especially before and after the onsite portion of the seminar?
- What other qualifications or experiences would make this team a strong participant in the overall seminar?
- What do you imagine your team members would contribute to creating the onsite portion of the seminar (e.g., contacts at the site, bibliography, presentation on a topic, etc.)?

INDIVIDUAL (each member of the team should respond separately to these questions; please be sure to identify the name of each respondent):

- Why are you interested in participating in the Wilderness in the Anthropocene seminar?
- What about the topic and site interests you and how do you see them enhancing your ability to teach multidisciplinary perspectives to advanced students?
- Describe specific ways in which the place-based and multi-disciplinary nature of the Wilderness in the Anthropocene seminar would enable you to enhance your scholarly work and teaching.
- What specific background or areas of expertise could you contribute to the onsite seminar?