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**The Damascus Project**  
**“The Crux: Engaging the Wisdom of the Wilderness for Today’s Changing Church”**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

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**When does this course meet?**

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This course has both an online component and an in-person component. The online component will begin September 3 and end October 14. The in-person component will take place on the Wisconsin River, at campsites and in canoes on Thursday, September 26 to Sunday, September 29. The online component is asynchronous. This means that the work of this course will be done via the internet and on your own time.

**What do I need to know about the wilderness portion of this course?**

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Aram Mitchell will be the primary guide of the wilderness portion of this course. He is a Registered Maine Guide and Wilderness First Responder with an M.A. in Religious Studies from Chicago Theological Seminary. He serves as the Executive Director of Renewal in the Wilderness. <http://www.renewalinthewilderness.org/>

Our wilderness experience will be geared to a basic level of fitness. All able-bodied individuals in good health will be able to participate fully. Time on the river will be leisurely and geared to the level of the group. All equipment will be provided (tents, sleeping bags, canoes, paddles, food, etc.). Those who would like may use their own equipment but that will not impact the cost of the course.

For a detailed description of this element of the course, including packing lists, go to:

<http://www.renewalinthewilderness.org/damascus>

**Can I see a copy of the syllabus?**

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The syllabus is in development. Dr. Pamela Shellberg, one of the course facilitators, would be happy to answer questions about the syllabus. You can reach her at [pamela.shellberg@att.net](mailto:pamela.shellberg@att.net)

For a sense of the spirit of the course read this article by Pamela Shellberg and Aram Mitchell written about The Crux program in Maine: : <https://www.thebtscenter.org/bearings/into-the-wild-october-2018/navigating-the-crux-of-21st-century-ministry-wilderness/>

**Books to consider for pre-course reading (recommended, not required)**

Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*

Belden C. Lane, *Backpacking with the Saints: Wilderness Hiking as Spiritual Practice; Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality; The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality*

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*

**Can I get seminary credit for this course?**

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This is a question for your seminary. The Damascus Project is not an accredited, degree granting program. However, seminaries are often willing to provide credit for learning experiences that take place in other aspects of life.

## **How much work will this course be?/How much time will it take?**

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The level of work for this course depends somewhat on you and on how much you decide to put into it. You will get more out of the course if you are able to spend more time. Between readings, viewing videos, participating in online posts and discussions, and your work on projects, you can plan to spend 5-7 hours per week for the 6 week series. One possible question to ask is, “what am I willing to say no to in order to make time to take this course?”

## **What do I get for taking this course?**

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Lifelong learning is a core value of the Damascus Project. The primary thing you will get out of this course is faith growth and development. Those who successfully complete the course will receive a certificate of completion. Members in Discernment within the UCC will be equipped to demonstrate increased competency in the Marks/Outcomes upon which the course is based.