

## Demystifying the Park: Student Agency & Joshua Tree National Park

### Information

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Date/ Time: Friday, May 15, 6 pm – 9 pm  
Saturday, May 16, 9 am – 5 pm  
Sunday, May 17, 9 am – 1 pm

Meet at: [Black Rock Nature Center](#)  
9800 Black Rock Canyon, Yucca Valley, CA 92284

Instructors: Mary Borobia Walls, founder of *Action Driven Inquiry*  
Jennifer May, teacher in the Ontario-Montclair School District

### Overview

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National Parks provide an ideal context for engaging K-12 students into doing science at a Park, on a school site, or in a community. Using the backdrop of the natural phenomena found in the Joshua Tree National Park, participants will experience ways to craft learning experiences that support the Next Generation Science Standards, California's Environmental Principles & Concepts, as well as other required state standards (CCSS). The methods used will expose participants to place-based and inquiry learning in ways that support learner agency and informed action. By the end of the three-day class, participants will plan and share a learning sequence that will be specific to their own grade level and content needs.

### Itinerary

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Friday, May 15, 6 pm – 9 pm

*Black Rock Nature Center*

- Using Notebooks to Explore the Park
- Launching the learning through an action driven inquiry cycle
- Getting to know who comes to parks and who does not
- Engaging in natural phenomena at the Joshua Tree National Park
- Overview of assignment: interdisciplinary learning sequence plan, 50 points (due final session)
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Saturday, May 16, 9 am – 5 pm

*Black Rock Nature Center*

- Mapping our corner of the Joshua Tree National Park, and connecting to school sites
- Moving into investigation and engineering

- Conducting Research and Taking Action
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- Creating your own National Parks at home
- Field class in Joshua Tree National Park including exclusive session at Key's Ranch
- Getting to know a 5E learning sequence model
- Creating a feedback rubric
- Developing Interdisciplinary Learning Sequence Plan

Sunday, May 17, 9 am – 1 pm

*Black Rock Visitor Center*

- Completing Interdisciplinary Learning Sequence Plan, 50 points
- Presenting Learning Sequence Plan, 20 points
- Lunch/snack break, **bring your own food**
- Providing feedback and reflecting on learning and next steps
- Sharing resources and supporting each other
- Program concludes at 1 pm

## **What to Bring to the Course**

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### ***Required Class Materials***

- Access to mobile application iNaturalist recommended
- Access to laptop recommended
- WiFi is available at the Black Rock Nature Center.

### ***Optional Class Materials***

- Field guides or other literature about Joshua Tree National Park (or other National Parks) appropriate for the grade level you teach

### ***The 10 Essentials: Every day in the Desert***

- Day pack
- 4 quarts of water
- Closed toe hiking shoes
- Lunch and snacks
- Clothing layers
- Hat
- Sun glasses
- Sunscreen
- Notebook and pencil/pen
- Whistle

## **Fitness Requirements**

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Participants must be in good physical condition for courses/activities in a desert that may be hot, dry, windy, and sometimes surprisingly cold.

### **Hike Level**

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Easy to Moderate

### **College Credit**

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If taking this course for 1.5 unit of credit through the University of California Riverside Extension. Your grade will be determined by:

- 70% Presentation of learning sequence plan
- 30% Field notes, attendance, participation

### **Guidelines**

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- You are responsible for your safety.
- Park your car in designated areas only. Parking along the side of the road is dangerous to you and the environment.
- Rattlesnakes are present in the desert. Avoid contact with wildlife. Put your hands and feet only where you can see them.
- Stay with the group. If you get lost, stay put.
- Before leaving the class, check out with the Desert Institute Representative.
- Drink plenty of water. If you run out, notify the instructor or the Desert Institute Representative.

### **Instructor Biography**

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**Mary Borobia Walls**, M.A., is the Director & Founder of Action Driven Inquiry and volunteer Project Manager for the EEC (Environmental Education Collaborative). Recently, she was CREEC (California Regional Environmental Education Community) Coordinator for CA Region 10 as well as a Teacher Ambassador for EEI (Education & the Environment Initiative) curriculum.

**Jennifer May**, is a fourth grade teacher at Arroyo Elementary: An International Baccalaureate World School. Within her district, she is a spotlight teacher who serves as a model for other educators who want to learn strategies that promote learner curiosity, inquiry, and agency. She is passionate about National Parks, so she brings them into her classroom in a variety of ways.

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\* The Desert Institute staff/instructors will attempt to accommodate participant's needs; however we reserve the right to deny a student participation in the course due to concerns regarding health and safety issues.