

**University of Alaska Anchorage  
School of Education  
3211 Providence Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508-8269**

**ED 581 Professional Learning in Science Education:  
Mushrooms in Denali**

**1 Credit, Graded P/NP  
Summer 2026**

**Course Sponsor:** Alaska Geographic, Murie Science and Learning Center, Denali National Park

**Instructor:** Eric Groth

**Educational Resource:** Paula Davis

**Primary Grading Instructor:** Jessica Brillhart

**Facilitating Instructor:** Jessica Brillhart

**Contact Information Address:** Alaska Geographic, Murie Science and Learning Center  
P.O. Box 136, Denali Park, AK 99755

**Telephone:** (907) 771-8485

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**Course Meeting Information**

**Location:** Murie Science and Learning Center, Denali National Park & Preserve entrance

**Start and End Date:** August 21 - 23, 2026

**Class Day(s) & Time(s):** August 21st, 6:30pm through August 23rd, 4pm, continuous residential course

**Final Project Due:** final day of course

**Course Description:** Late summer showcases a wealth of mushrooms throughout interior Alaska. Local naturalist Eric Groth will lead participants in learning various techniques for identifying native wild mushrooms in Denali National Park. By paying special attention to the landscape, participants will hone their observation skills and gain experience using field guides. Participants will learn about the many roles mushrooms play in Denali's vastly different environments and will gain an appreciation for wild mushrooms and how they influence human life. Participants will experience integrating fieldwork content with their own learning and teaching about natural environments.

**Intended Audience:** Teachers and other interested educators

**Enrollment Restrictions:** None

**Course Prerequisite/Co-requisites:** None

**Course Design:**

- a. Requires 15 contact hours and approximately 30 hours of engaged learning.
- b. Does not apply to any UAA certificate or degree program.
- c. No UAA lab and/or materials fees beyond standard charges.
- d. This Murie Science and Learning Center course will be entirely field-based. Learning will be achieved through lectures, group discussions, field observations, and field activities. This course is based upon the collegial sharing, collaboration, and support of the participants and facilitator as a community of learners. Course activities will include common readings and group discussions, collective learning processes, peer coaching/mentoring, and reflective practices.

**Instructional Goals and Defined Outcomes:**

RESEARCH BASED THEORY/PRINCIPLES/PRACTICES/TRENDS (CONTENT)

1.0 Instructional Goal:

Instructor will define the basic biological and physiological functions of fungi as they compare to other organisms and guide exploration into the diversity of fungi in interior Alaska. Instructor will communicate the importance of fungi in the terrestrial environment.

Defined Outcomes:

- 1.1 Participants will analyze and reflect upon the similarities and differences between fungi and other organisms.
- 1.2 Participants will witness many different species of fungi in their natural habitat and learn characteristics on how to tell different species apart.
- 1.3 Participants will identify ecological roles that fungi play in interior Alaska.

THEORY INTO PRACTICE (APPLICATION)

2.0 Instructional Goal:

Instructor will provide activities to help newcomers recognize the diversity of fungi species in interior Alaska. Instructor will provide stories on the impact of particular species on local ecology.

Defined Outcomes:

Participants will be able to recognize the diversity of fungi species in interior Alaska and describe the impact of a particular species on local ecology.

3.0 Instructional Goal:

The instructor will demonstrate ways of learning about fungi by working with fresh specimen materials in the field. Instructor will demonstrate the use of a variety of field guides and other scientific resources for identifying and appreciating the fungal world.

Defined Outcomes:

- 3.1 Participants will engage in outdoor field activities of searching for, collecting, photographing, spore printing, describing and labeling fungi.
- 3.2 Participants will describe how they will integrate their experiences into their teaching or educational environments.

## REFLECTION ON THEORY INTO PRACTICE (REFLECTION)

### 4.0 Instructional Goal:

Engage participants in discussions, reflective journaling and informal sharing about science instruction and how to incorporate gained knowledge and experience into their educating opportunities.

### Defined Outcome:

Participants will review and reflect upon the scientific information covered. Participants will complete a self-determined journal, reflecting on how the information can be shared with others.

## RELATIONSHIP TO STANDARDS (STANDARDS)

### 5.0 Instructional Goal:

Familiarize participants with science content standards addressed through strategies and concepts presented.

### Defined Outcome:

Participants will identify Science-Content standards applicable to classroom material.

### **Writing Style Requirements:**

Participants' writing will reflect the clarity, conciseness, and creativity expected of post-baccalaureate participants and/or certificated educators.

### **Attendance and Make-up Policy:**

Participants are expected to actively participate in all classes as a contributing member of a learning community. Attendance is mandatory, and due to the ongoing field-based nature of this course, make-up work is not possible.

### **Course Assignments, Assessment of Learning, and Grading System:**

Course grading will be Pass/No Pass based upon the following:

1. Participation 50%  
Participants will be expected to actively and collegially participate in discussions, activities, and other process experiences during the seminar.
2. Final Project – Professional Development Field Journal completion 50%  
Participants will complete journal assignments to be turned in to MSLC field guide on the last day of class. Assignments will include thoughtful reflection based upon seminar experience and an application plan of how participants will integrate issues and content discussed into their own classroom setting.

### **Quality of Work**

#### **Grade of "Pass"**

Passing work includes all components of the assignment and meets proficient criteria. It is focused, developed, supported, logical, and acceptable work with minimal errors. Work of this quality indicates understanding of key concepts and knowledge base.

#### **Grade of "No Pass"**

Work graded "No Pass" may lack key criteria/components of the task and show little or no evidence of conceptual understanding or knowledge utilization. Work may also show minimal or no organization/development and/or clear focus (may be difficult to follow) and may contain numerous errors. This grade indicates minimal or no knowledge or concept development. It may also mean that work was not attempted.

**Course Calendar/Schedule:**

|          |                       |   |
|----------|-----------------------|---|
| Friday   | 6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. | Greeting and check in at MSLC   |
|          | 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. | Introduction, orientation & overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are fungi?</li><li>• Mushroom identification characters</li><li>• Mushroom diversity/ecology</li></ul>  |
|          | 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. | Drive to MSLC Field Camp and settle in  |
| Saturday | 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Exploration of Denali <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visits to multiple habitat types to explore diversity across the landscape</li><li>• Discussions on individual species and their roles in community ecology</li></ul>   |
|          | 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. | Dinner and evening discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion of day's findings, and the results of fine-tuning your eye to the smaller-scale world of fungi.</li><li>• Teacher study group to discuss the day's activities and how the information can be shared with students</li><li>• Identify applicable science content standards addressed by course content</li></ul> |
| Sunday   | 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Continued exploration of Denali <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continued study of fungal diversity across the landscape.</li><li>• Continued search for individual species that present great stories about their roles in community ecology.</li></ul>  |
|          | 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | Return drive to MSLC  |

**Final Project Due:** last day of course

**Course Texts, Readings, Handouts, and Library Reserve:**Required Text/Materials:

None

Suggested Materials:

Arora D. (1991). *All That the Rain Promises, and More...: A Hip Pocket Guide to Western Mushrooms*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.

Arora, D. (1986). *Mushrooms Demystified*. Ten Speed Press.

Laursen, G. & McArthur, N. (2016) *Alaska's Mushrooms: A Wide-Ranging Guide*. Graphic Arts Books.

Lincoff, G. H. (1992). *The Audubon Society field guide to North American mushrooms*. New York: Knopf.

McKnight, K. B., J. R. Rohrer, K. McKnight Ward, and K. H. McKnight. (2021). *Peterson Field Guide to Mushrooms Second Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Sheldrake, M. (2020). *Entangled life*. Bodley Head.

Siegel, N & Schwarz, C. (2024). *Mushrooms of Cascadia: A Comprehensive Guide to Fungi of the Pacific Northwest*. Backcountry Press.

Trudell, S. & J. Ammirati (2009). *Mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest*. Portland: Timber Press.

#### Content References:

Kuo, Michael (2019). Mushroom Expert Retrieved from: [www.mushroomexpert.com](http://www.mushroomexpert.com)

Laursen, G.A. and R.D. Seppelt. (2009). *Common Interior Alaska Cryptogams: Fungi, Lichenicolous Fungi, Lichenized Fungi, Slime Molds, & Mosses and Liverworts*. University of Alaska Press

Miller, O. K., Jr and H. H. Miller. (2006). *North American Mushrooms: A Field Guide to Edible and Inedible Fungi*. Falcon Guide. 583 pp.

North American Mycological Society. Retrieved from: <https://namyco.org/>

Stamets, P. (2005). *Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World*. Ten Speed Press.

Trudell, S. and J. Ammirati. (2009). *Mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest*. Timber Press Field Guide.

#### Standards References:

Alaska Comprehensive Center. (2012). *Guide to Implementing the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators*. Juneau, AK: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Retrieved from: <https://education.alaska.gov/standards/cultural>

Alaska Native Knowledge Network. (1998). *Alaska standards for culturally responsive schools*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press. Retrieved from: <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/publications/culturalstandards.pdf>

National Research Council, the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Achieve. (2013). *The next generation science standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.nextgenscience.org/next-generation-science-standards>.

State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. (2019). *Content and performance standards for Alaska students*. Juneau, AK: Author. Retrieved from:

[https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/standards/Content and Performance Standards\\_edited.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/standards/Content_and_Performance_Standards_edited.pdf)

State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. (2019). *K-12 Science Standards for Alaska*. Juneau, AK. Author. Retrieved from:

<https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/science/science-standards-for-alaska.pdf?v=1>

State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. (2012). *Alaska*

*English/Language Arts and Math Standards*. Juneau, AK: Author. Retrieved from:

[https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/standards/ELA and Math.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/standards/ELA_and_Math.pdf)

### **Informed by the School of Education Vision, Mission, and Conceptual Framework:**

We believe that the preparation and support of professional educators is the shared responsibility of the University of Alaska Anchorage and our partners, and that our programs must evolve dynamically in response to unique community needs, research, and continuous program assessment. This PACE course is designed to meet a professional development need in response to our partner school districts and professional organizations. The course fits within the mission of the UAA School of Education as we encourage lifelong learning to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

### **Link to Alaska Educator Content and Performance Standards:**

This professional development is rooted in the fundamentals of Alaska's standards for teachers, administrators, and beginning teachers in Alaska's Administrative Code, 4 AAC 04.200. It is offered to encourage and support practicing educators attain, maintain, or surpass the standards for effectively preparing today's students for successful lives and productive careers.

(<https://education.alaska.gov/standards/other-standards>)

### **Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning:**

This course is further informed by the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning which outline the "characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results." As explicit in the standards, "professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices and dispositions they need to help student perform at a higher levels."

(<https://standards.learningforward.org>)

### **Course Policies:**

#### **Incomplete Grades**

Due to the nature of this course, grades of incomplete will not be permitted.

#### **ADA Policy**

The provision of equal opportunities for students who experience disabilities is a campus-wide responsibility and commitment. Disabilities Support Services (DSS) is the designated UAA department responsible for coordinating academic support services for students who experience disabilities. To access support services, students must contact DSS (786-4530 or 786-4536 TTY) and provide current disability documentation that supports the requested services. Disability support services are mandated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Additional information may be accessed at the DSS Office in RH 105 or on-line at [www.uaa.alaska.edu/dss](http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/dss).

#### **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

Academic integrity is a basic principle that requires all students to take credit only for the ideas and efforts that are their own. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are defined as the submission of materials in assignments, exams, or other academic work that is based on sources prohibited by the faculty member. Academic dishonesty is defined further

in the “student Code of Conduct.” In addition to any adverse academic action that may result from the academically dishonest behavior, the University specifically reserves the right to address and sanction the conduct involved through student judicial review procedures and the Academic Dispute Resolution Procedure specified in the University catalog.

### **Professional and Ethical Behavior**

University of Alaska Anchorage School of Education students are expected to abide by the State of Alaska Code of Ethics of the Education Profession and professional teaching standards as they concern students, the public, and the profession. The standards, adopted by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, govern all members of the teaching profession. A violation of the code of ethics and professional teaching standards are grounds for revocation or suspension of teaching certification.

### **Technology Integration**

University of Alaska Anchorage School of Education students are expected to (a) demonstrate sound understanding of technology operations and concepts; (b) plan and design effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology; (c) implement curriculum plans that include technology applications in methods and strategies to maximize student learning; (d) facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluation strategies; (e) use technology to enhance productivity and professional practice; and (f) understand the social, ethical, and human issues surrounding use of technology in PreK-12 schools and apply those principles in practice.

### **Course Safety and Risk**

This course is sponsored by Alaska Geographic and the Murie Science and Learning Center. The University of Alaska Anchorage provides the credit option for interested participants. This course takes place entirely outdoors and within a remote area of Alaska. Field courses, such as this, do have inherent risks. These risks will be outlined by the course instructors and in the Alaska Geographic Participant Release of Liability, Waiver of Claims, Assumption of Risks, and Indemnity Agreement form. This form will be provided at the time of registration and a signed copy is required in order to attend.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

The University of Alaska is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educational institution. The University of Alaska does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, physical or mental disability, status as a protected veteran, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, parenthood, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation or belief, genetic information, or other legally protected status. The University's commitment to nondiscrimination, including against sex discrimination, applies to students, employees, and applicants for admission and employment. Contact information, applicable laws, and complaint procedures are included on UA's statement of nondiscrimination available at [www.alaska.edu/nondiscrimination](http://www.alaska.edu/nondiscrimination).