FOOTPRINTS ON THE JAMES: THE NATURAL AND HUMAN HISTORY OF THE JAMES RIVER WATERSHED

BIOL 391 and HIST 391, Summer 2014

Instructors:
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Andrew J. Parent, parentaj@vcu.edu, (undisclosed location)

Credits: 6 total (3 BIOL, 3 HIST)

Websites: All social media and websites linked to course name.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

The James River watershed is one of the largest geographical features in the Commonwealth of Virginia and a crucial part of its history. This newly-developed class will travel down and along the river, exploring its past and present, with History and Biology faculty. The four-week journey will take place in canoes, kayaks, batteaus, and vans and will extend from roughly Lynchburg to Jamestown. We believe students will gain a greater appreciation for the river, its role in Virginia’s development, and how our historic and present-day use impact its quality, flora, and fauna.

The principal goal is to expose students to the importance of the James River watershed, to the residents of Virginia in the present, past and future. This collaborative, experiential learning opportunity will combine faculty from the Biology and History departments and the Outdoor Adventure Program (OAP). This program represents a unique opportunity for students at VCU to learn about human history, natural history and how the two shape each other. Students will also learn about specific features that make up this river system after identifying and stimulating ownership of particular issues of interest to each student during the class. The initial practical component of this course will teach a variety of hands-on sampling and identification techniques that will be employed multiple times as the class proceeds down the river, building a picture of the river as it is today. Students will also learn and practice advanced camping, canoeing/kayaking, and outdoor living skills, including leave no trace camping. Students will also learn to function as team members, and will be instructed in expedition management, group dynamics, and leadership skills.

This class will be a collaborative field-based experience taking place over four weeks in the summer of 2014. It will begin with a series of topical seminars and skill development classes at the VCU Rice Center for Environmental Studies on the James River in Charles City County, VA. The class will continue by moving down the river, visiting sites of historical and environmental significance until we reach the colonial capital of Jamestown, VA. The class will then return to Richmond before continuing to the headwaters of the James River near the Blue Ridge mountains and proceeding by foot, canoe, bateau and kayak through the watershed. During this journey the students will be engaged with a wide variety of hands-on interactions in the three disciplines, guided by faculty from each department and guest experts. The OAP will be
providing trained students from their Student Outdoor Leader Program to act as program guides to teach a wide variety of practical outdoors skills and to introduce traditional expedition management and outdoor leadership techniques. The students will be camping in tents each night and managing their own daily affairs. Responsibility for daily activities such as group leadership, cooking, navigation, setting up camp and managing social media will be assigned as daily duties on rotation.

COURSE GOALS:

At its conclusion, students should be able to:

- identify the major features of a river system and its related watershed
- discuss the distinguishing features of the James River and its watershed
- biology: identify, compare and discuss features of a biological system of interest in each of the three regions of the river
- learn and employ basic biological sampling regimes to better understand the major biological components and their interactions in each of the three regions of the river
- history: identify, compare, and discuss the principal organizations, individuals, trends, and events that have shaped the human history of the James River watershed
- recognize and understand many of the ways in which human habitation and development have impacted the James River, and vice versa
- recognize and explain various connections between the river and the land which surrounds it
- use, demonstrate proficiency in expedition skills, management, and logistics as it relates to this trip

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Honor Code: Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on tests or any other graded activities, as well as plagiarism, are violations of the University's Honor Code and will result in failure and a referral to the Student Honor Court. Also, students who observe cheating or any violation of the Honor Code have a responsibility to follow the procedures detailed in the Virginia Commonwealth University Student Handbook.

Participants will be held to the VCU Student Code of Conduct at all times. This document and other relevant information can be found at the following link. Please pay particular attention to the section regarding conduct off campus.
http://www.students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/students/6865606EB1F74B04BAD2D2EEFC4A0E7C.html

Required Readings:

- Students will be given a coursepack with articles, etc.
- Readings posted on Blackboard

ASSESSMENT:

Grades for all assignments:  90-100%=A, 80-89%=B, 70-79%=C, 60-69%=D, 0-59%=F

Tentative Breakdown of Grades:
Practical Exam 20%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading/participating in discussions</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal Entries</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>End of course essays</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Attendance and Participation (and Punctuality): Students are expected to attend all group events and participate in all group activities. This includes personal responsibilities (water, fire, dishes, etc.) outlined below in Camp Life. It is essential that students are also on time for all group meetings and gatherings—this will be taken very seriously. Carry a phone/watch and plan ahead for transportation. Always know when and where our meetings will take place and how to get there.

Essays: At the beginning of the course, we will pass out 3 essay questions. While these questions are due after the course ends, students should include information from sites, our speakers, and our readings in each answer, so it is important to take thorough notes while on the trip to be able to adequately answer these questions afterwards. Each essay should be approximately 4 pages in length (for a total of 12 typed, double-spaced pages). Essays should be emailed to all of the course instructors no later than one week after the end of class.

Discussions: Students, in groups of 2-3, will lead two 1-hour discussions. In addition, students are expected to participate actively and thoughtfully in every group discussion. Students must come to each discussion with ALL of the readings completed. Discussions will cover all of the reading material assigned since the prior discussion. Also, students should be prepared to discuss the sites we have visited and the people we have talked with since the previous discussion session. In addition, students will be expected to undertake individualized and specialized research, and then teach some content of their own. There will be a total of 8 discussions. The instructors will lead the final discussion.

Journal: Students are required to complete 10 journal entries during the trip. Entries should be 2 full pages (front and back) in length. Students should write an entry every 2-3 days, and entries should analytically connect students’ experiences at the sites, their interactions with speakers/activists, course readings, and the experience of traveling. In other words, we don’t want you to go a week without writing anything and then write daily during the last week of the course. It is important for your reflection and analysis to spread out the journal entries across the two weeks. Other than these guidelines, there are no assigned topics for these journal entries. Journals will be collected and checked periodically on the trip. You will turn in your journal at the end of the trip. [some will prefer to submit online entries, etc] Students will also be required to post regular journal entries, SPOT updates, photos and videos of their travels and experiences on Facebook (www.facebook.com/BCVOR) and a blog (voiceoftherivers.com) and Twitter (https://twitter.com/BC_VOR).

Exam: A practical exam of skills learned during the first week at the Rice center.

**TRIP LIFE**

All participants will be living, travelling and learning in variety of camping locations in close proximity to the James River and its watershed. From the first night out, everyone will be living out of a backpacking tent and eating meals prepared by our classmates. After the first week, most of your nights will be spent in a different place from the evening before. While there will be a few opportunities for a night back in Richmond, we will spend 30 days and nights in the field. Showers, grid electricity and refrigeration will be infrequent if not absent. The class will take
place during the early summer in Virginia; students will have ample opportunity to consider mosquitos, heat, sunburn, ticks and body odor. To accommodate this, the day to day operations of this trip will be largely the responsibility of the student participants. This will require both self discipline and cooperation among our members.

The living arrangements will be organized enough to maintain a smooth flow of work and life without being burdensome. To this end, you will all be dividing up the necessary group responsibilities, outlined below. These will be assigned on a daily, rotating schedule. Duties will include: Trip Leader, Navigator, Program, Cook, Cook’s Helper, and Communications. Each person will be responsible for those duties for that 24 hour period and the communication of all relevant information to the next person. The roster will be drawn up and agreed upon during the first day at the Rice Center.

Your assigned positions will rotate each day after dinner is finished. The particular duties are as follows. The Navigator will be responsible for knowing where we are on the map. This includes areas of interest we will be travelling through and where we will be camping that night. The Program coordinator will figure out from the teachers what is needed for class each day (location, materials, schedule, etc.) and organize it before class. This may include a timetable for events. The Cook and Cook’s helper will prepare the three meals for everyone and organize the food supplies. Each person will clean up after themselves, but the Cook will set up the dishwashing area for everyone and wash up the crew gear. The Cook will also report to the Trip Leader on the status of the food and fuel supplies in camp every day after dinner. The Communications coordinator will be in charge of documenting various aspects of the trip. These will include writing the daily blog entry, taking pictures and updating various social media outlets throughout the day. They will also be checking the weather for that day and the next. The Trip Leader will be responsible for making sure that everything that needs to happen does happen each day. The Trip Leader will need to make decisions, delegate authority, and define duties for the others.

**TRIP INFORMATION:**

**Typical day** (will vary from day to day based on needs of the group)

- 6am Rise and shine
  - Breakfast
- 8am Packed and ready to go
  - Class time
- 10am Head downstream
- 12pm Lunch
  - Class time
  - Head downstream
- 4-5pm Set up camp
  - Class time
- 7pm Dinner
- 9pm Free time

**Travel**
The OAP vans and trailer will transport everyone and the equipment to and from our various destinations throughout the course. While in the backcountry, we will be traveling by human power either by foot, canoe, sea kayak, raft and batteau. The OAP staff will transport equipment to various transition points along the route.
Preparation
This trip is designed for those with little experience to be able to fully participate in all aspects of the trip. Most of the trails that we will be walking are over gradual terrain and the whitewater on this trip is primarily class II waves. This is an extended outdoor experience that will demand a moderate level of physical fitness. Participants must be able to participate in a minimum of 5 hours of physical activity a day for 30 consecutive days. We have scheduled in a limited number of rest days throughout the trip.

Lodging/Camping
We will be camping every night of this course. During the first week of the course we will be basing out of VCU’s Rice Center and camping on the grounds. When we move up river, we will be camping in remote backcountry locations for most of the trip. Occasionally we will pass more developed areas (such as Scottsville) where we will camp in an established commercial campground. The norm will be either backcountry campsites while we are on the trail, or on islands in the middle of the James River while paddling. We will be sleeping on the ground almost every night.

Average Day
Plan on long days with lots of activities and discussions. Typically each day will begin around 6am. The group will have breakfast and be packed up and ready to go by 8am. We will likely have a lecture/discussion once everyone is packed. Our goal is to start moving down stream between 9am and 10am each day. We will take a break around midday for lunch and another discussion. The group will then continue downstream until 4 or 5 pm at which time we will set up camp for the evening. Our evenings will be be filled with more classroom time, as well as group chores and cooking dinner. Once all the group’s chores are done, students are free for the evening, this will likely be around 9pm. Please understand there is no set schedule. To some extent we will be on river time; some days may be longer or shorter than others. Stuff happens and we will need to adjust in order to make up for it. We will all enjoy ourselves much more if we work as a group and “go with the flow.”

Weather
Weather in central Virginia in early June can be variable. It is very likely we will see everything from sunny hot days to wet cool and overcast days while in the field. Generally it is comfortable during the day with temps in the mid 70s - upper 80s. At night the temperature tends to drop significantly, likely to the mid 50s-60s.

Money
The course fee includes all transportation, food, camping fees, and essential equipment. Participants may want to bring some extra cash for stops and snacks along the way. Some clothing and personal gear may need to be purchased by students beforehand in order to participate.

Notes on using OAP Gear on VCU trips:
Please keep track of the equipment checked out to you. You are responsible for the numbered items checked out specifically to you. Fees will be charged to students if the gear is not returned to the OAP or if it is damaged.

Medical History, Medications and Allergies:
OAP trip leaders have wilderness medical training and certifications. It is important for the trip leaders be aware of any preexisting medical conditions, medications you are taking, and any
allergies that you may have. It is critical that we know this information before we are in the backcountry. It is your responsibility to notify trip leaders of any medical issues you may have. This information will be confidential and is for your safety.

**Group/Expedition Travel Philosophy:**

On all OAP trips, we travel and participate in activities as a group. We make every attempt to cater to individual requests, needs and goals. Ultimately, we will make decisions in the interest of safety and the common good. Although this will be a student-run experience, faculty will have the final word on any contentious issues that may arise.

**Alcohol and Illegal Substances:**

OAP activities are sanctioned VCU events. Therefore, in accordance with the campus Alcohol and Drug Policy, alcohol and illegal substances are not permitted on VCU trips and activities. Furthermore, on OAP trips, alcohol and illegal substances become a safety issue for adventure activities. An altered mindset is a safety issue for the entire group and is not tolerated. We appreciate your cooperation.

**Packing List**

Students will need to bring certain essentials items with them on the trip. Please remember that we will have to carry everything that we bring, plus additional group gear and food. The personal gear that each person brings will stay with them throughout the entire trip even as we transition from backpacking to canoeing and sea kayaking. The only thing that will change is the container (ie. backpack, dry bags, etc.).

It is a good idea to pack two pairs of clothes to have during the day and one warmer set of clothes to wear around camp in the evenings. Plan to dress in layers so that clothing can be added or taken away as the weather changes.

*All Items marked with stars (***) can be checked out from the OAP at no additional cost.*

1. Spoon, cup, bowl (**very important, we do not supply**)
2. light or medium weight long underwear (top and bottom)
3. Warm wool or synthetic sweater (not to bulky)
4. Warm hat
5. Hat with brim (baseball)
6. Rain Jacket
7. Rain pants
8. Pair hiking socks
9. Pair sturdy hiking shoes
10. Pair of water shoes or sandals (must have heel strap **NO FLIP FLOPS**)
11. T-shirt
12. Long sleeve sun shirt
13. Quick drying shorts
14. Bathing Suit
15. Underwear(?)
16. Headlamp or flashlight with extra batteries***
17. Bandana
18. Sunglasses
1 Sunscreen
1 Lip balm with sunscreen
1 Pocket knife
1 Small toilet kit
§ small biodegradable soap
§ toothbrush and toothpaste
§ women, bring tampons
§ do not bring makeup, deodorant, perfume, etc. (it’s too heavy!)
1 Sleeping bag (at least 20 Degree)***
1 Pad***
1 2 person tent or shelter (shared with another tent mate)***
1 Water bottles, enough to carry 1 gallon
1 Large capacity backpack***
1 Large capacity dry bag***
1 Personal small dry bag***

Optional
camera, extra film, journal, pen/pencil, compass, natural history books

Maps of the James:
http://www.jamesriverassociation.org/enjoy-the-james/james-river-maps
Also includes good info on sites along the way

Google map of our anticipated route. Corresponds to the information listed below
https://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=zRx8mPjMXj14.kHs9mYCqOYPY

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/va/nwis/current/?type=flow

Selection of participants
Enrollment by instructor permission only. Selection criteria include written application & interview. Application will provide background on applicant coursework, academic standing, prior experience (e.g., research, outdoor etc), and provide basis for allocation of scholarship support. Application will be due April 1, 2014. Interview in early April. Final selection anticipated by May 1.

Pre-course preparation
During early May students should review course materials, organized personal gear required for successful trip (see personal equipment list) and plan to attend optional trip preparation meetings. Student will also be expected to review pre-course readings posted on course website.
# Syllabus -- Daily Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location(s) -- day</th>
<th>Activities (day/evening)</th>
<th>Mileage</th>
<th>Location -- night</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mon, 5/19</td>
<td>Meet at VCU @8am</td>
<td><strong>AM</strong> - LFSC: Pre-course Assessment; Introduction to BIOL 391; Introduction to HIST 391; GUEST SPEAKER: ANNE WOODLIEF, VCU Dept English (Emeritus), Author of &quot;In River Time - The Way of the James&quot;&lt;br&gt;PM - VCU ORC: Group Introductions; Team and personal gear orientation; Expectations of daily group responsibilities. [Intension is that much of this has been introduced in pre-course contact]&lt;br&gt;EVE - Pack up ready to leave in AM; Sleep at home</td>
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<td>Home</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Tues, 5/20</td>
<td>Meet at VCU ORC@6am Travel down the James by sea kayaks</td>
<td><strong>AM</strong> - Put in @ 14th Street Bridge; Stop at Ancarrow’s Landing [1.5]; LECTURE: Richmond Slave history&lt;br&gt;PM - Fort Darling/Drewry’s Bluff: Civil War defense of Richmond [7.5 mi]&lt;br&gt;EV: LECTURE: Civil War in Eastern VA</td>
<td>7 mi total</td>
<td>Fort Darling - Drewry’s Bluff NP camp [by special use permit*]</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Thurs, 5/22</td>
<td>Sea kayaks to Presquile</td>
<td><strong>AM</strong>: Depart Dutch Gap paddle to Deep Bottom Park;&lt;br&gt;LECTURE: Bulluck lab introduced PROW project [5 mi] &amp; Introduction to basic birding&lt;br&gt;PM: Paddle to Presquile NWR Ecology School [6 mi]&lt;br&gt;EV: LECTURE Mammals of JRWS &amp; use of camera traps</td>
<td>11 mi</td>
<td>Presquile NWR Ecology School</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Fri, 5/23</td>
<td>Sea kayaks VCU Rice Center</td>
<td><strong>AM</strong>: Depart Presquile to VCU Rice Center [direct 6 mi; Around Turkey Island [11 mi]; LECTURE History TBA?&lt;br&gt;PM: Arrive @ Rice; Establish Basecamp; Walking tour of Rice</td>
<td>6 or 11 mi</td>
<td>VCU Rice Center</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
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<td>7 Sun, 5/25</td>
<td>AM: LAB: Aquatic insects &amp; Terrestrial Insects PM: LECTURE: Species of economic, historic and conservation importance: Fish of JRWS VANS to Harrison Lake Fish Hatchery - Conservation of anadromous fish EV: LECTURE: Native American and European Contact and Conflict [set minnow traps and evening bug lighting]</td>
<td>VCU Rice Center</td>
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<td>8 Mon, 5/26</td>
<td>Day trip to Williamsburg and Jamestown AM: Colonial Williamsburg PM: Jamestown; LECTURE: Sturgeon past, present, future EV: LECTURE Colonial VA and tobacco culture</td>
<td>VCU Rice Center</td>
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<td>10 Wed, 5/28</td>
<td>AM: History and Biology pairs work on their short presentations to be given on river during second half of class PM: VANS to Shirley Plantation EV: Lecture HIST: Colonial trade and westward expansion on the James</td>
<td>VCU Rice Center</td>
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<td>11 Thurs, 5/29</td>
<td>AM: Plant of economic, historic, and conservation importance &amp; plant identification PM: LECTURE: History TBA EV: Study for practical</td>
<td>VCU Rice Center</td>
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<td>12 Fri, 5/30</td>
<td>AM: Biology practical PM: History practical EV: Break camp VANS to RVA</td>
<td>Home</td>
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<td>Day</td>
<td>Event Details</td>
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<td>Sat, 5/31</td>
<td>Richmond Day off &amp; packing for second half Home</td>
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<td>Sun, 6/1</td>
<td>VCU to Crabtree Falls AM: VANS to Crabtree Falls, set up camp Camping at Crabtree Falls</td>
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<td>Mon, 6/2</td>
<td>Backpacking - Montebello to Spy Rock Montebello Fish Cultural Station Camping at Spy Rock</td>
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<td>Thurs, 6/3</td>
<td>Backpacking - Spy Rock to the Priest, Appalachian Trail Crabtree Falls overlook Lecture BIOL: Geology? Short “field lectures” by students (opportunistically) Camping near the Priest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat, 6/4</td>
<td>Backpacking - Priest to Tye River Lecture HIST: Creation of Shenandoah National Park Short “field lectures” by students (opportunistically) Camping near Tye River swinging bridge</td>
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<td>Sun, 6/5</td>
<td>Canoeing/Kayaking - Upper Tye River Whitewater Canoe/Kayak - Tye River (Swinging Bridge to?) Short “field lectures” by students (opportunistically) Saundersbrothers orchard/farm market? Sampling river indicators: water, macroinvertebrates (en route), fish (seine and minnow trapping at camp), birds (AM birding transect from canoe), mammals (camera trapping at camp)</td>
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<td>Mon, 6/6</td>
<td>Canoeing/Kayaking - Tye River Short “field lectures” by students (opportunistically) Confluence of Piney River Sampling river indicators: water, macroinvertebrates (en route), fish (seine and minnow trapping at camp), birds (AM birding transect from canoe), mammals (camera trapping at camp)</td>
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<td>Tues, 6/7</td>
<td>Canoeing/Kayaking - Tye River to James River State Park Scott Passwaters, Park Ranger: 434-993-4355 Short “field lectures” by students (opportunistically) James River State Park Sampling river indicators: water, macroinvertebrates (en route), fish (seine and minnow trapping at camp), birds (AM birding transect from canoe), mammals (camera trapping at camp)</td>
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<td>Wed, 6/8</td>
<td>Canoeing on James River - James River State Park to Dog Island or Buford Short “field lectures” by students (opportunistically) Dog Island or Buford Island (before Sampling river indicators: water, macroinvertebrates (en route), fish (seine and minnow trapping at camp), birds (AM birding transect from canoe), mammals (camera trapping at camp)</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>23 Fri, 6/10</td>
<td>Batteauing on James River</td>
<td>Scottsville (camp at James River Reeling and Rafting)</td>
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<td>24 Sat, 6/11</td>
<td>Batteauing on James River; Hardware River State Wildlife Management Area; Thistle Gate Vineyard and Winery (by van)</td>
<td>Boatwrights Island</td>
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<td>25 Sun, 6/12</td>
<td>Batteauing on James River; switch to canoes at Maidens Landing, paddle to island at Fine Creek</td>
<td>West View (Island at Fine Creek?)</td>
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<td>26 Mon, 6/13</td>
<td>Batteauing on James River; switch to canoes at Maidens Landing, paddle to island at Fine Creek</td>
<td>Island at Fine Creek</td>
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<td>27 Tues, 6/14</td>
<td>Canoeing on James River</td>
<td>JRPS - Williams Island</td>
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<td>28 Wed, 6/15</td>
<td>Canoeing on James River; switch to rafts at Pony Pasture, Pony Pasture; Willow Oaks Country Club; Hollywood Cemetery</td>
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<td>raft to 14th Street</td>
<td>Belle Isle, including hydroelectric</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Thurs, 6/16</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
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<td>Service day: river clean-up with James River Parks</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Fri, 6/17</td>
<td>VCU</td>
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<td>Process, write</td>
<td>Home</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Sat, 6/18</td>
<td>VCU</td>
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