

# SYLLABUS FOR FRESHMAN SEMINAR 124: The History and Culture of Climbing in the US

Professor John Gager  
Spring Semester, 2009

*Question to Sir George Mallory: "Why do you want to climb Mt. Everest?"*

*His answer: Because it is there."*

## Feb. 4: Introduction

What is climbing? Where did it come from? Terms, gear and styles in rock climbing: free climbing (leading, trad and sport climbing), top-roping, competitions, bouldering, building, soloing/free soloing, rope soloing, aid climbing; ice climbing; mountaineering

- Wikipedia article 'rock climbing - styles' --- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock\\_climbing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_climbing)
- DVD
- \*R. Bates, Mystery, Beauty and Danger, pp. 1-22
- \*E. Whymper, Scrambles amongst the Alps, (various illustrations) pp. 85,118, 172, 236, 290
- \*Lito Tejada-Flores, "Games Climbers Play," in The Games Climbers Play, ed. Ken Wilson (1978; at Dartmouth) 19-27

## Feb. 11: The Beginnings in the Northeast

- \*\*Waterman, 1-52, 117-47
- [http://www128.pair.com/r3d4k7/Bouldering\\_History1.0.html](http://www128.pair.com/r3d4k7/Bouldering_History1.0.html)

## Feb. 18: The Beginnings in the West - Yosemite:

- \*\*S. Roper, CAMP 4
- Big Walls by Chris McNamara (Yosemite Big Walls) - <http://www.supertopo.com/freetopos.html#snakedike> and follow the path to Snake Dike (ignore "More info" and "Purchase")

## **Feb. 25: American Mountaineering – Attempts on K2**

- \*Bates et al. in Jim Curran, K2. The Story ... ch. 6, 8, 11;
- “Into the Void” (film)

## **March 4: Can women climb? 😊**

### **Guest = Majka Burhardt, '99**

- \*\*Lynn Hill, Climbing Free;
- \*\*Waterman, pp. 282-90
- 3 Majka Burhardt pieces (handouts)
- \*Sherry Ortner, LIFE AND DEATH..., pp. 217-31

## **March 11: Vulgarians, Appies and Princetonians**

- \*\*Waterman, chs. 13, 14, 15;
- \*\*D. Roberts, “Boulder and the Gunks” in Moments of Doubt , pp. 210-18
- \*Roberts, “The Gunks Revisited,” in ESCAPE ROUTES , pp. 192-202;
- \*Vulgarian Digest(s), 1970 (and maybe 1972)/Scree (handouts)
- \*Lawrence Hamilton, “American Rock Climbing...,” Pacific Sociological Review 22 (1979) 285-308

## **SPRING BREAK – Two-day trip to the Gunks**

## **March 25: Search, Rescue and Ethics**

### **Guest = Bobby Starke ('01)**

- \*\*A. Osius, SECOND ASCENT;
- \*John Middendorf, pp. 275ff. in 30 Years of Climbing (rescue on Half Dome)
- \*Tyler Stableford, “The Wild Bunch,” in 30 Years ..., pp. 295ff.
- \*\*D. Roberts, ON THE RIDGE, pp. 1-24;
- \*Neil Lewis, “The Climbing Body...,” Body & Society 6:3(2000) 58-80

## April 1: Better Things through Science and Technology: Gear, Falls, Physics, Physiology and the Psyche

- John Middendorf, “The Mechanical Advantage” (<http://bigwalls.net/climb/mechadv/index.html>)
- A look at a physics course at MIT – on climbing  
(<http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/Special-Programs/SP=255Spring-2006/Syllabus/index.htm>)
- YATES advertisement - <http://www.yatesgear.com/climbing/screamer/use.htm> -- on screamers;
- D. Custer, “An Elastic Model of the Holding Power of SLDC’s...”  
(<http://mit.edu/custer/www/rocking/cams/cams.body.html>)
- “Understanding Fall Factors” ([http://www.southeastclimbing.com/faq/faq\\_fall\\_factor.htm](http://www.southeastclimbing.com/faq/faq_fall_factor.htm))
- \*Phillip Watts, “Physiology of difficult rock climbing,” EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF APPLIED PHYSIOLOGY 91 (2004): 362-72;
- Handout of bibliographies from PubMed database

## April 8: Professionalism and Popularity:

- \*\*Waterman, ch. 22;
- \*John Long, “Confessions...” in Best of Rock and Ice, pp. 92ff.;
- \*J. Taylor, “Mapping Adventure: a historical geography of Yosemite Valley climbing landscapes,” JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY 32 (2006) 190-219
- \*Ortner, pp. 185-216, 283-93
- \*\*Waterman, ch. 10

## April 15: Why do we climb? Risk and Reward

- \*\*Roberts, ch. 10 in THE RIDGE BTWN LIFE AND DEATH;
- D. Llewellyn, “RISK-TAKING” (<http://www.risktaking.co.uk/intro.htm>);
- \*Peter Croft, in N. O’Connell, BEYOND RISK, pp. 263-77;
- \*Paul Roberts, “Risk,” PSYCHOLOGY TODAY 27.6 (1994) pp. 52-53, 83-84;
- \*D. Llewellyn and Xavier Sanchez, “Individual Differences and risk-taking...,”
- PSYCHOLOGY OF SPORT AND EXERCISE 9(2008): 413-26;
- \*\*John Thackray, “The Pornography of Death,” in 30 Years of Climbing, pp. 291-93

## April 22: Climbing Extremes and Controversies

- \*D. Dustin, I. Schneider, L. McAvoy, A. Frakt, "Cross-Cultural Claims," *Leisure Sciences* 24 (2002) 79-88;
- Videos on soloing and other stuff:
  - <http://www.rock-climbing-for-life.com/matt-lloyd-free-solos-the-bastille-crack.html>
  - <http://www.truveo.com/Dan-Osman-Speed-climbing-and-Free-Soloing-Video/id/3246686490>
  - <http://extremefreestyle.wordpress.com/2008/05/16/climbing-dan-osman/> (3rd video)
  - <http://www.spike.com/video/dean-porter-solo/2820587>
  - <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/14/sports/othersports/14climber.html>
  - <http://outside.away.com/outside/features/200606/dean-potter-delicate-arch-climb-1.html>
  - <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/18/sports/othersports/18outdoors.html?partner=rsnyt&emc=rss>
  - [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qn4188/is\\_20060717/ai\\_n16538740](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4188/is_20060717/ai_n16538740)
  - <http://www.huecotanks.com/essays/shermjuly1998.htm>
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC2eOl4f23Q>
- \*\*Dave Pegg, "What's your problem...," in *30 Years*, pp. 269ff.;
- \*Chris Kalous, "Rant, Rock and Ice (*journal*) 174, Jan. '09: 36-37;
- \*Bruce Erickson, "Style Matters: Explorations of Bodies, Whiteness...," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22 (2005) 373-96;

## April 29: Conclusions

- \*Pat Ament, "Prologue," to *CLIMBERS CHOICE*, ed. Ament, pp. xi-xix;
- \*\*D. Roberts, "The Unexamined Life," in *ON THE RIDGE*, ch. 10
- \*P. A. Nettleford and E. Stratford, "The Production of Climbing Landscapes-as-Texts," in *Australian Geographical Studies* 37 ('99):130-41;

- \*\*Waterman, ch. 26;
- \*Susan Edwards, "It's the Dance that Counts," in *Leading Out. Women Climbers...*, ed. Rachel da Silva, pp. 250-56;
- \*A. Abramson and R. Fletcher, "Recreating the Vertical," *Anthropology Today* 23 (2007) 3-7

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\* = online in Blackboard

\*\* = from purchased books

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**Books to buy:**

L. and G. Waterman, Yankee Rock and Ice

30 Years of Climbing Magazine;

David Roberts, On the Ridge between Life and Death

Alison Osius, Second Ascent

S. Roper, CAMP 4