

ANT 4930 (8121)
Origins of Agriculture

Lecturer: Dr. Augusto Oyuela-Caycedo

Lecture sessions: W 6 (12:50-1:40 p.m.) and F 6-7 (12:50-4:45 p.m.)

Meeting Location: NRN 0342

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Office hours: p.m. 10- 12: Friday and by appointment.

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This class is an introduction to the study of the origins of food production. The topic is an important field of study in anthropology and archaeology. Biologists can reconstruct the genetic relationships of plants and their diversity as well as the process leading toward genetic modifications, but in the end it is only the archaeologist who can provide the hard evidence on how, where, and when these processes took place. More importantly, archaeologists as anthropologists can ask why humans domesticated specific plants. In this course we will explore some of the explanations of the causes of the domestication of plants and the relationship to the formation of complex societies and the state. We will do this by addressing issues like the origins of food production, the invention of technology, the rise of the urban way of life, and other topics that are relevant for comprehending our place in the planet.

In this course we will examine specific histories of plants that provide us with pictures of the particularities of the domestication and dispersion of these plants around the planet and what this means today. By looking at these particular cases of domestication, we will recognize some significant patterns that will help us to understand the process toward food production.

Course Objectives:

We hope that the students will be able to answer and understand some basic questions such as:

1. Why plants were domesticated?
2. What was the impact of domesticated plants on the social structure of societies?
3. What was the effect on the political and economic structure of human society?
4. What is the role of hunter-gatherers in the process of domestication?
5. When, where and why did food production originate around the planet?
6. What was the contribution to food production in Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and the New World?
7. What technologies originated with food production?
8. To have knowledge of the histories of some basic economic plants and what these mean for human societies.

Textbooks:

Bellwood, Peter. (2005). *First Farmers: Origins Of Agricultural Societies*. Blackwell Publishing. Malden.

Wesley Cowan, C. and Patty Jo Watson (edited)(2006). *The Origins of Agriculture: An International Perspective*. (Paperback) University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Van Wyk, Ben-Erik (2005). *Food Plants Of The World*. Timber Press, Portland.

Damanian, A. B. et al. (1998) *The Origins of Agriculture and Crop Domestication*.
<http://www.ipgri.cgiar.org/publications/HTMLPublications/47/begin.htm>

EVALUATION: A final paper (20%), class presentation of the paper (10%) and class participation (20%), as well as two exams (each 25%).

GRADE SYSTEM:

A= 90-100 %

B= 80-89

C= 70-79

D= 60-69

F= Below 59

Assignments: You are expected to do the following:

- 1) Read the assigned material BEFORE coming to class. Many students have difficulty understanding the lectures because they do not familiarize themselves with the material prior to class. Do NOT be one of these students.
- 2) Participate actively in the discussion of the articles and the reading material.
- 3) Produce a very original paper, with clear objectives and ideas. The paper will be prepared in a group. The topic will be defined in agreement with the professor. Presentations will start September 15. The focus must be on a plant not discussed in my class presentations in relation to a chosen area: Africa, Europe, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas. The students will have 30 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for questions.

Disclaimer: Some adjustments may be made in the schedule and class requirements during the course of the semester. All changes will be announced.

ATTENDANCE is required. Final grades will be reduced one grade level for two unjustified absences. Students who are unable to come to class on a regular basis due to special circumstances should see the instructor at the beginning of the term to discuss such circumstances. Finally, please avoid at all costs coming in or walking out of the classroom in the middle of lectures. This is most rude and disruptive.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Part I: Plant history and ecology will be taught on Wednesdays.

Part II: Agriculture Technology Origins and Part III: Area perspectives and dispersion will be taught on Fridays.

Week 1. Introduction

August 23: Introduction to the course

August 25: Why study the origins of agriculture. Why did agriculture develop in first place (read Ch 2 of Bellwood)

Part I: Plant history and ecology will be taught on Wednesdays.

Week 2. August 30: Roots, tubers and rhizomes

Week 3. September 6: Roots, tubers and rhizomes

Week 4. September 13 (no class)

Week 5. September 20: Roots, tubers and rhizomes

Week 6. September 27: Cereals

Week 7. October 4: Pulses (Legumes)

Week 8. October 11: Nuts

Week 9. October 18: **First Exam**

Week 10. October 25: Fruits

Week 11. November 1: Fruits

Week 12. November 8: Leaves, stems and flowers

Week 13. November 15: Sugars, gums and starches

Week 14. November 22: Plants used in beverages

Week 15. December 29: Spices and herbs

Week 16. December 6: **Second Exam**

Part II: Agriculture Technology Origins

Week 1. August 25: Processing and extractive technology

Week 2. September 1: Landscape modifications

Part III: Area perspectives and dispersion

Week 3. September 8: Explanations of areas and dispersion

Week 4. September 15: East Asia (Ch.2 of Cowan and Watson, Ch 7 of Bellwood).

Week 5. September 22: Near East (Ch.3 of Cowan and Watson, Ch 3 of Bellwood)

Week 6. September 29: Africa (Ch.4 of Cowan and Watson)

Week 7. October 6: Homecoming, no classes

Week 8. October 13: Europe (Ch.5 of Cowan and Watson)

Week 9. October 20: North America (Ch.6 and 7 of Cowan and Watson)
Week 10. October 27: Mesoamerica (Ch.8 of Cowan and Watson)
Week 11. November 3: South America (Ch.9 of Cowan and Watson)
Week 12. November 10: Veterans Day, no classes
Week 13. November 17: The spread of farming and linguistics (Ch 10 of Bellwood)
Week 14. November 24: Thanksgiving break, no classes
Week 15. December 1: Last class. Final comments. The spread of farming and people:
the human biological evidence (Ch 11 of Bellwood)
Week 16. December 8: Reading day. No classes
Week 17. December: Final exam. 15C