

Plants and People – Sustenance, Ceremony, and Sustainability

NCLC 402

6 Credits (2 credits of EL embedded)

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Office hours by appointment

Class Time: Wednesday and Friday, 10:30 am - 1:10 pm

Class Location: Robinson Hall A105

Course Description:

This learning community will examine the direct relationships between people and plants by integrating perspectives from both ethnobotany and economic botany. It will provide students with an appreciation of the fundamental role of plants and plant-derived products in all aspects of human life in both industrialized and non-industrialized societies. Topics will include food plants, medicinal plants, psychoactive plants, and sustainability issues surrounding the use of plants by people, among many others. Students will also gain an understanding of how plants and their uses have shaped both past and present cultures around the world.

This course will combine discussion of readings, mini-lectures, films, group and individual projects, and active, inquiry-based learning. You will earn two credits of experiential learning through a variety of field experiences and hands-on projects. This learning community places special emphasis on the following four New Century College competencies: critical thinking, communication, group collaboration, and global understanding.

Learning Objectives:

- To recognize the fundamental role and significance of plants in our culture and other cultures around the world.
- To appreciate, respect, and value the varied and unique beliefs and relationships that different cultures have with the plants in their environments.
- To understand how plants have shaped the trajectory of past and present human societies and cultures throughout the world.
- To recognize and understand the current state of both biological and cultural diversity in regards to the relationship between people and plants.
- To investigate and understand sustainability issues as they relate to the use of plants by people.

Required Texts and Readings:

Balick, M. J. and P. A. Cox. 2005. Plants, People, and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany. Scientific American Library, New York.

Pollan, M. 2006. The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. The Penguin Press, New York.

Pollan, M. 2001. The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World. Random House, New York.

Standage, T. 2006. A History of the World in Six Glasses. Walker Publishing Company.

*A large variety of other required readings will also be available on the course Blackboard website.

Evaluation:

	Points:
Self Directed Field Trip Assignments	75
Open-Journal Midterm Exam	150
People and Plants Project	150
Peer Teaching	100
Significant Plant Essay	150
Journal	100
Course Portfolio	200
Class Participation	75
Total	1000

Grading Scale:

A+ 100-97%	B+ 89-87%	C+ 79-77%	D 69-60%
A 96-93%	B 86-83%	C 76-73%	F 59-0%
A- 92-90%	B- 82-80%	C- 72-70%	

Assignments:

Self Directed Field Trip Assignments (75 points)

- As part of the experiential learning requirement for this course, you will be required to complete self directed field trips to the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and the U.S. Botanic Garden, both of which are in Washington, D.C. You will be responsible for transportation (including costs) to and from both of these venues. You will receive detailed instructions for these self directed field trips.

Open-Journal Midterm Exam (150 points)

- You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your learning via an in-class midterm exam. During this exam, you will be able to consult your journal and course readings.

People and Plants Project (150 points)

- For this project, you will create something from scratch using plants – for example, paper, medicinal remedies, dyes, etc. This project is ultimately designed to give you hands-on experience with the economic, cultural, and/or historical uses of plants. This is a chance for you to be creative and choose to learn about something in which you are interested. In addition to creating the item(s), you will also be required to research the historical and cultural foundations of your item and to share your experiences and knowledge gained with the entire class. You will receive detailed instructions for this assignment. See the course schedule for key dates associated with this assignment.
- It is also important to note that through this project, along with required field trips, you will satisfy the requirements to earn the two credits of experiential learning that is embedded in this course. Please note that you must complete the experiential learning requirements in order to pass this class.

Peer Teaching: Key Topics Related to People and Plants (100 points)

- Throughout the semester, groups of students will teach their peers via short presentations about key and interesting topics associated with course subject matter. In addition, each group will write a paper detailing the information that they learned about their respective topic. You will receive detailed instructions for this assignment.

Significant Plant Essay (150 points)

- During the third class of the semester we will be watching a short film titled “Corn is Life” which is about the significance of corn to the Hopi Indians of Arizona. After watching this film you will write an essay about a significant plant in your life explaining in detail why you chose the plant that you did. In addition, you will do detailed research about this plant and you will also be asked

to reflect back on the film in your essay. You will receive detailed instructions for this assignment. See the course schedule for key dates associated with this assignment.

Journal (100 points)

- Your journal is a critical component to your success in this course. Plan to spend a minimum of two hours per week on your journal and please make an effort to write legibly. *Purchase a 3-ring binder and loose-leaf paper for your journal.* You will have a lot of freedom to develop your journal as you wish yet I ask that it contain the following two major components:
 - Front-Line Entries: These entries should be an ongoing record of thoughts and details that you capture in class, on field trips, and at home. Your front-line entries should include notes that you take during mini-lectures in class, classroom discussions, and class activities; notes, questions, and discussion topics that you compile on assigned readings; notes and observations that you take while on field trips; and ideas and connections that you may brainstorm related to the class at various times. These front-line journal entries will be extremely valuable to you when it comes to your open-journal midterm exam, the directed/reflective journal entries that you will be required to write, your final course portfolio that you will produce, and other course assignments that will be required of you throughout the semester.
 - Directed/Reflective Entries: You will complete approximately 10 entries throughout the course of the semester that will be in response to specific instructions or writing prompts that I will give to you. In these entries you will be asked to reflect upon the weekly required readings or activities, synthesize course concepts, and/or reflect upon or complete assignments related to field experiences. These will be collected, read, and evaluated throughout the course of the semester to provide you with timely feedback.
- Please be advised that all journals will be assessed rigorously and that keeping a high quality journal is also the best method of preparation for success in regards to this course, especially the open-journal midterm exam and the final course portfolio. In your journal I will be looking for proof that you have been deeply engaged and have been thinking critically about the course material, activities, and experiences throughout the semester. I will also be looking to see that you are making critical connections between your course readings, field trips, and classroom discussions, activities, and experiences. When you are writing entries about course readings, I highly suggest that you cite, refer to, and quote specific and relevant parts of the readings, lectures, films, etc. As a general rule, try to be as specific and concrete as possible in regards to your journal entries.

Course Portfolio (200 points)

- You will be required to compile a course portfolio at the end of the semester in which you will consolidate the work that you have completed and synthesize and reflect upon your learning throughout this course. You will receive detailed instructions for this assignment.

Class Participation (75 points)

- Throughout the semester, you will be expected and required to not just attend every class and field trip but to be fully engaged in every activity as an active learner. This ultimately means that you will be expected to come to class on time and fully prepared by completing all readings and assignments before class, raising well thought out and intelligent questions during class, and participating in a positive way in class discussions and activities, among other things. In addition, a variety of in-class writings will also factor into your participation grade. If everyone fulfills this course requirement we will not only build a positive classroom environment but a true community of learners.

Experiential Learning Requirements

- You will earn two credits of experiential learning in this course by participating in required field trips and by completing the “People and Plants Project” as described above. **Please note that you must complete these experiential learning requirements in order to pass the class.**
- In addition, you will be required to pay a fee to cover the costs associated with the various field trips in this course. This fee must be paid directly to the Center for Field Studies (Enterprise Hall 441) within the first three weeks of class and all payments must be made in cash or personal check (made payable to George Mason University).

Policy for Late Assignments:

All assignments are to be submitted on time on their respective due dates. Assignments submitted late will be reduced one letter grade per day (including Saturdays and Sundays). Absolutely no work will be accepted one week after its due date without a valid written medical excuse or notice of death in the family.

Statement on the Honor Code and Academic Integrity

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. This is especially true in New Century College. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, *ask for clarification*. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this or any other course, please talk with me or to a trusted friend or counselor to get your situation in perspective. The University provides a range of services to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, and other related concerns.

Some assignments are designed to be undertaken individually. For these assignments, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, I have the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

As in most learning communities at New Century College, you will be engaged in group work at various times throughout the semester. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Over the course of these assignments you may find that it is necessary for different group members to take the lead on different parts of the assignment. However, I expect that all group members will contribute equally and that the pieces will be conceptually integrated into the final end product.

Using someone else’s words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism, a very serious offense. It is very important to understand how to prevent committing plagiarism when using material from a source. If you wish to quote verbatim, you must use the exact words (including punctuation) just as it appears in the original and you must use quotation marks and page number(s) in your citation. If you want to paraphrase ideas from a source, that is, convey the author’s ideas in your own words—you must still cite the source, using MLA or APA format.

The re-use of papers, presentations, etc., from one course in another course is not appropriate. In every NCC course, faculty expect that the work that is submitted has been done only for that class. An exception is made for materials included within course and year-end portfolios.

Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences:

Students requiring special accommodations should consult their instructor and the Office of Disability Services (703-993-2474) as soon as possible. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the Office of Disability Services.

Diversity Statement:

New Century College, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and disability.

- We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
- We commit to supporting students, faculty and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
- We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.
- We believe that faculty, staff and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.
- We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, and become aware of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world.

For more information about NCC's diversity commitment go to: <http://ncc.gmu.edu/diversity.html>

Campus Resources:

1. *Writing Center:* (703-993-1200; Robinson A 114, main office; Enterprise 076, satellite office) Provides tutors, at no charge, who can help you develop ideas and revise papers. The Writing Center is also available online at <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>. For more information, e-mail wcenter@gmu.edu.
2. *On-line Writing Guide:* (<http://classweb.gmu.edu/nccwg>)
3. *Counseling Services:* (<http://caps.gmu.edu>; 703-993-2380; SUB I, Room 364) Provides individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues. In addition, the Learning Services Program (703-993-2999) offers academic skill-building workshops as well as a tutor referral service.
4. *Office of Disability Services:* (<http://ods.gmu.edu>; 703-993-2474; SUB I, Room 222) Assists students with learning or physical conditions affecting learning. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will provide you with a form to give to your instructor at the beginning of every course.
5. *Library Support:* GMU Librarian Tina Adams is available to help NCC students with research. To make an appointment, please e-mail her at tadams11@gmu.edu or call 703-993-4038.
6. *Technology Support:* The Mason Online Student Technology Guide (<http://itusupport.gmu.edu/STG/STGfrontpage.asp>) has complete information, including web-based instructional resources and phone numbers/campus locations for technology support professionals who are ready to help you. For assistance with Blackboard, send an email to courses@gmu.edu; include your GMU email address in all correspondence.

7. *Student Technology Assistance and Resources (STAR)*: (<http://media.gmu.edu>; 703-993-8990; 229 Johnson Center). Provides support for web and multimedia design. STAR has video cameras and other equipment for student check out.
8. *Other Resources*: There are numerous resources on campus to help you make your academic and personal experience here at Mason successful. If you need assistance with a problem, please let your instructor or another faculty member know so that we can help you find appropriate resources. The GMU Student Handbook also provides information on campus services and resources.

Email Policy:

In compliance with a University-wide initiative, GMU faculty and staff can correspond electronically with students only through their official university assigned email accounts. Student emails sent from other types of email accounts will not be answered.

Laptops and Paperless Classroom:

You are welcome to bring a laptop to class and use it for class-related purposes. During class you are asked to refrain from using your laptop for purposes not related to class.

We will use the Blackboard online course management system to minimize paper use. Our aim is to collaboratively adopt policies that will balance academic needs with resource conservation concerns.