

Social Life of Plants

SPRING 2021

Lecturer: Dr. Augusto Oyuela-Caycedo

ANT 4930 - Special Topics,

BOT 4935 - Special Topics

ANG 6930 - Special Topics

Meeting Location: [MCCA1142](#)

ANT 4930 - Special Topics Online (100%)

ANG 6930 - Special Topics Online (100%)

Tuesday, Period 3 - 4 (9:35 AM - 11:30 AM) and **Thursday**, Period 3 (9:35 AM - 10:25 AM)

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This class is an introduction to the study of the social life of plants. Biologists can reconstruct the genetic relationships of plants and their diversity as well as the process leading toward genetic modifications. Anthropologists and archaeologists can provide the hard evidence on how, where, and when these processes of domestication and socialization of plants took place. Today with the new approaches in post-humanism and the decentralization of the relationship between humans and plants, it is possible to develop new lines of inquiry. More importantly, archaeologists as anthropologists can ask why humans domesticated specific plants and what this means for the social organization of societies in terms of control, use, management and dispersion of plants, but also from the perspective of the plant, we can ask the same questions. In this course, we will explore some of the explanations of the mutual interactions of plants and peoples, and their importance in the process leading toward diverse forms of social relationships around the planet that range from kin groups to state societies and post-human interactions. We will do this by addressing issues like the human social interactions with specific plants in terms of relations of production that generate structures of power and the creation of multispecies plants (Biotechnology, Bioengineering). We will also address the plants that favor these structures due to their specific characteristics.

In this course, we will examine specific social histories of plants around the planet and what this means today.

Course Objectives:

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

1. What is the social life of plants? Why can we talk about social plants?
2. When, where and why did social plants originate around the planet?
3. What was the impact of social plants on the social structure of societies?
4. What were the effects social plants had on the political and economic structures of human society?
5. What social plants are relevant for hunter-gatherer groups today and in the past?
6. What was the contribution of social plants to the formation of state societies and empires?
7. What are the new multispecies plants in the post-human world.
8. What human social relations have favored social plants in the past and in the present?
9. Why it is important to understand the histories of some basic social plants and what does it mean for human societies and the planet?

Textbooks:

Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. 1993. *Rice as Self*. Princeton.

Optionals:

Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd and Aparecida Vilaça. 2020 *Science in the Forest, Science in the Past. Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 9 (1): 36–182. https://haubooks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SFSP_Webready.pdf

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. 2017. *The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton.

James C. Scott. 2017. *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. Yale University Press.

Stephen L. Nugent. 2017. *The Rise and Fall of the Amazon Rubber Industry: An Historical Anthropology*. Routledge

EVALUATION. For undergraduate students a six pages analysis paper (20%), class presentation of paper (20%), two take home exams (each 20%), and class participation (20%).

GRADE SYSTEM:

Grading Scale: Grades will be awarded according to the following scale in effect by the university:

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Grading Scale

A	93 – 100%	C-	70 – 72.9%
A-	90 – 92.9%	D+	68 – 69.9%
B+	88 – 89.9%	D	63 – 67.9%
B	83 – 87.9%	D-	60 – 61.9%
B-	80 – 82.9%	E	0 – 59.9%
C+	78 – 79.9%		
C	73 – 77.9%		

A complete listing of university policy pertaining to grades may be found at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Assignments: You are expected to do the following:

- Read the assigned material BEFORE coming to class. Many students have difficulties understanding the lectures because they do not read the material prior to class. Do NOT be one of these students.
- Participate actively in the discussion of the articles and the reading material.
- Presentation of short papers as assigned by the instructor.
- Undergraduate analysis paper (6 pages).
- Graduate student, an original paper (20 pages) with clear research questions, objectives and ideas. The topic will be defined in agreement with the professor. The focus must be

on a social. Undergraduate students will have 10 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for questions, graduate students 20 minutes presentation, 10 minutes 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. 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 AND READINGS

Undergraduate readings (U)

Graduate students readings (G)

Undergraduate and graduate students (UG)

FIRST PART: BASIC GENERAL THEORY

W1. Jan. 12 and 14: Introduction to the course, plants as beings.

Reading: Ch 5, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ufl/detail.action?docID=3407222> (UG)

W2. Jan. 19 and 21: Rhizome thinking.

Deleuze and Guattari. Chapter *Rhizome* (U & G).

Ch 7 of Hall, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ufl/detail.action?docID=3407222> (UG)

W3. Jan. 26 and 28: Interactions of plants with insects, animals and people

Readings: Hustak and Myers. Involuntary Momentum: Affective Ecologies and the Sciences of Plant/Insect Encounters. (OU & G). Janzen and Martin 1982 (UG). Franklin (OG).

W4. Feb. 2 and 4: The evolution or co-evolution and domestication

Readings: Murphy chapter 4 and 5 (UG), Rindos 1980 (G), Zohari 2004 (G) Dudley 2007(G) Karba and Shiojiri

W5. Feb. 9 and 11: Domestication, kin selection and other forms of social reproduction of plants.

Murphy chapter 6 and 7 (U & G), Dudley 2007(G) Karba and Shiojiri 2009 (G).

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND SOCIAL FORMS OF PLANTS.

W6. Feb. 16 and 18: "Invasive species".

Readings: Head 2017 (UG), Nakley et al. 2017, Russle and Blackburn 2017, Warren et all 2017.

W7. Feb. 23 and 25, *First Exam (due 11:59 pm, Feb 28)*: Religious plants and social commodification.

Read selected chapters of Andrew Russell and Elizabeth Rahman (editors) 2016. *The master plant: tobacco in lowland south America*. Bloomsbury academic.

W8. Mar. 2 and 4: Religious plants

Reading: pending.

W9. Mar. 9 and 11: The diversity of social structures of plants, part I (tubers: yams, taro, manihot and others).

Read chapter of Karl S. Zimmerer. 1997. *Changing fortunes: biodiversity and peasant livelihood in the Peruvian Andes*. University of California press.

W10. Mar. 16 and 18: Social plants of inequality (Poaceas).

Reading chapter of James C. Scott. 2017. *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. Yale University Press.

W11. Mar. 23 and 25. Social plants of identity.

Read Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. 1993. *Rice as Self*. Princeton University Press.

W12. Mar. 30 and April 1 Fina Paper due at 11:59 pm, April 4: Capitalist social plants. (cotton, cocoa, rubber, coffee)

Read Paige West. 2012. *From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive, The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea*. Duke University Press.

W13. Ap. 6 and 8: Post human plants?

Reading: Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. 2017. *The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press.

W14. Apr. 13. Apr. 15. Second exam, due 11:59 pm, April 18: Changes in the social plant species to multispecies

Selected readings

W15. Apr. 20: Final comments and paper presentations.

W16. Apr. 22 and 23: reading days.

