

PLANTS AND SOCIETY: THE BIOLOGY OF FOOD, SHELTER AND MEDICINE

Instructor: Erin Aiello (She/They) eaiello@ucsc.edu

Office hours: Jean Lengenheim Greenhouses, 11:00-12:15 Thursdays and Fridays and by appointment

Class hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 12:30-2:00 **and** Tuesdays 3:00-4:30

By the end of the course, you will know plant morphology and what parts of plants are used by humans, how humans have shaped plant genes, morphology, physiology and reproduction, how plants have shaped societal advancements, how racial, sexual, environmental, and religious injustice and inequality is intertwined with our relationships to plants, and how plants can be food, people (vs. objects), specimens, fabrics, building materials, obsessions, drugs, medicine, poison, spiritual aid and displays of wealth across the world and throughout history.

ACCESSIBILITY: Any student with a disability or special need is encouraged to contact me early in the quarter to work out accommodations to support their success in this course. Please contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) to find out what accommodations are available to you and don't hesitate to ask if you need more assistance than what is listed on the DRC website.

I WELCOME AND CELEBRATE DIVERSITY. I will do my best to accommodate you in any way that I can to create a safe, equitable and enjoyable learning experience for all.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

HISTORICAL TRAUMA: We will be covering historical and current indecencies centered on human-plant interactions; for example, slavery for sugar and cotton and the treatment of American Indians and resulting loss of traditional ecological knowledge. While I encourage students to pay attention to difficult material and participate in uncomfortable conversations, I do *not* require students who may be strongly affected by this material *due to their ancestry* to attend class during days that we cover such topics. I *do*, however, expect students to engage in the material by watching the parts of the lecture that do *not* mention these sensitive topics either at home or in class (there will be trigger warnings during the presentation, at which point you may walk out or skip to future slides). Students *will* be responsible for the portions of lectures that do *not* incorporate mentions of injustice. Discussing and writing about these topics will be encouraged but *never* required in tests, homework, or classwork.

EXERCISE: For a few activities, we will be walking at a leisurely pace for up to 2 hours at a time. Some walks will be off-road and hilly, and some walks will be near (but not in) dry grasses and/or poison oak. Please let me know early in the course if this will be a problem for you so that we can plan accordingly.

READING: A fair amount of reading is required in this class. If reading is a challenge to you, I highly recommend the audiobook version of [Braiding Sweetgrass](#). I also recommend that you reach out to Learning Support (see below).

RESOURCES

LEARNING SUPPORT: In addition to reaching out to your peers and instructor on a regular basis, I encourage you to check out UCSC's [Learning Support Services](#) which provide supplemental instruction, reading and writing support and more.

SLUG SUPPORT: If you find yourself struggling with food or financial insecurity, [Slug Support](#) can help with basic needs like housing, food, and getting the technology you need. To learn more, contact the Dean of Students Office at 831-459-4446 or deanofstudents@ucsc.edu.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): CAPS will provide or connect you with services such as therapy, psychiatry, counseling, support groups and more. I utilize [CAPS](#). Therapy is like a massage for the brain. It's scheduled self care. I'm here for you and we'll be here for each other through these five weeks and hopefully beyond. Still, I encourage each and every one of us to take good care of our mental well-being, starting by contacting CAPS if we are feeling off, or if we feel that we could use a fresh and professional point of view.

READING

Textbook

(Required): **Plants and Society**, by Estelle Levetin and Karen McMahon (referred to in the schedule as PAS). 7th or 8th edition. *Available on reserve at the Science Library.*

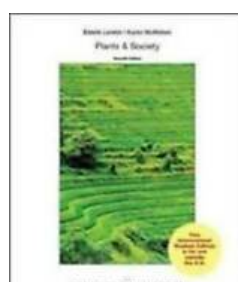
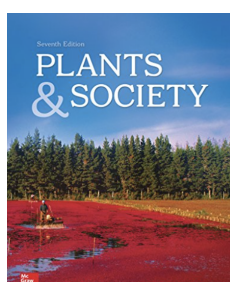
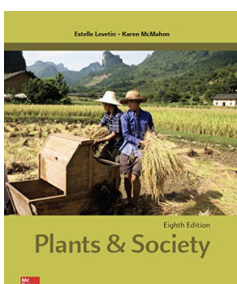
Other

(Required): **Braiding Sweetgrass**, by Robin Wall Kimmerer (referred to in the schedule as BRS).

Other readings will be scanned and provided on Canvas. *Hard copy available on reserve at the Library.*

[This](#) is a link to our Course Reserves through which you have **unlimited, free** access to [Braiding Sweetgrass](#) as well as limited but free access to [Plants and Society](#).

Plants and Society 7th and 8th editions have the following covers:



READING CONTINUED

The reading for each day is listed in the schedule. The date it is written in is the date that the reading is *assigned*, so you start reading on that date and need to have finished the reading by our next meeting time. BRS is shorthand for Braiding Sweetgrass and PAS is shorthand for Plants and Society. So if you see “PAS Ch 7” That means read Plants and Society CH 7. The chapters in Braiding Sweetgrass are not numbered, but named. Go to the front of the book to find out what pages each chapter is on.

A TYPICAL DAY

We'll be meeting in Thimann 239 at 12:30 on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Please leave 10 minutes early Tuesday so that you have plenty of time to find the room. I'll start lecturing at 12:35 Tuesday but for the following meeting times, I'll start right on time (12:30). It's a 5-week course so things move quick - No time to waste! Every day (*including the first day of class!* but not during the week of the final), you will be assigned reading. In the morning, there will be a reading and lecture quiz from the previous lecture and reading. These quizzes are designed to assess your engagement with the material and the majority of the questions will reflect this (ie what is your opinion on GMOs and why?). However, there are some technical things that I need you to know and these will be assessed with more traditional quiz questions (ie what is an allele?). I will grade and return these quizzes to you promptly so that you can study them; *50% of the questions on the midterm and final will come directly from these quizzes*. On most days, a lecture will follow, with some discussion, and homework will be assigned. On Tuesdays, there will be a quiz and a lecture, and then we will have an activity such as touring the UCSC arboretum or making cordage from tule reeds. There are a couple of days during which there will be no lecture and only an activity.

POLICIES

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: Attendance and participation are very important to me. You will get more out of the class, as will your peers, if you participate in discussions and activities (which will be fun!) Obviously, life happens and sometimes you'll have to miss a class. I get that. I'd rather you be late or leave early than miss an entire lecture, but if you have to miss an entire lecture, let me know ahead of time. I will give you a make-up quiz that you can get to me within 24 hours and I will be available to you should you have any questions as you're going over the slides for the lecture you missed.

COVID

It looks like Covid is still a thing. So, please wear a mask to class when we are indoors. I'll let you know ahead of time if class is meeting outdoors and no mask is needed. I'll be in the front of the room near an open door and will all-but-force everyone to sit as close as possible so I don't have to take my mask off. If people still can't hear me, I'll take it off when I lecture.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: I will accept late assignments on the last day of the quarter only, for 70% of the grade that you would have received had you turned in the assignment on time.

MISSED EXAMS: If you miss an exam, we will schedule a make-up exam with different questions than your peers.

WEEKENDS: I take weekends off and so should you! I'll check my email first thing in the morning Mondays and responding to students will be my top priority.

DISCUSSION: There will be a fair amount of discussion during lecture. This is a small class, and I will be paying attention to the level of participation at which each student engages. If you are shy, I will encourage you to break out of your comfort zone and chat with other students and myself. Part of what will be assessed in this class is how well you can communicate your ideas. I will encourage you to share so that you can take your new knowledge and communication skills into the outside world and have engaging conversations outside of class. *Part of participating well in conversation is giving others space to share. Being the most talkative person in class is not guaranteed to earn you the best grade.*

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: You are welcome and encouraged to discuss papers and assignments with each other, but copying or paraphrasing of someone else's work is not acceptable. Also, quoting directly from, or cutting and pasting from, published work including the internet, *even if you cite the author*, is considered plagiarism. Always put it in your own words. See "[Avoiding Plagiarism](#)". The academic sanction for plagiarism, cheating, or data fabrication is 0 on that assignment, and the student is reported to their college for disciplinary sanctions. This is designed for you to succeed. Try your best, and you won't need to cheat.



The course grade will be based upon:

Morning quizzes, cumulative (25%)

Assignments, cumulative (20%)

Section activities (10%)

Participation (10%)

Midterm (15%)

Final (20%)

SCHEDULE TO BE DETERMINED

But I will post the schedule every week before the week begins.

If you'd like to get ahead or make sure you are prepared for the class (e.x. if you've never learned about plants before), you can read chapter 3 in Plants and Society.