

FYSP 197: Cats, Cattle, & Corn: On the Origin of Domesticated Species

Instructor

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Drop-in Student Hours: MWF 10–11am, 1:30–1:30pm, or by appointment

Student Hours are times that I have set aside specifically to meet with students in my course(s). I will be in my office and available – you can just stop by and give my door a knock! You can drop in by yourself or bring friends; you may have specific questions or just want to say hi – any reason is good enough. If you aren't available during these intervals, I'm happy to find another time that works for both of us. For help using Google Calendar to schedule a meeting: www2.oberlin.edu/faculty/aroles/studenthourssignup.html

Class Meetings: MWF 2:30-3:20 p.m. Science Center K209

Attendance and participation in all class meetings is expected. Work in groups relies on everyone's participation. When an absence is unavoidable, please give me advance warning (if possible).

Course Description

Have you ever wondered how agriculture arose? Or how we improve crops and livestock? What about considering the consequences of bringing Old World agriculture into the New World? We will discuss the evolutionary processes involved in domestication and agricultural improvement but also consider how cultural views of the land and our relationship with nature vary and have changed over time. What might we hope this relationship and our agriculture look like in the future?

Attributes: 4NS, WRi.

College Writing Requirement

Students in the College of Arts and Sciences must meet the writing requirement by completing two Oberlin College courses carrying the Writing attribute (WR-Int or WR-Adv). This course is WR-Int, writing intensive, meaning that substantial writing and discussion of writing are expected.

Course Objectives

This is a discussion-based, writing-intensive course. I will not be lecturing, we will spend class periods in discussion of assigned readings. This course is cross-disciplinary and approachable for non-science majors. There will be no exams and nearly all of your assignments will be

writing assignments (many of which will require revisions). The major goals of this course are:

- to improve your ability to participate in class discussions;
- to improve your academic writing skills, including an understanding of and appreciation for revising drafts of writing assignments;
- to improve your critical thinking skills, learning to explain and support your point of view;
- to consider agriculture (past, present, future), including its connection with evolutionary biology and the implications for global, national, and local communities.

Statement on Accessibility and Inclusion

Central to this course is an understanding and appreciation of diversity across the tree of life. In line with that value, I aim to make this course accessible and inclusive of all students. Each individual brings with them a unique set of experiences which inform their perspective when interacting with others and learning new information. All are welcome in this class and expected to put in the work to learn more than you knew coming in. You have the right to ask for assistance, access, or additional resources to meet your learning needs. If you find yourself unable to fully access the course in any way, you are welcome to contact me to discuss your needs. During the first week of classes, we will discuss community norms to guide us in our interactions.

In case of emergency...

Should circumstances arise that prevent you from fulfilling your responsibilities, such as completing assignments on time or making it to class, you should contact me ASAP. If you anticipate issues or conflicts arising in advance, please contact me so that we may make arrangements.

Honor Code

You are expected to sign the Honor Code (“I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”) on all work completed. For electronically submitted assignments, you may type your name as a signature or add a scanned copy into the document.

Following the Honor Code includes:

- Submitting only work that is your original production (no plagiarism).
- Properly citing any works or ideas created by others that you reference or were influenced by in your own work.
- Properly crediting any images / figures / tables / charts / data that were generated by someone else but used in your work.

I am required to report any suspected violations of the Honor Code to the Honor Committee. Independent of any deliberations of the Honor Committee, in this course suspected violations

of the Honor Code may result in a grade of zero on any relevant assigned work. More information on the Oberlin Honor Code may be found here: <https://www.oberlin.edu/dean-of-students/student-conduct/academic-integrity>.

Support Services

- I am available for individual consultation during student hours or by appointment.
- **Students who have been approved by the Center for Student Success (Peters Hall 118) for course accommodations should speak with me to be sure that your needs are being met in this course.**
- Peer Tutors are available through the Academic Advising Resource Center (AARC), <https://www.oberlin.edu/aarc/peer-tutoring> or email peertutoring@oberlin.edu. This service is free and you are encouraged to arrange for a tutor as soon as you like.
- The Executive Functioning Program offers peer tutors, freely available through the Center for Student Success. If you struggle with planning and organization skills, you might contact this program! You can find out more at <https://www.oberlin.edu/center-student-success/efg>, where you can also sign up to meet with a an EF tutor.
- The Writing Center has peer writing associates who can assist students at all stages of the writing process.

Required Texts

The required texts are available at the Oberlin Bookstore.

1. Kimmerer, R. W. 2013. *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions, Canada.
2. Denison, R. F. 2012. *Darwinian agriculture: How understanding evolution can improve agriculture*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
3. Graff, G. and C. Birkenstein. 2021. *They say, I say: The moves that matter in academic writing*. 5th ed. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York.

Assessment

In this course, we will use contract grading, a method of assessment in which you write a contract laying out the work you will complete (to a satisfactory level) in order to earn the grade you specify. For details, see the template contract shared [here](#). All course materials will be available in a shared Google Drive folder, [linked here](#) (you will need to be signed into your Oberlin account to view these resources). You can also access these links via Angie's webpage: <https://www2.oberlin.edu/faculty/aroles/fysp197.html>.

Preliminary Schedule

Note that TSIS = They Say, I Say by Graff and Birkenstein

Week 1: October 4–6

- M 10/04 Course Introduction
- W 10/06 Begin Braiding Sweetgrass: (1) *Introduction* and (2) *Preface*
- F 10/08 TSIS: (1) *Preface* and (2) Chapter 14. “What’s Motivating This Writer?” *Reading for the Conversation*

Week 2: October 11–15

- M 10/11 Planting Sweetgrass: (1) *Skywoman Falling*, (2) *The Council of Pecans*, and (3) *The Gift of Strawberries*
- W 10/13 Planting Sweetgrass: (1) *An Offering*, (2) *Asters and Goldenrod*, and (3) *Learning the Grammar of Animacy*
- F 10/15 TSIS: (1) *Introduction* and (2) Chapter 12. “I Take Your Point” *Entering Class Discussions*

Week 3: October 18–22

- M 10/18 Tending Sweetgrass: (1) *Maple Sugar Moon*, (2) *Witch Hazel*, and (3) *A Mother’s Work*
- W 10/20 Tending Sweetgrass: (1) *The Consolation of Water Lilies*, and (2) *Allegiance to Gratitude*
- F 10/22 TSIS: (1) Chapter 1. “They Say” *Starting with What Others Are Saying* and (2) Chapter 2. “Her Point Is” *The Art of Summarizing*

Week 4: October 25–29

- M 10/25 Picking Sweetgrass: (1) *Epiphany in the Beans*, (2) *The Three Sisters*, and (3) *Wisgaak Gokpenagen: A Black Ash Basket*
- W 10/27 Picking Sweetgrass: (1) *Mishkos kenomagwen: The Teachings of Grass*, (2) *Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide*, and (3) *The Honorable Harvest*
- F 10/29 TSIS: (1) Chapter 3. “As He Himself Puts It” *The Art of Quoting* and (2) Chapter 4. “Yes / No / Ok, But” *Three Ways to Respond*

Week 5: November 1–5

- M 11/01 Braiding Sweetgrass: (1) *In the Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place*, (2) *The Sound of Silverbells*, and (3) *Sitting in a Circle*
- W 11/03 Braiding Sweetgrass: (1) *Burning Cascade Head*, (2) *Putting Down Roots*, and (3) *Umbilicaria: The Belly Button of the World*
- F 11/05 TSIS: (1) Chapter 5. “And Yet” *Distinguishing What You Say from What They Say* and (2) Chapter 6. “Skeptics May Object” *Planting a Naysayer in Your Text*

Week 6: November 8–12

- M 11/08 Braiding Sweetgrass: (1) *Old-Growth Children*, and (2) *Witness to the Rain*
 W 11/10 Burning Sweetgrass: (1) *Windigo Footprints*, (2) *The Sacred and the Superfund*,
 and (3) *People of Corn, People of Light*
 F 11/12 TSIS: (1) Chapter 7. “So What? Who Cares?” *Saying Why It Matters*

Week 7: November 15–19

- M 11/15 Burning Sweetgrass: (1) *Collateral Damage* and (2) *Shkitagen: People of the Seventh Fire*
 W 11/17 Finish Braiding Sweetgrass: (1) *Defeating Windigo* and (2) *Epilogue: Returning the Gift*
 F 11/19 TSIS: (1) Chapter 8. “As A Result” *Connecting the Parts*

Thanksgiving break (11/20–11/28)

Week 8: November 29–December 3

- M 11/29 Begin Darwinian Agriculture: Chapter 1. Repaying Darwin’s Debt to Agriculture
 W 12/01 Ford: Chapter 2. What Do We Need from Agriculture?
 F 12/03 TSIS: (1) Chapter 9. “You Mean I Can Just Say It That Way?” *Academic Writing Doesn’t Mean Setting Aside Your Own Voice*

Week 9: December 6–10

- M 12/06 Ford: Chapter 3. Evolution 101: The Power of Natural Selection
 W 12/08 Ford: Chapter 4. Darwinian Agriculture’s Three Core Principles
 F 12/10 TSIS: (1) Chapter 10. “But Don’t Get Me Wrong” *The Art of Metacommentary*

Week 10: December 13–17

- M 12/13 Ford: Chapter 5. What Won’t Work: Tradeoff-blind Biotechnology
 W 12/15 Ford: Chapter 6. Selfish Genes, Sophisticated Plants, and Haphazard Ecosystems
 F 12/17 TSIS: (1) Chapter 11. “What I Really Want To Say Is” *Revising Substantially*

Week 11: December 20–22

- M 12/20 Ford: Chapter 7. What Won’t Work: Misguided Mimicry of Natural Ecosystems
 W 12/22 Ford: Chapter 8. What Has Worked: Improving Cooperation within Species
 F 12/24 Winter Break: No classes

Winter Break (Dec 23–Jan 02)

Week 12: January 3–7

M 01/03 Ford: Chapter 9. What Could Work Better: Cooperation between Two Species

W 01/05 Ford: Chapter 10. Stop Evolution Now!

F 01/07 Class presentations

Week 13: January 10–14

M 01/10 Ford: Chapter 11. Learning from Plants, Ants, and Ecosystems

W 01/12 Ford: Chapter 12. Diversity, Bet-hedging, and Selection among Ideas

F 01/14 Class presentations

Sun Jan 23: Final exam period, 2–4 pm