

# ***Environment, Development, and Food Production***

## **Syllabus, Spring 2018**

**Course number:** GRG 339K

**Unique number:** 36940

**Meeting time:** MWF 1100 – 1150

**Meeting room:** CLA 0.128

**Prerequisite:** Upper division standing

**Instructor:** William E. Doolittle

**Office:** CLA 3.704

**Hours:** By appointment made via email

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**Website:** [www.la.utexas.edu/users/wd/](http://www.la.utexas.edu/users/wd/)

**Teaching assistant:** William Delgado

**Office:** CLA 3.400

**Hours:**

**Email:** [wrdelgado@utexas.edu](mailto:wrdelgado@utexas.edu)

### **Course Overview:**

This course focuses on "indigenously developed" and what used to be called "traditional" farming methods and techniques. Such practices are those not dependent on either fossil fuels, chemical fertilizers, or other external inputs, and hence have been called "low external-input technologies" (LEIT). Based on "traditional ecological knowledge" (TEK) or "indigenous technical knowledge" (ITK), they are typically small in scale, involving for the most part the labor of individuals, families, and communities. Emphasis is placed on those systems most commonly used in various parts of the world today and in times past.

Agriculture is treated here as the transformation of biophysical, sometimes referred to inappropriately as "natural," environments, into "cultural" environments. It is assessed in regard to both the plants cultivated (crops), and the soil, slope, moisture, and temperature conditions that exist and those that are either modified or created by farmers. The processes involved in the domestication of both crops and landscapes are discussed. Ecological and systematic approaches are taken in order to understand how different agricultural strategies insure continual long-term productivity and stability similar to that characteristic of environments that are not cultivated. Microeconomics is all-important.

The various "agro-ecosystems" are also discussed as economic activities that have highly visible spatial manifestations that result in distinctive "landscapes," and as activities that are dynamic, changing continuously. Development is treated conceptually as a specific type of change, not necessarily as a goal. It is envisaged as improvement in land productivity. It is the opposite of land degradation. Agricultural features such as terraces and canals are considered "landesque capital." Social, political, and cultural aspects of agriculture and development are topics not dealt with to any great degree here, although they are touched on from time to time.

*This is not a "how to" course for tree-hugging, granola-eating acolytes of John Muir who wish to make the world into some unrealistic utopia.* It is not intended for students who want to venture into the developing world to teach agriculture to people who have been farming successfully for 2000 years. This course is not about developing "sustainable agriculture." It is, however, designed for students who wish to gain a better understanding of the complexity of human-environment interactions, particularly as they pertain to people feeding themselves.

## Grading Policy:

The final course grade will be based on three criteria as follows.

**Three exams** comprised of 33 multiple choice questions each (value: 30% each for 90% of the course grade).

**One two-page critical assessment** (not a half-baked opinion or simple definition) of the concept of “sustainable agriculture” with at least two citations of scholarly works—books or journal articles—not some BS cut-and-pasted from a website or blog (value: 10% of the course grade).

**Class participation** based largely but not exclusively on attendance. *The course grade* based on the three examinations and the book review *will be dropped one letter for 4 unexcused absences*, two letters for 7 unexcused absences, three letters for 10 unexcused absences, and four letters for 13 unexcused absences. Students who participate enthusiastically in class by asking questions, offering constructive comments, providing new information, and proffering intelligent opinions will be rewarded with extra points. *If you anticipate missing a class, or you do miss one due to unforeseen circumstances, inform the professor by email as soon as possible.*

## Extra credit? Forget it!

Plus and minus grades will be used for the final course grade.

## Laptops and Tablets:

The use of personal computers in class is highly encouraged. Copies of all PowerPoint slides presented in class will be available in grayshade PDFs in the **Modules** section of **Canvas**. Students should convert them using OCR or some other program and use them in class to assist in taking notes.

## Textbooks:

There is **NO textbook** for this course. Instead, one to three readings will be available in the **Modules** section of **Canvas** for each class meeting.

## Review Materials:

Audio and video material presented in class will be available for students to review through the Lectures Online section in *Canvas*. These materials should not be used in lieu of attending class.

## Final Exam:

There is **NO “final exam,”** meaning a comprehensive examination, for this course.

## Students with Disabilities:

Such students may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, [www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/) 512.471.6259.

## Help a Classmate Overcome a Disability:

A few students with disabilities need assistance taking class notes. If you would like to be a peer Volunteer Note Taker and share your notes with such students in this class, through a secure Web Portal maintained by Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), apply at

[https://utexas.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_b2D7aEL5dB8B8k5](https://utexas.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b2D7aEL5dB8B8k5).

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Students are expected to be knowledgeable of, and conform to, UT's Honor Code.

<http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>

**Religious Holidays:**

According to UT policy, students must notify professors of their pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. Students missing a class or examination because of a religious holy day will have an opportunity to make-up missed work.

**Security and Emergency Evacuation:**

Students are expected to be knowledgeable of UT's recommendations about campus safety and security [www.utexas.edu/safety/](http://www.utexas.edu/safety/) and emergency evacuation routes and procedures

[www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency)

The most direct route out of escape is through either of two doors at the rear of the lecture hall, and then proceeding to the exit directly across hallway, or by turning left to the exit at the end of the hallway.

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