

# GEO201: Intro to Plant Geography Syllabus

Spring 2024 (3 credits)  
Class for all MW 10:20 – 11:40 am  
NatSci 150 or Zoom

## Instructors

Dr. Kyla Dahlin (she/her)  
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## Contact

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## Office Hours

*Office hours on Zoom or in GEO rm  
121-A: Tues 2 – 4 pm – Calendly  
sign up link on D2L*

## 1 General Information

### 1.1 Description

GEO 201 explores the geographic distribution of plants around the world. We will discuss how different plants grow in different biomes, the various aspects of the physical environment that determine where certain plants can grow, and human impacts on vegetation. Lectures are split between food plant lectures and biogeography lectures.

#### 1.1.1 Course Objectives

- Explain the origins, domestication, and current distributions of common food plants.
- Recognize common food plants from around the world.
- Describe the three types of photosynthesis.
- Illustrate the global distribution of ecoclimatic zones.
- Explain the relationships between plants and other organisms.
- Discuss the relationships between plants and the abiotic environment.
- Interpret and appraise a research topic for the class.

#### 1.1.2 Prerequisites: none.

**1.1.3 Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated by a syllabus quiz, quizzes, short homework assignments reflecting on readings, participation, two larger assignments, and a final exam.

**1.1.4 On D2L:** SS22-GEO-201 – Introduction to Plant Geography

## 2 Course Materials

### 2.1 Readings

Almost every class meeting will have a reading associated with it. Readings will be posted on D2L as stable links through the MSU library (some will require you to log in), though if they do not have a paywall, direct links will be provided as well.

### 2.2 Recommended Computer Space Set Up

Since we are spending even more time on screens these days, it is good to think about your computer set up. If at all possible, make sure you have a set up that is comfortable for you (see <http://www.msuergonomics.com/> for more info) and, if possible, consider a second monitor for your computer. Even a small and relatively inexpensive one (they are available for <\$100, and MSU

Surplus has old ones for \$20-40!) will dramatically improve your ability to work in this and all your classes, especially while online.

### **3 Course Policies**

#### **3.1 Email**

Dr Dahlin will use D2L to email the class on a semi-regular basis. D2L messages occasionally go to spam – please make sure to regularly check your spam folder and set your email to accept D2L emails as this could impact all your classes.

If you have questions or issues, please contact me! Students should not expect immediate responses to email messages, however, if you don't receive a response within 48 hours please email again or talk to me before or after class. Please include "GEO201" in the subject line of your email for a faster response.

#### **3.2 Sending Attachments**

Most homework assignments in this class will be turned in via D2L 'quiz' formats or on paper. If, for some reason, you send a file digitally, it should be sent as an MS Word document (.docx) or PDF (.pdf). If files are received "corrupted" or with other issues, the onus is on you to correct this problem, and if it isn't dealt with promptly it will be considered late. If something goes wrong on D2L, we will adjust accordingly.

#### **3.3 Electronics in Class and on Zoom**

Laptops and cellphones are permitted in class, however, if they become a distraction to other students the instructor may ask you to put them away. If you are working on a laptop during class the instructor may ask you to look up concepts/definitions and share them with the class.

If you occasionally attend class via Zoom, I strongly encourage you to set your phone aside and keep your computer focused on what we are talking about. Even though you are sitting in front of a screen, research suggests writing by hand helps you learn (for example:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20191122-when-the-best-way-to-take-notes-is-by-hand>), so consider taking notes by hand (it will also give you a break from typing).

#### **3.4 Course Platforms & Structure**

Most communications and materials for this course will be shared via D2L. This course will include two times a week lectures presented in person and synchronously via Zoom (link on D2L). My expectation is that most students will regularly attend these meetings, ideally in person, and participate (see attendance policy below). Lecture slides will be posted on D2L ahead of the lectures but lectures will not be recorded.

#### **3.5 Office Hours**

Office hours will be held throughout the semester either in person or via Zoom. Dr. Dahlin has set up a Calendly page so you can sign up for a time, and then a calendar invite and zoom link will be sent to both you and her. If the office hours times do not work for your schedule, email Dr. Dahlin to set up another time.

### **3.6 Academic Honesty**

Unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, quizzes, and exams, without assistance from sources external to this class. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit another student's work or course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact Dr. Dahlin if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also the Academic Pledge webpage.)

### **3.7 Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

MSU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at [rcpd.msu.edu](http://rcpd.msu.edu). Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to Dr. Dahlin at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date may not be honored.

If you have any challenges or issues related to your ability to succeed in this class, regardless of their status with RCPD, please let Dr. Dahlin know as soon as possible.

### **3.8 Diversity**

In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different than ourselves. Each and every voice in the classroom is important and brings with it a wealth of experiences, values and beliefs. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from each other. Please respect your fellow students' opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind.

### **3.9 Attendance & Participation**

#### **3.9.1 Attendance in Class**

Students whose names do not appear on the official class list for this course may not attend this class without permission. Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.

Students are expected to attend most class meetings, to show up on time, and to contribute intellectually to the class by asking questions and sharing thoughts and opinions. That said, Dr. Dahlin is not going to track attendance this semester after the first two weeks (where it will be monitored for enrollment purposes). The expectation is that you signed up because you are interested in learning this material.

If you get sick (even a tiny bit), PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS IN PERSON! Contact Dr. Dahlin as soon as possible to work out a plan if your illness impacts your ability to complete assignments.

#### **3.9.2 Assignments & Exams**

Late assignments will not be accepted unless evidence of a legitimate emergency is provided. The only exam in this class will be the final, which will be administered via D2L. The final exam will be made available on the exam day (see Course Schedule) for a fixed amount of time (3 hours for the

final, though it should only take 2 at most) but can be taken at any time during that day, from 12:01 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. Exams cannot be made up unless proof of a legitimate emergency is provided. D2L exams are, necessarily, open book.

“Legitimate emergencies” include tragedies and medical issues. Students seeking a grief absence should go to the Grief Absence Request Form found on the RO home page (<https://reg.msu.edu/>) under 'Student Resources – Forms - Grief Absence Request Form' OR to StuInfo (<https://stuinfo.msu.edu/>) under 'Academics - Enrollment Information and Services - Grief Absence Request Form.' If a grief absence is approved, accommodations will be made. If your emergency is medical, please provide a note from your medical provider to Dr. Dahlin.

These are the course policies, however, exceptions do sometimes arise, so if something comes up that is not covered here but impacts your ability to participate in the course, please contact Dr. Dahlin as soon as possible.

### 3.9 Collaboration

Collaboration **IN CLASS** is encouraged. However, all work done outside of the classroom should be your own. Written assignments and exams should represent your own independent work. If you need help on an assignment, contact Dr Dahlin, not your classmates.

### 3.10 Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, our primary goal will be to stay safe. There is a wide variety of situations we could potentially face as a class, so please be prepared to stay calm, and never hesitate to interrupt the instructor if something seems awry, whether we are in a classroom or on Zoom.

## 4 Other Resources & a Note

### 4.1 Technical Assistance

If you are having trouble with general Information Technology (IT) issues, try one of these sources, though do not expect a response in less than 24 hours:

- Visit the MSU Help site at <http://help.msu.edu>
- Visit the Desire2Learn Help Site at <http://help.d2l.msu.edu>
- Call the MSU IT Service Desk at (517)432-6200, (844)678-6200, or e-mail at [ithelp@msu.edu](mailto:ithelp@msu.edu)

### 4.2 Support at MSU

Being a university student comes with many opportunities and challenges, especially right now. Just a reminder of some of the many great resources MSU has available online to help you maximize the opportunities and address the challenges.

**Spartan Life OnLine** - <https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/index.html> - Lots of great info here.

**University Ombudsperson** - <https://ombud.msu.edu/> - If you have an issue (like with an advisor or professor) and do not feel comfortable trying to resolve it with the person/department, the Ombuds Office can offer you advice.

**MSU Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance** - <https://civilrights.msu.edu/> - If you have questions about discrimination or harassment, this is a good place to look for resources.

**MSU Institutional Diversity and Inclusion** - <https://inclusion.msu.edu/> - Differences are our strength! This is a good place to look for inclusion-related opportunities and support.

**MSU Counseling & Psychiatric Services** - <https://caps.msu.edu/> - Free! Connect virtually via the website if you are concerned about yourself or someone in your circle.

### 4.3 Confidentiality

Students should be aware that MSU employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues based on external legal obligations or that relate to the health and safety of MSU community members and others. All your instructors must report the following information to other MSU offices if you share it:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with MSU Counseling & Psychiatric Services.

## 5 Evaluation

Dr. Dahlin's philosophy on grading is that it is a necessary but not very fun part of being a student (or being a professor). As such, she has tried to set up our grading system to be fair but also to respect the fact that students have complicated lives with unexpected challenges. **The keys to getting a good grade in this class are to show up, do the work, and study.** If something goes awry, you will then have a cushion to fall back on with accumulated extra credit – you will notice in section 6 that if you add up all the points, you could accumulate up to 660 points, however, the total only goes to 600. This means you can earn up to 60 points of extra credit simply by doing the assigned work well. It also means skipping a reading reflection or quiz or two is not a big deal.

### 5.1 Syllabus Quiz

The syllabus is an important part of any class! It serves as a guiding document for the course, and I will likely refer you to it if any questions arise. After the first day of class we'll have a syllabus quiz (via D2L) to ensure that you all actually look at the syllabus carefully. This is the one assignment in this class that you can make up. If you miss the first day of class for some reason, please get in touch with me and I will open it up for you on D2L. Syllabus quiz makeups must be completed by the end of the second week of class (January 19).

### 5.2 Reading Reflections & Quizzes

For each of the food plant lectures there will be an associated reading that you will be expected to submit a 'reflection' on via D2L. For each one you will be asked to share three things you learned or thought were interesting from the article, one thing you didn't understand, and one thing you would like to learn more about. Each week's reflections will be due on Sunday at 11:59 pm.

**Reading reflections will not be accepted late** (with the usual exceptions).

Nearly every week there will also be a D2L quiz also due on Sunday at 11:59 pm. Each quiz will have 10 questions and you will be able to take it up to three times with no time limit. The questions on the quizzes are meant to help prepare you for the final exam, so it is worth noting what the questions focus on as you take the quizzes, as you will not be able to go back and look at the quizzes after they are done, or to view quizzes you missed. **Missed quizzes cannot be made up** (with the usual exceptions).

### 5.3 Reports & Projects

On the second-to-last day of class a collection of 20 pages summarizing information about some of the plants we discuss will be submitted as a report (preferably on paper). Dr. Dahlin will provide a template for these pages, and while we will discuss more than 20 food plants, it will be up to you to pick 20 you are interested in from those discussed in class.

In the second half of the class, students will complete a mapping project focused on a plant of interest to be presented to the class. We will discuss these projects more after spring break.

### 5.4 Final Exam

The final exam will be a take-home, open book exam composed of multiple-choice and true/false questions based on the material presented in the class, administered through D2L. You will have 3 hours to complete the exam at any point during the exam day (from 12:01 am to 11:59 pm).

### 5.5 Participation

Everyone starts the semester with 10 participation points. Students will lose points for excessive unexcused absences from class. You can earn 10 additional participation points by attending Dr. Dahlin's office hours before spring break.

## 6 Grading

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Final Grade Scale</u>	
Syllabus quiz	10	552 - 600	4.0
Reading Refl. & Quizzes (23 x 10 pts)	230	522 - 551	3.5
Food Plant Report	200	492 - 521	3.0
Final Project Presentation	100	462 - 491	2.5
Participation	20	438 - 461	2.0
Final Exam	100	402 - 437	1.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>600*</b>	360 - 401	1.0
		< 360	0

## 7 Course Schedule

The following lecture schedule remains subject to change and last-minute modifications. If significant changes do occur, students will be notified and an updated syllabus will be posted on D2L. Links to readings are posted on D2L.

Reading reflections (RR) and quizzes (Q) are due on the Sunday after they are assigned at 11:59 pm, all as 'Quizzes' on D2L. Other assignments are due at the start of the class.

Wk	Lect.	Date	Topic	Reading	Assigned   Due
1		8-Jan	Intro, Syllabus Review	Syllabus!	Syllabus Quiz   1/14
1	1	10-Jan	Tomatoes & Potatoes, Report Info	See on D2L	RR1   1/14
2		15-Jan	<b>MLK Day - no class</b>		
2	2	17-Jan	Corn	See on D2L	RR2   1/21
3	3	22-Jan	What is biogeography?	See on D2L	Q1   1/28
3	4	24-Jan	Agave & Cacti	See on D2L	RR3   1/28
4	5	29-Jan	What and why are ecoclimatic zones?	See on D2L	Q2   2/4
4	6	31-Jan	Avocadoes & other tropical fruits	See on D2L	RR4   2/4
5	7	5-Feb	Review of Earth history	See on D2L	Q3   2/11
5	8	7-Feb	Pumpkins, Squashes, & Melons	See on D2L	RR5   2/11
6	9	12-Feb	Insects & Plants	See on D2L	Q4   2/18
6	10	14-Feb	Soybeans & other legumes	See on D2L	RR6   2/18
7	11	19-Feb	What is soil?	See on D2L	Q5   2/25
7	12	21-Feb	Rice	See on D2L	RR7   2/25
<b>SPRING BREAK!</b>					
8	13	4-Mar	Do animals matter?	See on D2L	Q6   3/10
8	14	6-Mar	Tea & Project Explanation	See on D2L	RR8   3/10
9	15	11-Mar	Bananas & Pineapples	See on D2L	RR9   3/17
9	16	13-Mar	Chocolate & Coffee	See on D2L	RR10   3/17
10	17	18-Mar	Wheat & other grains	See on D2L	RR11   3/24
10	18	20-Mar	Cabbages	See on D2L	RR12   3/24
11	19	25-Mar	Disturbances	See on D2L	Q7   3/31
11	20	27-Mar	Oil Palm	See on D2L	RR13   3/31
12	21	1-Apr	People & Plants	See on D2L	Q8   4/7
12	22	3-Apr	Apples & Oranges	See on D2L	RR14   4/7
13		8-Apr	Student Presentations		
13		10-Apr	Student Presentations		RR15 (based on presentations)   4/14
14		15-Apr	Wrap up & review for exam		Plant Reports Due 4/15
14		17-Apr	Field trip to botanic garden (meet there)		
		<b>25-Apr</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM (take home via D2L)</b>		