

**Department:** PLSC

**Course No.:** 125

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Insects, Food and Culture

**Contact:** Dr. Ana Legrand

**Content Area:** CA4-Diversity and Multiculturalism

**Diversity:** CA4 - International

**Catalog Copy:** PLSC 125. Insects, Food and Culture. First Semester. Three Credits. Three class periods. Legrand.

Introduction to the fascinating world of insects and their ubiquitous interactions with people. Role of insects in food and fiber production; insects as food; impact of insects on human health, commerce and history; and insects as inspiration sources for art, music, film and literature around the world.

**Course Information:** This course is an introduction to the fascinating world of insects and their ubiquitous interactions with people. Topics will examine how insects hinder or contribute to food and fiber production; the impact of insects on human health, commerce and history; and finally how insects have been the source of inspiration for art, music, and literature around the world. After taking this course, students will be knowledgeable about insect biology, will be able to discuss the role of insects in human affairs and appreciate the role of insects in their own lives.

Students will be evaluated with two exams, mid-term and final, in addition to a series of projects. The first project will be a diary in which students describe and analyze their encounters with an insect or insect-related material. This journal should include things like news articles, insect damage samples, insect art, movies or publicity that uses insects. Second, students will work on creating a story, short-video, work of art, or other creative work with insects as a theme. Students will need to research and write a short paper on the insect subject(s) chosen for their creative work. Third, students are required to work on a term-paper dealing with a topic of their choice. The topic must be on any of the ways insects and humans interact. Weekly readings will be assigned from the textbook (*Bugs in the System* by May Berenbaum), from the entomological literature and from other sources which illustrate insect- human interactions.

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed.**: The proposed course will serve the purpose of General Education by providing instruction and experiences that will: 1) increase the student's intellectual breadth and versatility; 2) train students in critical thinking; 3) make students aware of the diversity of human

culture and experience; and 4) train students in how they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.

Students will gain intellectual breadth and versatility by learning about the most important group of animals at this time. The initial lectures will introduce aspects of insect biology and basic insect identification. These lectures will then lead to a section which covers the gains and losses from our interaction with insects. Through the interpretation of reading assignments and completion of projects students will exercise their critical thinking abilities. For instance, in a term paper students will be required to carefully analyze a topic of their choice. They will also be required to make entries in a journal that records their reactions to any encounter with insect-related materials. Thus, students will be exposed to scientific articles, films, music compositions, short stories, etc. and all students will be required to evaluate the works based on the entomological knowledge gained so far and record their evaluations in their journals. The exposure to creative works such as films and music will also serve the goal of making students aware of the diversity of human culture and experience. Throughout the course, students will be exposed to how other cultures view our relationship with insects and creative works from different countries will be presented. In addition, the course will examine the use of insects as food in different countries and the role of insects in various mythologies among other topics. Finally, students will learn about processes to acquire and use knowledge as students develop their own creative work and complete their term papers.

#### CA4 Criteria:

1. Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and/or modes of creativity.
2. This course is meant to be an introduction to the science of entomology from the perspective of insect and human interactions. Thus, the request for inclusion in group 3. However, the interactions of insects and humans cannot be fully appreciated if the discussion stems from one cultural perspective. This course could be included in group 4 because it will meet criterion 1 for this group. The course will highlight how various cultures view the interactions of humans and insects and in the process show to the students how this group of animals is diversely perceived. For example, insects are routine food items in various Asian cultures and among Indian cultures of the American continent while that is not the case for Western European cultures.
3. Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups. Insects utility or aesthetic value is perceived differently among various cultures. Conversely, there are many commonalities in how cultures have used insects, for example, as symbols or characters in myths. One such myth told by Native Americans and by Australian aborigines is that of a hard working tribe being converted into bees while the lazy tribe was made into flies. This course will explore these commonalities to illustrate how this animals have inspired the human imagination.