FOOD ORIGINS

The course aims to introduce scientific analysis of archaeological data on the origins of agriculture and domestication to non-science major students. The course covers up-to-date theories and perspectives on why/how some foragers became farmers in the past, the mechanisms involved in the spread of domesticated species to the world from primary areas of origin, and the social, cultural, environmental consequences associated with adopting agriculture in multiple locations around the world.

The instructional goal of the course is to make students aware of current research on the inter-disciplinary study of agricultural origins. By the end of the course students will have a comprehensive knowledge on the domestication and agricultural impacts on environments in multiple locations around the globe. The course meets science group criteria as it integrates research from a variety of scientific disciplines, including scientific archaeology, systematic botany, evolutionary ecology, palynology, and genetics.

During the first five weeks of the course students will learn the important archaeological data on plant and animal domestication and basics of analytical methods applied to the data. For example, students will observe archaeological plant fossils with microscopic aids.