Course Description for Ethnobotany 101, Dual Credit Program

In our exploration of how humans utilize plants, we investigate some basic botanical anatomy, physiology, and phylogeny. What properties of plants make them useful to people, and how are these properties distributed in different plant families, in different habitats, and across the globe? We become familiar with plant attributes through detailed anatomical studies, and by cooking and eating plants from different ecological and cultural contexts. You will become familiar with nutritional characteristics of common foods, and the politics and economics of access to distant crops. We examine the history of plants used here in the Southwestern desert for food, manufacture of clothing and tools, fuelwood, and shelter construction, and the evolution of our very special regional cuisine. We will also briefly explore medicinal uses of plants and local lore.

What We Will Do

In general,

* Tuesdays we will have an anatomy lesson (intro, microscopic studies of live specimens, you draw) and we will cook or do some hands on activity.
* Thursdays we will have a discussion based on a required reading, led by a student.
* You will present two powerpoints: one on a specific plant or plant group, and one on a topic related to human plant utilization.
* At the close of each class, we will clean up, and then have 15 minutes for a quick-write reflection.
* There will be a midterm, and a final. They will be open book.
* During class, you should take notes, but they should be minimal and very focused. For the most part, you should be present in what’s going on in class.

Your Presence

Your presence in class is vital. Every single day. However, life happens. When you are sick or have a legitimate conflict, LET ME KNOW (text to 505-426-7776 or email jennifer.ferguson@atcschool.org). IAIA allows five (5) unexcused absences, and then you are out on your ear (ejected from the course). So please, communicate with me.

Student presentations: You get one (1) delay (although I strongly discourage this), if you are seriously not ready and want more time to make your presentation better. Beyond that, you must find a classmate to trade dates with you (your responsibility). Or, you get no points for that presentation. (Not a good idea).

Discussion leaders: you must be prepared to lead your discussion on the day it is scheduled. (Once per semester). Make sure you’ve read the chapter or article, with passages of interest or curiosity marked. Prepare a short summary of the chapter or article (what’s it about?), and 3 or 4 interesting questions to prompt discussions. You’ll also give a brief wrap-up at the end, about where the discussion went, and remaining questions or conclusions we came to.