

Civic Agriculture

LA 410/510

Winter 2015

Tuesdays and Thursdays • 10:00-11:50

263 Lawrence Hall

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The question before us, then, is an extremely difficult one: How do we begin to remake, or to make, a local culture that will preserve our part of the world while we use it? Wendell Berry



Introduction – As the realization that the state of our industrialized food system is neither healthful nor sustainable becomes more self evident, and that food is the primary defining element shaping how and where we live, communities of all scales are seeking to re-embrace the skills and sensibilities that once defined civilized food production and consumption. Simultaneously, forward-looking thinkers are united in beginning the discovery and development of new methods in which to re-invent food systems so that they fit into a modern, responsible and more sustainable social paradigm. Civic agriculture is the embodiment of these concepts.

Course structure – This course is intended to be a place-based, experiential model of learning where students will identify - and contribute to the actual development and enhancement of – a complex set of constituents and recognized tactics which are required to create and maintain a socially responsible local food system. Working in teams, students will research, develop and implement various strategies aimed towards repairing the damaging effects of industrialized food production and distribution within the campus and local communities.

Course work will be organized around weekly presentations, supported by interpretive activities and field-work. Course activities will consist of discussions, field trips, guest interaction, project critiques and audio-visual presentations. Assignments may include essays, multimedia creations, and class presentations. Two required textbooks will be supplemented by weekly readings and assigned projects.

Course Objectives - Upon successful completion of this course you will have developed:

- An understanding of the importance of civic agriculture in shaping human communities.
- The role of small-scale (non-industrial) food systems in fostering local economies.
- A first-hand introduction of actual agrarian efforts to re-invent the local foodshed.
- Familiarity with topics relevant to evaluation of locations for site scale urban farming, such as; site cultural history, geology, soils, climate and micro climate, ecology, hydrology, aesthetics and zoning.

Required Texts-

Lyson, Thomas A., *Civic Agriculture, Reconnecting Farm, Food and Community*

Wirzba, Norman, *The Essential Agrarian Reader*