



PSCI-ENV-GEOG 380 The Politics of Urban Agriculture: From Victory Gardens to Neoliberalism

Course Syllabus Fall Semester 2023

Instructor: Zachary Nowak, PhD, and dott.ssa Anna Giovi (practicum)

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 18 seminar hours and 36 practicum hours

Prerequisites: none

Class Hours: Mondays 10:45am-12:15pm (seminar) and Wednesdays 10:45am-2pm (practicum)

Office Hours: by appointment after a class or via Zoom (see Moodle site)

Course Type: Seminar and Practicum

Lab Fee: USD \$90

Course Description

What do gardens in cities do for people? What are the political structures at the global, national, and local levels that promote urban gardens? Urban gardening is a favored solution to society's ills to theorists across the political spectrum from neoliberals to radicals—but is it all it's meant to be?

Urban agriculture is a catch-all term that covers community gardens, vegetable plots at prisons, didactically-minded gardens in schoolyards, gardens planted illegally on vacant lots, high-tech hydroponic companies, and farmers' markets. Students will learn about how these different spaces differ across variables like legality, goals, and actors. If urban space is inherently limited and if politics is a way to decide the use of limited resources, then urban gardens are deeply political. We will debate whether urban agriculture is an excellent way for city dwellers to reduce hunger, improve public health, and assert their control over urban space, or whether it's just another subtle manifestation of neoliberalism. A core goal of this course, above and beyond the content, is to develop research skills useful for other courses: how to read an article in 20 minutes, how to plan research, etc. The course meets once a week for the classroom portion of the class; students will spend three hours a week in The Umbra Institute's campus garden, Orto Sole, or in another urban garden in the city center.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *Define* what constitutes urban agriculture;
- *Articulate* the key debates in the literature about urban agriculture projects;
- *Identify* measurable collective and individual actions in urban agriculture and their possible beneficial health effects;
- *Engage* in experiential learning activities and practice systematic research and ethical scholarship;
- *Communicate* their learning with and to others using 21st-century tools.

Course Materials

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Assessment

Attendance	10%
Weekly Moodle Quizzes	25%
Course Journal	25%
One-on-One Meeting w/Prof	2.5%
Lit Review for Research Proposal	12.5%
Final Research Proposal	20%
Community Engagement Presentation	5%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. If you attend all the meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Weekly Moodle Quizzes (25%)

Students will be assigned a quizz every week, which will be due before the seminar meeting and will not be

reopened. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed. Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive. There will be a combination of *technical*, *methodological*, and *content questions*. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the readings. The technical questions will help students learn the class's policies and administrative procedures. The methodological questions will test skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author's argument and assessing sources. Part of this grade as well will be some practice with the research software Zotero, which is mandatory for this course.

Course Journal (25%)

Students will need a notebook, which they will use as a personal space through which to reflect on course material and ideas. See the full prompt on Moodle for more information.

One-on-One Meetings w/Prof (2.5%)

Getting to know your professor makes you more comfortable with that person and therefore more likely to ask for help. It also might help you to ask questions about the various assignments or discuss a paper idea. In this course, you get 2.5% of your grade for coming one time before Week 9 to office hours.

Literature Review for the Research Proposal (10%)

The final exercise for this class is to write a paper that combines the literature on urban agriculture with a proposal for future research in Orto Sole (or other urban gardens in Perugia) or, alternately, a plan for a future community-engaged project. The first part of this assignment is for the student to write a literature review on a topic within urban agriculture. We'll practice recognizing and writing literature reviews, so students without experience in this need not worry. A full prompt will be available on Moodle.

Final Research Proposal (20%)

The final research proposal is essentially the literature review plus a description of how you might do research to add to the discussion on that topic (20%). A full prompt, as well as a template, will be available on Moodle.

Community Engagement Presentation (5%)

Part of this course is a community-engagement project in Orto Sole, Umbra's campus garden. You will work in groups and deliver a final presentation in Week 13. A full prompt will be available on Moodle.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero. As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance & Lateness Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. Regular attendance is a critical component of academic success and students are expected to attend all scheduled classes unless there is a legitimate reason for absence. Students are also expected to be on time for all classes and co-curricular activities.

Each unexcused absence will affect the final grade by 1.5% up to a maximum of 10%. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. Excessive unexcused absences (8 or more) may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up

within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will be considered the equivalent of two unexcused absences. As such, absence from the co-curricular field trip will lower students' final grade in that course by 3% (the equivalent of two unexcused absences).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness includes: death in immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled. Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director but only if a medical certification is provided. Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class.

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, students are asked to keep computers and phones away and use a regular notebook. There are four exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if you're using a tablet to take notes, 3) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; or 4) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Introduction to the Class

Seminar Meeting: *Overview of the course, introductions, and some introductory discussion of what urban agriculture is.*

Readings for the week:

[There are no readings for the first seminar meeting.]

Assignments:

Complete the first quiz in Moodle (for Week 2) and the Zotero set-up by the next seminar meeting.

WEEK 2

Introduction to Urban Agriculture

Seminar Meeting: *Overview of the course, introductions, and some introductory discussion of what urban agriculture is.*

Readings for the week:

Nowak, Zachary. "How To Read A Journal Article Well (And Quickly)." 2023.

McClintock, Nathan. "Radical, Reformist, and Garden-Variety Neoliberal: Coming to Terms with Urban Agriculture's Contradictions." *Local Environment* 19, no. 2 (February 7, 2014): 147–71. [note especially McClintock's typology on page 150]

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. Read pages 1-19.

WEEK 3

Urban Ag in the Past

Seminar Meeting: *This week we'll dig into the history of urban agriculture in the US, and talk about how food production was always a goal but rarely the goal.*

Readings for the week:

Bassett, Thomas J. "Reaping on the Margins: A Century of Community Gardening in America." *Landscape* 25, no. 2 (1981): 1–8.

Moore, Sarah. "Forgotten Roots of the Green City: Subsistence Gardening in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1940." *Urban Geography* 27, no. 2 (March 1, 2006): 174–92.

"Beantown Farming: 10 Urban Agriculture Projects in Boston." Food Tank (blog), February 15, 2014. [

<https://foodtank.com/news/2014/02/beantown-farming-10-urban-agriculture-projects-in-boston/>]

WEEK 4

Farmer's Markets

Seminar Meeting: *We'll talk about these iconic places but also about how certain spaces can be racialized.*

Readings for the week:

Hoover, Brandon. "White Spaces in Black and Latino Places: Urban Agriculture and Food Sovereignty." *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 3, no. 4 (2013): 109–115.

Guthman, Julie. "If They Only Knew': Color Blindness and Universalism in California Alternative Food Institutions." *The Professional Geographer* 60, no. 3 (August 2008): 387–97.

WEEK 5

Gender & Race

Seminar Meeting: *We'll return to the topic of race in UA and add a new lens of analysis of urban agriculture projects, gender.*

Readings for the week:

Reynolds, Kristin. "Disparity Despite Diversity: Social Injustice in New York City's Urban Agriculture System." *Antipode* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 240–59.

Riley, Liam, and Alice Hovorska. "Gendering Urban Food Strategies Across Multiple Scales." In *Cities and Agriculture*, edited by Henk De Zeeuw, 336–57. New York: Routledge, 2015.

WEEK 6

Workshop for Final Project

Semester Break

WEEK 7

Identity & Good Food

Seminar Meeting: *What is good food? Is the goal of urban agriculture to make good food? Or to make food at all?*

Readings for the week:

Rubio, Bruno. *Bruno Rubio interviewed by Zachary Nowak*. Interview by Zachary Nowak. MP3 recording on phone, July 9, 2016. Ms. N-2283 Subseries VII.B. Massachusetts Historical Society.

"History." Fenway Victory Gardens (blog). Accessed January 24, 2019. [<https://fenwayvictorygardens.org/history/>]

Ott, Cindy. "Making Sense of Urban Gardens." *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies* 15, no. 3 (August 1, 2015): 18–27.

Assignments: Literature Review for the final paper due Sunday.

WEEK 8

Institutional Gardens—Schools to Jails

Seminar Meeting: *Brief description of this day's content*

Readings for the week:

Pudup, Mary Beth. "It Takes a Garden: Cultivating Citizen-Subjects in Organized Garden

- Projects.” *Geoforum*, Rethinking Economy, 39, no. 3 (May 1, 2008): 1228–40.
- Allen, Patricia, and Julie Guthman. “From ‘Old School’ to ‘Farm-to-School’: Neoliberalization from the Ground Up.” *Agriculture and Human Values* 23, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 401–15.
- Flanagan, Caitlin. “Cultivating Failure.” *The Atlantic*, January 1, 2010. [<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/01/cultivating-failure/307819/>]

WEEK 9

Policy & Therapy

Seminar Meeting: *Brief description of this day’s content*

Readings for the week:

- Bartling, Hugh. “A Chicken Ain’t Nothin’ but a Bird: Local Food Production and the Politics of Land-Use Change.” *Local Environment* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 23–34.
- Adevi, Anna A., and Fredrika Mårtensson. “Stress Rehabilitation through Garden Therapy: The Garden as a Place in the Recovery from Stress.” *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 12, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 230–37.
- Hawkins, Jemma L., Kathryn J. Thirlaway, Karianne Backx, and Deborah A. Clayton. “Allotment Gardening and Other Leisure Activities for Stress Reduction and Healthy Aging.” *HortTechnology* 21, no. 5 (October 1, 2011): 577–85.

WEEK 10

Commercial & Guerilla Gardening [The State, The Market, & Legality]

Seminar Meeting: *Brief description of this day’s content*

Readings for the week:

- Schindler, Sarah. “Unpermitted Urban Agriculture: Transgressive Actions, Changing Norms, and the Local Food Movement.” *Wisconsin Law Review* 82, no. 1036 (2014): 369–96.
- City of Boston. “Article 89 Made Easy.” City of Boston, 2015. Read page 1-36 watch: “Ron Finley: A Guerrilla Gardener in South Central LA | TED Talk.” [https://www.ted.com/talks/ron_finley_a_guerrilla_gardener_in_south_central_la]

Assignments: final research proposals due Sunday night.

WEEK 11

Community Gardens?

Seminar Meeting: *What is a “community garden”? Should Orto Sole be considered one? Do we want it to become one?*

Readings for the week:

- Eizenberg, Efrat. “Actually Existing Commons: Three Moments of Space of Community Gardens in New York City.” *Antipode* 44, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 764–82.
- Cumbers, Andrew, Deirdre Shaw, John Crossan, and Robert McMaster. “The Work of Community Gardens: Reclaiming Place for Community in the City.” *Work, Employment and*

Society 32, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 133–49.

WEEK 12

Final Wrap-Up

WEEK 13

Special Academic Events Week

Tuesday, December 12: End of the Semester Community Engagement Presentations (students will receive detailed guidelines and a presentations' order after the semester break).