

AGSC 415 Ethical Issues in Sustainable Agriculture (W/E)

Fall Semester, 2004; 3 credit hours
Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 11:30-12:20 p.m., Barnett 268

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Office Hours:
M,W,F 10:30-11:30
T, W, TH 1:30-2:30
Other times by appointment or stop by.

There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace.

~Aldo Leopold, 1949

Course Overview

This course examines the sustainability of agricultural production, processing, and marketing systems, including their ethical, economic, social, and ecological dimensions.

Prerequisites: Junior standing AND AGSC 100 or completion of most AGSC core classes

Objectives

1. To familiarize students with important historical and contemporary thought, writing, and practice on sustainable agriculture,
2. To evaluate alternative (and often competing) definitions of agricultural sustainability,
3. To consider farming, food processing, and consumption technologies and policies that may promote long-term viability of natural resources, and
4. To actively engage in promoting awareness of sustainable agriculture through a service-learning project.

Required Texts and Supplemental Readings

1. Dana L. Jackson and Laura L. Jackson. *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. 2002.
2. Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1949. *(Any edition will work for this class.)*

Other required readings are available online or will be made available through two-hour reserve at Pickler Library or as handouts. **Readings assigned for a particular day should be done before class that day, because this is the material that will be discussed in class that day. Comprehension of reading material will occasionally be aided and assessed through the use of readings quizzes and/or take-home questions.**

Course Topics

❖ Introduction

- What is sustainable agriculture?—competing definitions & agendas
- Organic, low-impact, biodynamic permaculture, or “saving the world through pesticides and plastic”
- Readings from ATTRA, SARE, WICIAS, Kerr Center, and Avery

A good part of agriculture is to learn how to adapt one's work to nature... To live in right relation with his natural conditions is one of the first lessons that a wise farmer or any other wise man learns.

~Liberty Hyde Bailey, 1915

❖ **Midwestern farmland: “Ecological sacrifice area”?**

- Readings from Kurtz, Jackson & Jackson: Intro plus Ch. 1-2

❖ **History of the movement**

- Readings from Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Wendell Berry, and Wes Jackson

❖ **The uneasy truce between conservation, preservation, & agric.**

- Jackson & Jackson Ch. 3

❖ **Attempts at natural restoration on farms at local & regional scales**

- Sustaining the land—agronomic techniques and practices
- Sustaining the land—reincorporating livestock and crop production
- Jackson & Jackson Ch. 4-8

❖ **Can agriculture and conservation be mutually compatible?**

- Jackson & Jackson Ch. 10-12
- Imhoff (Farming with the Wild) case studies.

❖ **Achieving economic sustainability**

- Role of alternative crops/livestock, value-added marketing, agritourism, and other enterprises

As for butter versus margarine, I trust cows more than chemists.

~ Joan Dye Gussow

❖ **Eating sustainably**

- What is the role of the food consumer in encouraging sustainable production?
- Selected readings from Gussow, Berry, Nabhan, and others

- Jackson & Jackson Ch. 17
- Work of Slow Food, Chefs Collaborative and other organizations
- The Niman Ranch-Chipotle story

I begin with the proposition that eating is an agricultural act. Eating ends the annual drama of the food economy that begins with planting and birth.. Most eaters, however, are no longer aware that this is true. They think of food as an agricultural product, perhaps, but they do not think of themselves as participants in agriculture.

~Wendell Berry, 1989

activists to work to deny "genetically-enhanced" crops to "third-world" farmers/consumers?

- Readings from DiGregori

❖ **Social and cultural issues in sustainability: changes of the heart**

- Growing your own: gardening and other steps that begin at home
- Farms as places to live: homesteading and other "lifestyle farm" trends
- Jackson & Jackson Ch. 16
- Selected readings from Logsdon and Berry

I became a shepherd, calling home those people who should never have left in the first place. How much profit per acre is this worth in accounting terms?

~Gene Logsdon, 1998

❖ **Public Policy for Sustainability**

- Jackson & Jackson Ch. 18

CourseInfo Web Site

There is a Blackboard/CourseInfo web site for the course. Reading assignments and links to other relevant resources will be posted on the site throughout the semester.

Basis of Student Evaluations

All deadlines and examination dates must be met unless you make prior arrangements with the instructor. Material covered during class discussion periods is integral to the content of the course. Therefore, **attendance at and participation in class sessions is expected and required**. Final grades will be calculated on a straight scale (A= 90%+, B=80-89.9%, C=70-79.9%, D=60-69.9%, F=Below 60%).

| Item | Points Possible |
|---|------------------------|
| Readings Quizzes (4 x 25 pt. quizzes will take the place of a mid-term exam) | 100 |
| Final Exam | 100 |
| Service Learning Project (FoodFest) <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Registration & Analysis of info❖ OR Display on Sustainable Agriculture❖ AND (Everyone): Publicity & Signage | 50 |
| Sustainable agriculture “Book Review” | 100 |
| Paper on Sustainable Agriculture Technique or Issue | 100 |
| Group Presentation & Leading of Discussion pertaining to Paper | 25 |
| Peer Reviews of other students’ papers (2 x 25) | 50 |
| (3) Short papers on Field Trip topics, Guest Speakers, and Reflective Journaling <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ SandHill Farm Sorghum Festival, Sat. Sep. 25❖ Agroforestry Field Day, New Franklin, MO, Sat. Oct. 16❖ Small Farm Conference, Columbia, MO, Th. Nov. 4 or Fri. Nov. 5❖ Farm observation & reflection❖ Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage?❖ Grass Hedges Tour?❖ Other farm tours? | 75 |
| Attendance & Participation | 50 |

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is required. Each unexcused absence after the first one will result in a 5-point deduction from the student’s attendance/participation score.

Statement on Academic Integrity

I expect students to maintain the highest standard of academic honesty, and students should hold that same expectation of me and of other students. This means that each individual must do his or her own work on assignments, tests, and papers. Teamwork is acceptable and encouraged on team projects, homework, papers and other “non-test” assignments; even so, the work ultimately produced and submitted by the student should be the product of his or her intellectual and physical effort. Any suspected incident of cheating or plagiarism will be discussed with the student and appropriate follow-up action (warnings, reduction of grade for assignment or class, and referral to Student Affairs) taken as deemed necessary.

Semester Layout and Tentative Assignment Deadlines

| <u>Week</u> | <u>Dates</u> | <u>Holidays, etc.</u> | <u>Assignment</u> |
|-------------|--------------|--|---|
| 1 | 8/30-9/3 | | |
| 2 | 9/6-9/10 | 6 th No class | F 9/10 Farm field trip? |
| 3 | 9/13-9/17 | | Quiz 1 Sat. 9/18 FoodFest |
| 4 | 9/20-9/24 | | Sat. 9/25 Sandhill field trip |
| 5 | 9/27-10/1 | | 10/1 Book Review Draft |
| 6 | 10/4-10/8 | | Quiz 2 |
| 7 | 10/11-10/15 | 15 th No class | 10/13 Book Review Final Sat. 10/16 Chestnut Roast field trip |
| 8 | 10/18-10/22 | | |
| 9 | 10/25-10/29 | | Quiz 3 |
| 10 | 11/1-11/5 | | 11/3 Paper 2 Draft 11/4 or 11/5 Small Farm Conf. field trip |
| 11 | 11/8-11/12 | | |
| 12 | 11/15-11/19 | | 11/19 Paper 2 Final |
| 13 | 11/22-11/26 | 24 th & 26 th No class | 11/22 Quiz 4 |
| 14 | 11/29-12/3 | | |
| 15 | 12/6-12/10 | 10 th Last class | Paper topic presentations |
| 16 | 12/13-12/17 | 15 th Reading Day | M 12/13 Final exam |

A Partial List of Sources for other Readings

Avery, Dennis T. Saving the planet with pesticides and plastic: the environmental triumph of high-yield farming. Indianapolis: Hudson Institute. 2000.

Bell, Michael Mayerfeld. Farming for us all: practical agriculture and the cultivation of sustainability. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press. 2004.

The real bottleneck to the revival of native, locally grown foods is a cultural—or more precisely, a spiritual—dilemma. If we no longer believe that the earth is sacred...then it does not really matter to most folks how much ecological and cultural damage is done by the way we eat.

~Gary Paul Nabhan, 2002

Berry, Wendell. The Unsettling of America. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. 1997.

Berry, Wendell. The Art of the Common Place. Washington, D.C.: CounterPoint. 2002.

Carson, Rachel. Silent Spring. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin. 1962.

DeGregori, Thomas R. Bountiful Harvest: Technology, Food Safety, and the Environment. Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute. 2002.

Freyfogle, Eric T. (editor) The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. 2001.

Gussow, Joan Dye. *This Organic Life*.

Imhoff, Daniel. *Farming with the Wild*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. 2003.

Jackson, Wes. *Altars of Unhewn Stone: Science and the Earth*. New York: North Point Press. 1987.

Jackson, Wes. *New Roots for Agriculture*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. 1980.

Kurtz, Don. *South of the Big Four*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. 1995.

Leopold, Aldo. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1991.

Logsdon, Gene. *The Contrary Farmer*. Post Mills, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Company. 1993.

Logsdon, Gene. *Living at Nature's Pace*. White River Junction, VT : Chelsea Green Pub. Co., 2000.

Logsdon, Gene. *You can go home again : adventures of a contrary life*. Bloomington : Indiana University Press. 1998.

National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA) Web Site. <http://attra.ncat.org/>. Various Articles.

Nickel, Raylene Frankhauser. *A Prayer for the Prairie: Learning faith on a small farm*. Kief, ND: Five Penny Press. 2003.

USDA, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). Online.

The State College tells farmers that Chinese elms do not clog screens, and hence are preferable to cottonwoods....The only thing it does not know about farms is where they came from. Its job is to make Illinois safe for soybeans.

~Aldo Leopold, 1949