

SC424/H424 Topics in Organic Agriculture

Catalog Statement:

Examination of issues specific to organic food production systems and marketing.

Learning Objectives:

Become familiar with the history and evolution of the organic food movement in the US, and the impact of environmental, socio-economic, marketing and production forces involved. Understand the differences between organic and conventional agricultural systems and the driving factors behind organic agriculture.

Course Specifics:

This is a 3-credit Spring semester course.

Lead Instructors: Jessica Davis, Soil & Crop Sciences
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and Dawn Thilmany, Ag and Resource Economics
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Course Materials

A collection of readings, fact sheets and case studies will be available for purchase from CopyRite and placed on reserve at Morgan Library.

Instructors will also choose 3 books for the class to read and discuss. These may include:

Farming-A guide by Wendell Berry

Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture by Andrew Kimbrell

For the Health of the Land by Aldo Leopold

Organic Field Crop Handbook by Carmen Fernholz

Prerequisites

H100 or SC100, SC171/H171, and SC 240
EA202 and EA328

Evaluation:

Each student will write either an extension factsheet (8 single-spaced pages) or a research report (8-10 single-spaced pages) on a topic of interest to organic food producers. Extension factsheets should follow the format for CSU extension factsheets and should not duplicate factsheets already available within the CSU system (although updating outdated factsheets is acceptable). Research reports should include review of previous research and needs for future research. Topics must be accepted by the instructors in advance, and students will be expected to meet with one of the instructors monthly to evaluate the progress and direction of the projects.

In addition, students will present their reports orally to the class (15-min each).

Evaluation:

Mid-term Exam	100
Final Exam	200
Factsheet or Report	
Written Version	100
Oral Presentation	50
Class participation	<u>50</u>
Total	500

Schedule:

- 1) History of Organic Movement in US Wk 1
 - a. When, Why, and Who
 - b. Evolution of the Movement

Book Discussion 1
- 2) Organic Certification Wk 2
 - a. What are the requirements? Don Gallegos
 - b. Alternatives to the Certified Organic label (all natural, local, regional etc.)
- 3) Production challenges and realities
 - a. Soil Fertility, Pest Management, and Alternative Machinery Wk 3
 - b. Urbanization, Farm Labor, Land Acquisition Wk 4 and Water Rights
 - c. Post-Harvest Handling - food safety issues (Paul Pelegrino) Wk 5

Book Discussion 2 Wk 6
- 4) Marketing- issues and opportunities
 - a. Strategies and planning for direct markets Wk 6
 - b. Appropriate target markets
 - i. local
 - ii. regional and national initiatives
 - iii. value-added
 - c. Marketing channels Wk 7
 - i. direct ; CSA, Farmers Markets
 - ii. wholesale
 - iii. alliances with retailers and institutions

Mid-Term Exam

- 5) Case Studies (Farmer Speakers on Biggest Challenges and Successes)
 - a. Happy Heart, Pachamama, Grant Family Farms, Wks 8-9 Cal Organic, First Fruits
 - b. Organic Co-ops Wk 10
 - i. Harmony Market, Ft. Collins Food Coop
 - ii. Tuscarora Growers' Coop
 - c. Colorado Crop to Cuisine, Practical Farmers of Iowa Wk 11

Book Discussion 3

 - d. Whole Foods, Wild Oats, Sunflower Market, Wk 12 Vitamin Cottage
 - e. Horizon Dairy, Silk Soy Products, Coleman Natural Wk 13 Meat, Celestial Seasonings, New Belgium Brewery

Student Presentations

Wks 14-15

Final Exam