CONS 305
Introduction to Sustainable Agriculture  
Fall 2012

Instructor: Dr. Joel Gruver
Office: Knoblauch Hall 302
Office hours: M,W 10-11, Th 10-12
Phone: (309) 298 1215
E-mail: j-gruver@wiu.edu
Class meeting time and location: 1-1:50 Knoblauch Hall 152

Course description: This course will begin with an exploration of ag literacy and popular perceptions (and misperceptions) of modern agriculture. Next we will quickly review the entire history of agriculture from its origins to the industrialization of agriculture. We will critically evaluate the dominant industrial agricultural paradigm with respect to ecological, social and economic impacts. Next we will discuss alternative forms of agriculture giving special attention to organic agriculture, management intensive grazing, local food systems and new crops/new uses. We will identify successful practitioners of each type of agriculture and discuss their common culture of conservation. We will conclude by analyzing 3 major challenges to the sustainability of agriculture: inter-generational transitions, global competition for inputs and markets and climate change.

Text: Readings from a wide variety of sources will be assigned most weeks.

Projects: Over the course of the semester students will complete 3 types of projects: weekly topical interviews, an ag literacy journal and a group website style report.

Field trips: Three field trips are planned. All students are expected to attend at least 2 field trips but alternative activities are possible.

Class format: Interactive lectures with lots of discussion.

Grading:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly interviews</td>
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<td>Group project</td>
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<td>Ag literacy journal</td>
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<td>Pop quizzes</td>
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<td>Take home final exam</td>
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Grading scale:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A &gt; 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>A- 90-93</td>
<td>C 73-77</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+ 87-90</td>
<td>C- 70-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>B 83-87</td>
<td>D 60-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>B- 80-83</td>
<td>F &lt; 60</td>
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Class schedule:

Ag Literacy
8/20 Overview of IL agriculture
8/22 Overview of US agriculture
8/24 Overview of global agriculture

Public perceptions of agriculture
8/27 *The Simple Life* – ag in pop culture
8/29 Understanding ag statistics
8/31 Rebranding mainstream agriculture

Development of traditional agriculture
9/3 No class on 9/3
9/5 The origin of agriculture
9/7 Pre-industrial agriculture

Development of industrial agriculture
9/10 The mechanical revolution
9/12 The chemical revolution
9/14 The story of hybrid corn

Socio/economic impacts of industrial agriculture Part I
9/17 The “Farm Problem”
9/19 The Midwest Farm Crisis
9/21 Who does the dirty work in US agriculture?

Socio/economic impacts of industrial agriculture Part II
9/24 Fast food nation – far reaching impacts on US agriculture
9/26 The consolidation of agribusiness and the global food system
9/28 The changing demographics and structure of US agriculture

Ecological impacts of industrial agriculture
10/1 Agroecological intensification
10/3 The ecology of concentrated animal feeding operations
10/5 Herbicide resistant weeds

Farm and food safety issues
10/8 Farm safety
10/10 Food safety and the American diet
10/12 no class

Development of alternative agriculture
10/15 Historical roots of alternative forms of agriculture
10/17 Alternative ag as a grassroots movement
10/19 Mainstreaming of alternative agriculture

Organic agriculture
10/22 Overview of the organic industry
10/24 Science vs. mythology of organic farming
10/26 Profiles of success in organic agriculture

Management intensive grazing
10/29 Overview of the role of grazing in US and global agriculture
10/31 Ecology of grazing systems
11/2 Profiles of success in management intensive grazing
Local food systems
11/5 Direct marketing
11/7 Agro-tourism
11/9 Urban agriculture
New crops/new uses
11/12 Historical overview of new crops/new uses
11/14 Profiles of potential new crops/uses for the Midwest
11/16 Profiles of success with new crops/uses in the Midwest
Thanksgiving Break
11/19-11/23 No class all week
Culture of conservation
11/26 Green and gold success stories
11/28 Creating a culture of conservation
11/30 Impacts of farm policy on conservation
Future challenges to sustainability
12/3 Inter-generational transition
12/5 Global competition for inputs and markets
12/7 Climate change – mitigation and adaptation
Final exam week
12/12 – Take home final exam due

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

Participation and timeliness: You are expected to attend class regularly, actively participate in class discussions and submit assignments on time. ATTENDANCE WILL BE MONITORED.

Academic integrity: NO CHEATING, PLAGIARISM, OR OTHER VIOLATIONS OF THE WIU ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY WILL BE TOLERATED. Please talk to me if you have any questions about the WIU academic integrity policy. All suspected violations of the WIU academic integrity policy will be addressed promptly and individually.

Student rights and responsibilities: Detailed information regarding student rights and responsibilities can be found at http://www.wiu.edu/provost/student/. You are responsible for being familiar with your rights and responsibilities.

Special accommodations: If you have special needs, please feel free to discuss them with me and/or contact Disability Support Services at 298-2512.

Special note for education majors: Education majors who receive a "C-" or below must retake this course or find a substitute course to meet School of Agriculture graduation requirements.