UNIVERSITY OF OREGON | Global Education Oregon

SYLLABUS

TITLE: Food and Agricultural Systems, Policy, and Sustainability in a Global Context
Instructor Name: Cristina Santini
Language of Instruction: English
UO Credits:4
Contact Hours*: 40
Total Hours of Student Engagement (THSE) in all course activities*: 120
Level: 300

SIENA, ITALY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This 5-week, 40-hour intensive course introduces students to the political, economic, and environmental dimensions of agriculture. The course will provide cases focused on specific geographical areas and supply chains/industries. Students explore agricultural policy frameworks, the socioeconomic value of farming communities, the structure and consequences of industrial food systems, and the environmental impacts of agricultural and food production.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this course is to introduce the intersecting political, economic, and environmental dimensions that define the contemporary agricultural landscape. It examines agricultural policy frameworks and their systematic influence on food systems, while simultaneously exploring the socioeconomic significance of farming communities and the structural dynamics of industrial food production. Furthermore, the course assesses the environmental impacts of agricultural practices, contextualizing these theoretical concepts through the detailed analysis of specific geographical areas and diverse supply chains.

Student Outcomes. Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Analyze key agricultural policy frameworks in Europe and at a global level
- Evaluate the socioeconomic role of agriculture in rural and urban contexts
- Outline the role of agriculture
- Compare industrial and traditional food systems and their implications for society.
- Assess environmental impacts of agricultural practices, including soil, water, biodiversity, and climate.
- Interpret real-world examples.
- Provide tools for analysing global supply chain
- Communicate informed perspectives on sustainable agriculture and food systems.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The course is conducted through a combination of lectures and seminars, using a blend of required readings, audiovisual materials (such as films and interviews), and guest contributions to introduce

key concepts. The learning experience is reinforced through experiential education, specifically field visits and the analysis of complex case studies. Active participation is essential, as students will engage in collaborative group work and deliver presentations to demonstrate their synthesis of the course material and research.

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

Student progress will be evaluated through a combination of active class participation, reflective writing grounded in experiential learning, and substantive research-based projects. The final grade is calculated as follows:

- Participation and engagement: 20%
- Field visit/case studies reflection papers (2): 30%
- Group case study presentation: 50%

1. Participation & Engagement (20%): Given the intensive seminar nature of this course, attendance is mandatory. Beyond simple presence, students are expected to actively contribute to class discussions, demonstrating their ability to engage critically with topics in agricultural policy and food systems.

2. Field Visit/Case studies reflection papers (30%): reflection on cases/field visit represents a way to maximise the value of the experiential education opportunities. These entries should not merely summarise the visit/case but must connect observations with the theoretical frameworks and socioeconomic concepts discussed in class.

3. Group Case Study Presentation (50%) (Project/Presentation): Working in small groups, students will conduct an in-depth investigation into a specific geographical area or a complex agricultural challenge. The group will synthesise their findings into a formal presentation delivered to the class at the end of the term. This project assesses the ability to collaborate, conduct research, and effectively communicate the intersecting political, economic, and environmental dimensions of the chosen topic.

COURSE OUTLINE

The course is scheduled in 5 weeks with a total of 40 hours and an average of 8 hours per week (the detailed schedule is to be defined).

Week 1 — Agricultural Policy: Frameworks and Governance

This week, students will understand the rules of the game.

Topics:

- Introduction to global agricultural systems and key definitions.
- The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): History, pillars, recent reforms, and funding mechanisms.
- Italian agricultural governance: National vs. Regional competencies.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will understand the regulatory hierarchy and how agricultural policy directly shapes production decisions, market access, and sustainability mandates.

Week 2 — The Socioeconomic Environment: Communities & Livelihoods

In this week we will explore the role of agriculture in socioeconomic environment

Topics:
- Agriculture as a cultural asset and economic driver in rural areas.
- Labor dynamics, demographics, and the challenge of generational renewal.
- Multifunctionality: Agritourism, landscape preservation, and cultural heritage.

Learning Outcomes:
Students can articulate the socioeconomic contributions of agriculture beyond mere food production and identify the challenges facing rural labor markets.

Week 3 — Industrial Food Systems vs. Local Economies
We will focus on Supply Chains and From farm to fork.

Topics:
- Characteristics of industrial agriculture: Monocultures and economies of scale.
- Global supply chains, corporate concentration, and retail power dynamics.
- Short supply chains (0-km) and local food systems as resistance models.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will be able to critically compare the logistics, efficiency, and social equity of industrial food systems versus local/short supply chain models.

Week 4 — Environmental Impacts & The Green Transition
The Ecological Footprint: Challenges and Solutions.

Topics:
- Environmental consequences: Soil degradation, water usage, and biodiversity loss.
- Climate change: Greenhouse gas emissions, mitigation strategies, and adaptation.
- The EU Green Deal and "Farm to Fork" Strategy: Targets for 2030.
- Sustainable practices: Introduction to Agroecology, Organic farming, and Regenerative Agriculture.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will assess the environmental footprint of different farming methods and evaluate the feasibility of European sustainability strategies.

Week 5 — Future Perspectives & Capstone Presentations

- Emerging Trends
- Smart Farming, Precision Agriculture, and Digital Innovation
- technological adoption
- Group Work: Final preparation of research findings.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the course material by synthesizing their research into a professional presentation, proposing solutions or analyses of complex agricultural issues.

COURSE READINGS

A curated selection of academic articles, policy documents, and multimedia resources will be provided. No textbook purchase required.

Academic Misconduct

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

Generative AI Course Policy

Students may use generative AI tools for specific parts of the writing/research process, such as brainstorming ideas, creating outlines, or summarizing complex readings. Students may not submit text, code, or images generated by AI as their own work. The final product must be written and created by students.

Accessible Education

The University of Oregon and I are dedicated to fostering inclusive learning environments for all students and welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Accessible Education Center (AEC) assists students with disabilities in reducing campus-wide and classroom-related barriers. If you have or think you have a disability and experience academic barriers, please contact the AEC to discuss appropriate accommodations or support. Visit 360 Oregon Hall or aec.uoregon.edu for more information. You can contact AEC at 541-346-1155 or via email at uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Pregnancy Modifications. Pregnant and parenting students are eligible for academic and work modifications related to pregnancy, childbirth, loss of pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, lactation, and related medical conditions. To request pregnancy-related modifications, students should complete the Request for Pregnancy Modifications form on the OICRC website. OICRC coordinates academic and other modifications for pregnant and parenting students to ensure students can continue to access their education and university

programs and activities.