

The Urban Farm

Dept. of Landscape Architecture
University of Oregon
Fall 2021
LA 390 CRN 13622 @ 12:00 - 1:50
CRN 13623 @ 3:00 - 4:50
Tuesdays and Thursdays
Urban Farm & 125 McKenzie Hall
4 Credits
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“A person who undertakes to grow a garden at home, by practices that will preserve rather than exploit the economy of the soil, has his mind precisely against what is wrong with us....What I am saying is that if we apply our minds directly and competently to the needs of the earth, then we will have begun to make fundamental and necessary changes in our minds. We will begin to understand and to mistrust and to change our wasteful economy, which markets not just the produce of the earth, but also the earth’s ability to produce.”

-Wendell Berry, Think Little from A Continuous Harmony: Essays, Cultural & Agricultural

Berry also famously described eating as an agricultural act. As we become more aware of this intrinsic connection, the necessity of understanding where our food comes from becomes extremely vital. Eating Local has joined Organic as an important criterion for learning how to behave responsibly and sustainably. Consequently, the necessity to preserve vanishing prime agricultural land has become equally important and has the potential to shape how we reassess our Urban Spaces.

The Urban Farm is a model for alternative urban land use where people grow food, work together, take care of the land, and build community. Dating back to the 1970’s, the Urban Farm has been a place and a process, integrating biological, ecological, economic and social concerns.

The class is a hands-on experience where students learn by doing, drawing upon several organic gardening philosophies. The Autumn is a wonderful time to be in the garden and there is a great deal of work to be done in order to be ready for the dark days of winter. Season specific activities such as planting over-wintering varieties, compost making, perennial planting, mulching and sowing cover crops will all need to take place this term. And... there will be harvesting, lots of harvesting. As such, students should be prepared for physical and sometimes tiring work in all kinds of weather. They also should look forward to eating the fruits of their labor.

A word about COVID: Although we will make every attempt to be out working in the gardens and orchards, **there might be occasions where we will meet in person in the classroom.** It will be necessary for all students to be present in the classroom and in the field. We are thrilled to be getting back to normal but we will be ready to adapt should circumstances demand it. If so, our group interaction will strictly adhere to the University of Oregon COVID guidelines with regard to masks, distancing, room sanitation etc. That said, we’ve had the distinct honor and privilege to have been able to teach in-person over the last three terms which has been a godsend. We are confident that the fall will be terrific as well.

In addition to the hands-on work, students are also expected to think deeply about how the work they are doing fits into the food system of which they are a part. There will be numerous assignments where they will demonstrate the degree to which they have done this critical thinking. Be prepared to work hard and to share your experience through projects and written reflection.

For information regarding the Urban Farm Program contact:
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