

Agroecology 702: THE MULTIFUNCTIONALITY OF AGRICULTURE

Spring, 2009

T Th noon to 2:30



The Line Storm, John Steuart Curry, 1935

The agricultural landscape serves a variety of social, economic, and ecological purposes for society. Yet these purposes often conflict in varying degrees and ways—thus the image above of a storm. Each may be associated with a different network of stakeholders, leading to political and organizational challenges in the cultivation of a more beneficent agriculture. This course explores methods of evaluating these diverse purposes and perspectives, with a special focus on social learning through participatory methods for the wise renegotiation of agriculture's conditions.

This course is also one component of the two-course core sequence of the Agroecology Masters Program. The other component, Agroecology 701: *The Farm as Socio-Environmental Endeavor*, takes the “inside-out” perspective of the farm contending with the challenges and opportunities of its diverse social and environmental contexts. 702 with 701 by taking the “outside-in” perspective of the diverse demands placed by different stakeholders on the agricultural landscape.

Instructors: Michael Bell (lead instructor), and various other visiting partners in pedagogical crime.

Students: This course is open to all interested graduate students, and is required for all students in the Agroecology Masters Program. Although it is part of a two-course sequence, it can be taken independently.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will become aware of the diverse demands placed on the agricultural landscape, and the stakeholder groups associated with them, including commodity agriculture, ecosystem services, poverty and hunger alleviation, farm and community viability, leisure and symbolic values.
2. Students will gain a set of tools for analyzing the range of interests, and the underlying value frameworks, involved in any site in the agricultural landscape worldwide, as well as their potential changes.
3. Students will learn methods for social learning through engaging competing interests in a productive discussion of the wise renegotiation of agriculture's conditions, with a special focus on the advantages and limits of participatory approaches.
4. Students will develop an appreciation of seeing the general in the specific, and the specific in the general, through the power of case study methods and a holonic approach to understanding complexity and potential reconfigurations.
5. Students will cultivate their communication abilities, including writing, oral, and performance skills.

Case Study Exercises: Each student will develop a case study of a site of disjuncture in an agricultural landscape, the varied voices of the varied perspectives on and in that site, and how imaginable changes to the multifunctionality of that landscape might be induced. The students will develop their cases incrementally through the semester, context by context. The final write-up and presentation will be in the form of a roughly 15 to 20 minute play, with roughly 2000 words of dramaturgical notes to contextualize your work. Students will be strongly encouraged, although not required, to work in groups for both the write-up and performance.

Intellectual Journal: Students will keep a weekly journal responding to the lectures and readings, which will be periodically collected for assessment. Each week, students are expected to prepare entries in the range of 500 to 750 words that integrate the essential points of the week and develop critical inquiry.

Readings: Course readings will be made available electronically, week by week, on the course website: <http://www.agroecology.wisc.edu/courses/agroecology-702/home.html>

Assessment:

- 33% on participation in class
- 33% on intellectual journal
- 33% on case study presentation and write-up

COURSE SCHEDULE

Dates	Topics
1 1/20, 1/22	<i>Introduction:</i> multifunctionality, sustainability, case study methods, holonic thinking, ecological power

Processes of Multifunctionality

2 1/27, 1/29	<i>Networks and communities:</i> solidarities, dialogue and monologue, actor networks	Case study selection
3 2/3, 2/5	<i>Valuation:</i> externalities, contingent valuation, non-market values, social contract theory	
4 2/10, 2/12	<i>Participation:</i> processes for public engagement, participation and democracy, participatory research	
5 2/17, 2/19	<i>Government:</i> local, state, federal, and international regulation and policy	

Contexts of Multifunctionality (Not Necessarily in this Order)

6 & 7 2/24, 2/26 3/3, 3/5	<i>Context I—Ecosystem services:</i> habitat protection, water supply, air quality, carbon sequestration	Case study integration
8 3/10, 3/12	<i>Context II—Commodity agriculture:</i> “feeding the world,” biofuels, pharming, organics	
	SPRING BREAK!	
9 3/24, 3/26	<i>Context III—Farm and community viability:</i> local food systems, marketing, farm survival	
10 3/31, 4/2	<i>Context IV—Leisure and symbolic values:</i> rural amenities, farm tourism, exurban growth, agrarianism, negative images of agriculture	
11 4/7, 4/9	<i>Context V—Animal welfare:</i> animal welfare versus animal rights, welfare certification, husbandry practices	
12 4/14, 4/16	<i>Context VI—Poverty and hunger alleviation:</i> economic development, food security, international dimensions	

Outcomes of Multifunctionality

13 4/21, 4/23	<i>Imagining alternatives:</i> using holonic thinking and public process to analyze the potential renegotiation of the agricultural landscape	Case study completion
14-15 4/28, 4/30 4/5, 4/7	<i>Case study presentations:</i> performance of plays, final written version due 4/12	