

Sustainable Agriculture Core Courses

SAG 101 Introduction to Sustainable Agriculture. This course is the foundational class for the proposed curriculum. It will be a prerequisite for all other core courses in the curriculum and is a required course for the proposed Sustainable Agriculture Minor. It will provide a broad introduction to the environmental, economic and cultural components of sustainable food production and marketing. The definition, emergence, and growth of sustainable agriculture will be discussed along with pertinent soil, crop and livestock management practices. Relationships between environmental stewardship, producer profitability, and community-based food systems will be emphasized.

SAG 201 Cultural Perspectives on Sustainability. People are both fully integrated and intrinsically isolated elements of this world and “Culture” has all too often been separated from discussions of agriculture and agricultural practices. This course examines cultural dimensions within the concept of sustainability through a close reading of texts addressing the relationship between people and nature. The application of cultural constructs used by individuals and societies in experiencing, interpreting and impacting the natural world are studied. Insights and observations of noted writers on environmental issues are discussed in relation to the interdependence between individuals, civilizations, and nature. The course is required of students in the curriculum and minor and will fulfill the the Graduate Writing Requirement.

SAG 386 Plant Production Systems (*cross-listed with PLS 386*). This class provides a detailed analysis of the underlying principles of agricultural plant production systems. One of the main goals is to provide an understanding of the physical and chemical properties of soil and other growing media used for the production of crops in the field and in containers. Additionally, the importance of aerial and root environment and the effects of nutrition, irrigation and mulching on crop health are presented.

SAG 397 Apprenticeship in Sustainable Agriculture. The majority of students at the university come from non-agricultural backgrounds and lack practical experience. This course provides an experiential learning opportunity on the organic community supported agriculture (CSA) farm at the 11 acre Horticultural Research Station in Lexington. Under the supervision of the Course Coordinator and Farm Manager, students receive training in organic production practices including seed germination and transplanting, maintenance of soil fertility, and pest management. Student responsibilities also include the harvest and preparation of produce for distribution to CSA members. SAG 397 will be offered in spring/ summer and summer/fall sessions corresponding to the University's academic calendar to provide students with broad exposure to seasonal conditions.

SAG 490 Integration of Sustainable Agriculture Principles. This is the ‘capstone’ course for the curriculum. The entire curriculum is designed to encourage students to consider agricultural systems as wholes in which a change to one part of the system has significant impacts in all other parts of the system. In this capstone class, students will bring knowledge from their previous coursework and experience to bear on issues raised. Ultimately, students will use different kinds of data to evaluate world agricultural systems as dynamic and interacting environmental, economic, and social entities. The course is required of students in the major.

SAG 395 Research in Sustainable Agriculture. This course is a vehicle by which students conduct independent research related to some aspect of sustainable agriculture under the direction of a faculty mentor. The research would be conducted in the College of Agriculture, another unit on campus, or at an approved off-campus entity. Projects would include, but not limited to, laboratory experiments, field-based research, and studies involving sociology, economics, anthropology, or related disciplines. The course would be open to majors and non-majors and would require the approval of a learning contract.

EXP 396 Experiential Education. Beyond the requirement to participate in SAG 397, students will be encouraged to gain additional practical experience through off-campus internships. This will be done in the context of an existing course, EXP 396. Relevant internships can take a wide variety of forms including work with regional, national, and international commercial farm operations; non-governmental organizations; and governmental units. Experiences that emphasize outreach into communities will be particularly valued. Such opportunities will permit students to apply their academic knowledge in a ‘real-world’ setting.