

Urban Agriculture

MET ML 714 A1

Boston University

Tue./Thu. 5:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Summer 2019

Room TBA



The Fenway Victory Gardens in Boston's Back Bay Fens.

Course Description

What do gardens in cities *do* for people? Urban agriculture is a catch-all term that covers community gardens, vegetable plots at prisons, didactically-minded gardens in schoolyards, gardens planted illegally on vacant lots, high-tech hydroponic companies, and farmers' markets. Students will develop knowledge about how these different spaces differ across variables like legality, goals, and actors. Students in this class will learn about how growing food in Global North cities has a long past. We will debate whether urban agriculture is an excellent way for citydwellers to reduce hunger, improve public health, and assert their control over urban space, or whether it's just another subtle manifestation of neoliberalism. A core goal of this course, above and beyond the content, is to develop research skills useful for other graduate-level courses.

Assessments & Grading

This class has some very typical assessments: attendance, online quizzes, some short writing assignments, and a final paper. The short writing assignments will ask you to do the following: to assess the differences in primary sources for several disciplines that study urban agriculture, to evaluate literature and construct a thorough (yet brief) literature review, and to synthesize primary and secondary sources in a short paper with a specific argument. In tandem with these other assignments, you will keep a course journal. This notebook should not be pristine, it should be messy: it can have your notes on the various readings if you like, sketches of places we visit if you are artistically inclined,

Your Instructor

Dr. Zachary Nowak (he/him/his)

znowak@fas.harvard.edu

Office Hours: the hour before each class meeting (by appointment)

Learning Objectives (short version)

After taking this class, students will be able to:

Define what constitutes urban agriculture;

Articulate the key debates in the literature about urban agriculture projects;

Identify measurable collective and individual actions in urban agriculture and their possible beneficial health effects;

Engage in experiential learning activities and practice systematic research and ethical scholarship;

Communicate their learning with and to others using 21st-century tools.

lists of foods you see in at a market, possible sources for projects, outlines of papers, or whatever else you wish to note down. This journal is a place to doodle and try things out, but it will show me your level of engagement with the ideas in the class. All the things I ask you to do in the course journal—write down the three main ideas of a reading, log your progress on a writing assignment, make a list of primary sources, or relate a reading your hometown—are graded with a check, not a grade. As long as you have these entries, you get full credit.

Required Supplies & Technology

Highlighters

Please buy an orange, blue, and yellow highlighter—we'll be using these a lot.

Course Reader

There are no required books. The course reader has all the articles for the class; please buy it at [xxxxxxx](#). All the course readings are available online through Blackboard. Please pull them into your Zotero collection each week.

Course Journal

I would like you to go to get a blank journal with at least 50 pages. I will send a list of several that I recommend but I mostly want you to have something durable with slightly thicker pages than a normal notebook. You will use this journal extensively both in and out the classroom; please bring it to every class. See the document on the Blackboard site before you purchase one.

Grading Summary

10%	class attendance
10%	online quizzes
10%	short writing assignments
20%	archiving & public history exhibit
20%	course journal
20%	final paper

What You Need For Class

- course reader
- three highlighters
- blank course journal

zotero

For this class we'll use the storage and citation freeware Zotero. Students who already have an equivalent or better system for storing files and citing (or who already use Zotero) should come speak with me. All other students will learn to use Zotero during the last hour of the first class. There will be support available from librarians and me for the whole summer session.

Classroom Technologies

This classroom is a place that supports and encourages student learning. I make a lot of use of our course's Blackboard site and use clicker polling in the classroom, but I see your main learning tools as paperhighlighters, and pens. The research on laptops in classrooms seems fairly compelling: students who take notes by hand do better on tests and report (overwhelmingly) that they are less distracted in the classroom. Laptops used for purposes other than note-taking or course materials also have a negative effect on students near the person with a laptop. That said, I do not want to stigmatize students who need a laptop to be able to learn in this class. Any student who has an accessible education accommodation letter specifying that they need a laptop or other device in place of a class journal can of course use one and any other student can request permission with me in person. Students who do not have letters must make a compelling argument in person about why they need to use a laptop for learning in this classroom. All students who ask to use laptops must sign a laptop contract.

Students who have a letter from the Disability & Access Services should either email me or speak with me. I am happy to do anything I can to make my classroom more accessible, more inclusive, and less ableist.

A Civil & Inclusive Classroom

In this course we will be examining interpretations of history that can appropriately be called controversial, including the role of identity, power, privilege, and agency in the past. We should endeavor to engage in these dialogues with two competing ideas in mind: that the classroom is a space where free exchange of ideas must happen, but where consideration for others and their life experiences is also paramount. I also would like all of you to join me in respecting our fellow students in their choice of pronouns, and I want to make it clear that I see bilingualism (or tri-, or more) as a huge strength for students, not an obstacle.

Practical Matters

I subscribe to the Boston University Academic Conduct Code ([HERE](#)) and will enforce it. I would much rather sit down and work with you before something is due than have you feel like you have to copy someone else's work.

I answer to the director of Gastronomy program (Dr. Megan Elias), but my daily work is at least in part for you. Coming to see me during office hours is never a bother for me: indeed, I love to talk one-on-one.

My office hours are Mondays for the hour before class and the hour following. Please sign up for slots through the calendar in Blackboard.

A Few Bits & Bobs

This course is a survey: No course can teach you everything about a subject and certainly not one as vast as urban agriculture, the literature for which spans several academic disciplines. This course's goals are to give you bit of knowledge about a number of themes in urban agriculture and to give you master's-level scholarly skills. Deeper knowledge of any one theme is the realm of another future course or your own research.

This syllabus is a draft: I reserve the right to modify, alter, delete, add, or otherwise change the contents of this syllabus at any time during the semester upon proper notification to all students enrolled in the course. For the most up-to-date assignments and reading, always refer to our course's Blackboard site [[here](#)], *not* to this pdf.

I grant one, 24-hour extension per semester: Please request this via email. Please see Blackboard for all due-dates and coordinate the assignments for this and other courses. The only possible exception to this policy is when you have a resident dean contact me. I am very happy to help you plan out assignments and to share my time-management tips. Late work receives the equivalent of a full letter grade off per day late. The extension cannot be used for the final project.

Active learning: This seminar may likely be very different from others you've taken, both in format or pedagogy. The course is organized around students learning actively and using skills immediately. [to this pdf.](#)

Weekly Readings

Week 1: Introduction & What is Urban Agriculture? [Typologies]

Readings

handout: "How To Read A Journal Article Well (And Quickly)"

McClintock, Nathan. "Radical, Reformist, and Garden-Variety Neoliberal: Coming to Terms with Urban Agriculture's Contradictions." *Local Environment* 19, no. 2 (February 7, 2014): 147–71.

Morgan, Kevin. "Nourishing the City: The Rise of the Urban Food Question in the Global North." *Urban Studies* 52, no. 8 (June 2015): 1379–94.

"Beantown Farming: 10 Urban Agriculture Projects in Boston." Food Tank (blog), February 15, 2014. [[HERE](#)]

Wednesday—Visit to the Victory Gardens in the Bay Bay Fens.

Week 2: History of Urban Agriculture [Methods]

Readings

- Bartling, Hugh. "A Chicken Ain't Nothin' but a Bird: Local Food Production and the Politics of Land-Use Change." *Local Environment* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 23–34.
- Moore, Sarah. "Forgotten Roots of the Green City: Subsistence Gardening in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1940." *Urban Geography* 27, no. 2 (March 1, 2006): 174–92.
- Bassett, Thomas J. "Reaping on the Margins: A Century of Community Gardening in America." *Landscape* 25, no. 2 (1981): 1–8.
- "Our History." Fenway Victory Gardens (blog). Accessed January 24, 2019. [[HERE](#)]

Week 3: Institutional Gardens—Schools to Jails [Health & Other Goals]

Readings

- Hickman, Larry. "The Edible Schoolyard: Agrarian Ideals and Our Industrial Milieu." In *The Agrarian Roots of Pragmatism*, edited by Paul B. Thompson and Thomas C. Hilde, 195–208. The Vanderbilt Library of American Philosophy. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000.
- Pudup, Mary Beth. "It Takes a Garden: Cultivating Citizen-Subjects in Organized Garden Projects." *Geoforum, Rethinking Economy*, 39, no. 3 (May 1, 2008): 1228–40.
- Allen, Patricia, and Julie Guthman. "From 'Old School' to 'Farm-to-School': Neoliberalization from the Ground Up." *Agriculture and Human Values* 23, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 401–15.
- Gerster-Bentaya, Maria. "Urban Agriculture's Contributions to Urban Food Security and Nutrition." In *Cities and Agriculture*, edited by Henk De Zeeuw, 139–62. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Flanagan, Caitlin. "Cultivating Failure." *The Atlantic*, January 1, 2010. [[HERE](#)]

Week 4: Commerical & Guerilla Gardening [The State, The Market, & Legality]

Readings

- Schindler, Sarah. "Unpermitted Urban Agriculture: Transgressive Actions, Changing Norms, and the Local Food Movement." *Wisconsin Law Review* 82, no. 1036 (2014): 369–96.
- Hung, Holvert. "Formation of New Property Rights on Government Land through Informal Co-Management: Case Studies on Countryside Guerilla Gardening." *Land Use Policy* 63 (April 1, 2017): 381–93.
- McClintock, Nathan. "Radical, Reformist, and Garden-Variety Neoliberal: Coming to Terms with Urban Agriculture's Contradictions." *Local Environment* 19, no. 2 (February 7, 2014): 147–71.
- watch: "Ron Finley: A Guerrilla Gardener in South Central LA | TED Talk." [[HERE](#)]
- Wednesday class— Visit to Higher Ground Farm on the roof of the Boston Medical Center.

Week 5: Farmer's Markets [Performance, Gender, & Race]

Readings

- Hoover, Brandon. "White Spaces in Black and Latino Places: Urban Agriculture and Food Sovereignty." *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 3, no. 4 (2013): 109–115.
- Guthman, Julie. "If They Only Knew': Color Blindness and Universalism in California Alternative Food Institutions." *The Professional Geographer* 60, no. 3 (August 2008): 387–97.
- Reynolds, Kristin. "Disparity Despite Diversity: Social Injustice in New York City's Urban Agriculture System." *Antipode* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 240–59.
- Riley, Liam, and Alice Hovorska. "Gendering Urban Food Strategies Across Multiple Scales." In *Cities and Agriculture*, edited by Henk De Zeeuw, 336–57. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Week 6: Conclusions & Presentations