Course Description:
Growing food in the city is an expanding practice in communities with and without food security. Heralded by some as a viable and sustainable supplement to conventional food systems, urban agriculture has many challenges to implementation. We will explore the motivations, benefits and difficulties of farming in the city itself. The focus will be on temperate North American cities with special emphasis on Detroit and other northern cities that must contend with the limitations of winter weather. To balance current theory with practical application, we will read and discuss a selection of scholarly papers and organizational reports. Guest speakers, local leaders deeply involved with urban agriculture in the region, will offer their insights on practical aspects of implementation. Discussion of the topics below will include a semester-long creative consideration of whether and how urban agriculture can provide a socially acceptable and successful alternative for the deficient food system in Detroit.

Topics include:
Urban agriculture typologies
Case study: Rustbelt Cities with a focus on Cleveland
Case study: Detroit
Community Empowerment
Land planning, repurposing vacancy, downsizing with attention to legal aspects
Sustainability through efficacy building - organizational perspectives
Equity: Local foods and food justice
Human health, nutrition and wellbeing considerations
Sustainable practices and environmental quality
Commercial ventures in urban agriculture
Planning for sustainable food systems & building institutional support
Building resiliency and efficacy from the ground up

Evaluation:
Since informed discussion is an effective method for integrating multiple viewpoints, the assignments below are designed to help you learn how to engage in exploratory and constructive syntheses. A total of 100 points can be earned.

Class participation (25 points)
A thorough reading of assigned papers is the pre-requisite for meaningful discussion. These points will be based on your presence and contribution to weekly discussions and the weekly posting of suggestions for discussion questions on CTools Forum.

Discussion Administration (25 points)
Once during the semester you will be a member of a team that will open the week’s topic and lead the discussion with a set of insightful and energetic questions based on the assigned readings. Your team will provide a brief comment on the week’s topic and discussion plan (5 minutes max – no power point). After the discussion period, the team will put together a thoughtful summary of the discussion (3 pages) and submit this by the following Tuesday. After approval, the paper will be posted on CTools.
Paper/Project and Presentation (50 points)

By Tuesday October 7th, you will submit a short proposal that identifies and outlines your paper/project topic. Submit the proposal as a Word file to mchunter@umich.edu. These will be returned shortly thereafter. During the last few weeks of the semester, you will use your paper/project as the basis of a short presentation. Your paper/project is due on the day you present.

The paper or project can be one of these two products:

1) a synthetic interpretation of the literature to address an aspect of urban agriculture of interest to you. The interpretation must include some application of your ideas to the practice of urban agriculture in Detroit. A few examples include: methods for activating community interest in Detroit based on what has been successful in another/other cities; economic realities of alternative food systems; or a case-study of another city where urban agriculture has emerged as an asset to civic life and healthy communities.

OR

2) a creative vision about implementation of urban agriculture in Detroit. The product- a paper or visual project, must include discussion of precedents or theory that support the promise of your vision.

Length, format and content requirements:

Proposal: Must be 250-400 words and include at least 3 references –Due Tuesday October 7th.

Paper: Must be 7-10 pages long with 1 inch margins and 12 point font; the page count does not include space required for the bibliography or any images you choose to include. The paper must include at least 10 references. Due on the day you make your oral presentation.

Project: Format is subject to approval. It must include a bibliography with at least 10 references.

Late Assignment Policy

For the sake of fairness to all students in the course, deadlines will be strictly enforced. If you have trouble completing a particular assignment, you must talk to Prof. Hunter prior to the deadline. Unless you’ve made prior arrangements, for every 24 hours an assignment is late, the final score will drop one grade. At the end of the semester, students with outstanding work will be assigned a letter grade on the basis of the work that has been completed. “Incompletes” will be given only in extenuating circumstances under special permission.

Etiquette

Many of our classes will open with a guest speaker. Please, it is very important to arrive on time. It is also very wise to avoid eating food during class. Please arrange your schedule to accommodate a respectful welcome for our speakers.