

## **The Politics of Urban Agriculture: From Victory Gardens to Neoliberalism**

**Instructor:** Umbra Institute

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 18 seminar hours and 36 practicum hours

### **Course Description**

What do gardens in cities do for people? What are the political structures at the global, national, and local levels that promote urban gardens? Urban gardening is a favored solution to society's ills to theorists across the political spectrum from neoliberals to radicals—but is it all it's meant to be?

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 learn about how these different spaces differ across variables like legality, goals, and actors. If urban space is inherently limited and if politics is a way to decide the use of limited resources, then urban gardens are deeply political. We will debate whether urban agriculture is an excellent way for city dwellers 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 courses: how to read an article in 20 minutes, how to plan research, etc. The course meets once a week for the classroom portion of the class; students will spend three hours a week in The Umbra Institute's campus garden, Orto Sole, or in another urban garden in the city center.

## **Water Resources: Environment, Society, & Power**

**Instructor:** Umbra Institute

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 45

### **Course Description**

Water plays a central part in our lives. Almost all human activities are dependent on water and the functioning of ecosystems; the well-being of the environment, industries, and the economy; agriculture and food production, and beyond. This course aims to understand the science behind human-aquatic relationships. The interdependencies and linkages between water, the environment and human activities using a transdisciplinary approach. Scientific methods and frameworks, such as socio-ecological systems (SES) frameworks, indigenous knowledge. There is a service learning component to this course: see the appendix at the end of this syllabus.

## **The History and Culture of Food in Italy**

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 45

### **Course Description**

What can food history teach us about contemporary culture? In this course, we will explore the history of food in Italy as a gateway to understanding present Italian culture. By examining the factors that have shaped Italian food, cuisine, and taste, the variations in eating habits of different socio-economic classes, and the essential role played by food in constructing Italian identities, we will shed light on fundamental patterns in Italian history and society. This exploration will lead us to consider processes of social and cultural exchange, political and religious influence, and economic and scientific development. Through a mix of discussions, readings, primary source analyses, workshops, a guest lecture and a field trip, we will investigate Italian food and culture from Antiquity to the present. After the completion of this course, students will have acquired a specific set of historical skills as a result of having developed a critical understanding of food history, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Italian culture and society, and a framework for analyzing Italian history.

This course very intentionally engages with Italian food in the present. Topics include nation and gender, alternative food systems and food justice in Italy, and climate change's effect on Italian cuisine. During the co-curriculum field trip activity, students will be actively engaged in the preparation and tasting of traditional Umbrian food recipes in the countryside around Assisi.