



**HOS 3285**  
**The Organic Debate: Organic Agriculture Development and Regulations**  
1 CREDIT  
Fall Semester  
W Period 9, 4:05-4:55 PM  
2316 Fifield

**INSTRUCTOR**

Dr. Xin Zhao  
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Office hours: MW 1:50-2:30 PM. If you are unable to meet me at this time, feel free to email me to request an appointment.

Prereq: BSC 2005 or equivalent.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Organic farming is a rapidly developing production system. This introductory course provides a critical analysis of organic agriculture growth, consumer perceptions, and regulations at the national and international level. This course also focuses on organic agriculture transdisciplinary innovations and challenges in advancing environmental, economic, and social sustainability of food production.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Critically assess consumer perceptions of organic agriculture and organic agriculture research.
- Explain the systems approach used in organic production.
- Evaluate the dynamics of organic agriculture regulations at both national and international levels.
- Describe organic standards and certification process.
- Discuss major challenges and critical areas for future development in organic farming to improve food security and long-term sustainability.

**TEXTBOOK**

There are no required textbooks for this course. Journal articles, websites, videos, and other materials will be collectively used. E-learning (<http://elearning.ufl.edu/>) is also used in this course to post lectures, assignments, reading materials, useful websites, video clips, study guides, and grades.

**COURSE GRADE**

**1. Quizzes**

**140 points**

There will be seven bi-weekly online open-book quizzes during the semester. Students will take each of the 20-point quizzes within 30 minutes on E-learning between Thursday and the following Tuesday after the quiz is posted in E-learning. Students must work individually.

## 2. Case study reports

**300 points**

Each student will conduct two case studies and complete the analytical reports for each case study during the semester. Each case study report is worth 150 points. In each case study, students will choose a specific area to critically analyze the role of organic agriculture, including organic regulations, in developing sustainable food systems as well as potential challenges and issues based on a comprehensive review of scientific literature.

## 3. Organic agriculture innovation video

**150 points**

This is a group project. Each group of 3 students will produce a 5-minute video to discuss major advancements and challenges in organic agriculture development and identify directions for future innovations to overcome those challenges.

All points earned in the course will be summed to calculate your final grade. Letter grades will be based on the performance of each student relative to the following standard percentages (%) out of a total of 590 points:

100 – 93	A	<77 – 73	C
<93 – 90	A-	<73 – 70	C-
<90 – 87	B+	<70 – 67	D+
<87 – 83	B	<67 – 63	D
<83 – 80	B-	<63 – 60	D-
<80 – 77	C+	<60 – 0	E

Please feel free to discuss your grades with the instructor at any time during the semester. Additional information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points can be found here:

- *Grading policy*, <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

## COURSE POLICIES

### Attendance and Make-up Policy

Attendance in this class is mandatory. However, you are allowed one unexcused absence during the semester without any influence on your final grade. More than one unexcused absence will result in a deduction in your final course grade by a third of a letter for each absence after one (for example, a grade of B+ would decrease to a B, a grade of A would decrease to an A-, with 2 unexcused absences). All students are encouraged to actively participate in class discussions and other in-class activities. You are required to attend every lecture and complete quizzes and assignments by the posted deadlines.

Absences will be excused and late assignments will be graded only for documented emergencies as per UF's attendance policy.

Additional information on class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work can be found here:

- *UF Attendance policy*, <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

#### Technical Difficulties

If you are experiencing technical difficulties with Canvas, you should immediately contact the UF Help Desk. This will generate a ticket number, which documents the date and time of your technical difficulty. Any requests to make-up late work due to technical difficulties must be accompanied by this ticket number.

- *UF Help Desk*, HUB 132, (352)-392-4357, <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>

#### Academic Honesty

As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action.

- For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>

#### Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken when appropriate.

#### Services for Students with Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom,

accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

- *Disability Resource Center*, 0001 Reid Hall, (352)-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)

### Campus Helping Resources

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

- *Counseling and Wellness Center*, 3190 Radio Road, (352)-392-1575, [www.counseling.ufl.edu](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu)
  - Counseling Services
  - Groups and Workshops
  - Outreach and Consultation
  - Self-Help Library
  - Wellness Coaching
- *U Matter We Care*, [www.umatter.ufl.edu](http://www.umatter.ufl.edu)
- *Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)*, Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
- *University Police Department*, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), [www.police.ufl.edu](http://www.police.ufl.edu)

Additionally, if you would like orientation on choosing a major, finding an internship, or planning your career, I encourage you to use the university's on-campus resources.

- *Career Connections Center*, Reitz Union Suite 1300, (352)-392-1601, <https://career.ufl.edu/>

### Course Evaluation Process

Student assessment of instruction is an important part of the effort to improve teaching and learning. At the end of the semester, you are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course using a standard set of university and college criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at:

- *Course evaluations*, [www.evaluations.ufl.edu](http://www.evaluations.ufl.edu)

Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. You will be notified of the specific times when evaluations for this course are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at:

- *Evaluations summary*, [www.evaluations.ufl.edu/results](http://www.evaluations.ufl.edu/results)

### Student Complaints

You can file and resolve any complaints about your experience in this course in the following site:

- *Student complaints in residential courses*, <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

**Tentative Lecture Schedule**  
**HOS 3285 – The Organic Debate: Organic Agriculture Development and Regulations**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lecture topic</b>
1	8/21	Introduction and course requirements; Effective use of library resources
2	8/28	History of organic agriculture movement; Growth of organic markets and consumer demand; What does “Organic” mean?
3	9/04	Why regulate organic agriculture?; Basic elements of organic standards
4	9/11	The National Organic Program and organic certification process
5	9/18	Organic crop production system overview
6	9/25	Organic animal production system overview ( <b><i>Case study report #1 due</i></b> )
7	10/02	Invited discussions with certifying agents (Anna Cesarotti and Shannon Bly from QCS)
8	10/09	The organic vs. conventional debate; Assessing organic agriculture research
9	10/16	Can organic agriculture feed the world? An in-depth look at science and technology integration and innovations in organic farming
10	10/23	A virtual visit to certified organic farms
11	10/30	Organic agriculture development around the world: Europe (Dr. Sabine Zikeli)
12	11/06	Organic agriculture development around the world: Asia (Dr. Jiping Sheng) ( <b><i>Case study report #2 due</i></b> )
13	11/13	Organic agriculture development around the world: Other regions
14	11/20	The organic struggle
15	11/27	<i>No class (Thanksgiving)</i>
16	12/04	The future of organic agriculture towards long-term sustainability
Final exams week		<b><i>(Organic agriculture innovation video due)</i></b>