PSS 208 Organic Farm Planning  
Dr. Yolanda Chen

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Office Hours: W 11:00-12:30, or by appointment  
TA: Gemelle Brion, gemelle.brion@uvm.edu, office hours by appointment

Course Description  
Organic farming is one of the fastest growing sectors in agriculture and many new farmers are attracted to farming as a lifestyle. However, a wide range of business, knowledge and skills are needed to succeed in farming. The challenge for new farmers starting a new farming business is to identify what they don’t know and be able to critically plan a complex farming system that will be financially viable.

Course Philosophy  
This course is not meant to teach students everything about agriculture, but is intended to develop skills in planning a farm business. In order to be strategic about their business plans, students need to understand why a farm plan needs to be designed in a particular way, accounting for consumers and competitors. Instead of giving students answers, I focus on fostering critical thinking skills to help students think deeply about designing a farming system. I use the Socratic Method, which has been considered to be the oldest and most powerful teaching tactic. The essence of the Socratic Method is based on posing and answering questions, and questioning both the assumptions and consequences of your farm plan.

Textbooks  

Course Objectives  
1. Students will be able to create an economically sustainable business plan for an organic farm.
2. Students will be able to critique the quality of other farm plans.
3. Students will be able to design a crop plan that supports a business plan and is realistic for the Northeastern US.
4. Students will gain hands-on experience in reading soil fertility tests, general farm work, transplanting, and seed selection.

Course Structure  
This course will employ a combination of readings, lectures, homework, in-class exercises, planning assignments, and peer review. Students are expected to be resourceful in acquiring the relevant evidence to support their business or field plans. That means that students will be expected to friends, family, and businesses within the community to acquire the necessary information. This means that the grades will be related to the amount of student effort.
Why Peer Review?
Peer review can be an effective strategy to develop a more holistic perspective and improve the quality of student projects. Students can learn how to communicate professionally and see that feedback and revision is a key component in designing high quality writing and planning projects.

When you hand in any assignments associated with the business or farm plan, print off enough copies for your group members so that they have a hard copy to review. When you turn in your peer review, print off two copies for each assignment that you reviewed, one for me and one for the student that you reviewed.

Email etiquette
Email is a reliable way to reach me outside of class, and I try to respond to student queries within 24 hours. I do not generally check emails on nights and weekends. Please be courteous and acknowledge my response. I would also appreciate receiving emails that are written respectfully. Starting an email with “Hey”, “Hey Yolanda”, or no salutation is not an appropriate way to start a professional conversation. I expect to see “Dear Dr. Chen or Hi Dr. Chen”. Consider email correspondence as an opportunity to practice your professional skills.

Student Understandings
1. All students are expected to follow the UVM student code of conduct. Any misconduct will result in disciplinary action.
2. Students are expected to read the readings before class and be prepared to discuss with them.
3. In order to be accepted, homework assignments need to be printed out and brought in person to class.
4. Five points will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. Assignments will not be accepted after 3 days unless the absence has been approved by Rose Laba in the CALS Student Services Division or the student services staff person from your college.
5. No cell phone or laptop use in the classroom, unless students are explicitly directed to do so through the assignment.
6. No make-up for the points associated with the in-class assignments.

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework assignments</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Farm Business Plan</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Business Plan Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Management Plan</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Management Plan Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmwork at Catamount Farm</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
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Student permission to use work for future classes

I give Dr. Yolanda Chen the right to use my written assignments for future classes only at University of Vermont. I do not give permission for any of my work to be used for any publications, websites, books, or widely-distributed media.

Name ______________________________
Signature ______________________________
Date ______________________________
PSS 208 Organic Farm Planning

Student Information Sheet

Please complete as much as possible. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may leave that area blank.

Name:________________________________

What you would like to be called: _______________________

Previously related courses:_______________________________

Academic Major:________________________________________________________

Year of Study __________________________

1. Do you have a job aside from being a student? If so, where do you work and what do you do? ______________________________________________________________________

2. Are you interested in farming for a living? __________

3. How many years of farming experience do you have?____________________________

4. Why are you taking this course?__________________________________________

5. If you are looking to manage/own a farm, what kind of farm would it be? Describe the kinds of crops and markets you would like to target. _____________________________________

6. Circle as many of the attributes that best describe you:

Creative          Team player          Implementer
Convincing speaker       Detail-oriented       Focused
Problem solver              Big-picture thinker
Mediator                    Sensitive
Organized                        Outgoing
Detail-oriented            Enthusiastic
Mathematical               Delegator
Communicator               Strategic
Observant                      Manipulative
Analytical                        Inflexible
7. List any other farming, business, organizational, management, sales, interpersonal, mechanical, skills that you might have.