This HECUA program explores America’s food system with a special emphasis on sustainability and justice.

Central Questions

What are the social, economic, and natural drivers of our current food system?

Who is involved? Who benefits?

How can we create a just and sustainable future?

Modern agriculture is one of the largest contributors to environmental degradation in the United States. We all eat, and yet the disproportionate environmental footprint of agriculture is rarely discussed or understood. This interdisciplinary, field-based course explores the connection between the environment and agriculture, provides first-hand experience with food systems, and analyzes the environmental, economic, political, social and cultural issues that define modern farming. Utilizing the lenses and tools of sociology, economics, philosophy, ecology, and agronomy we critically examine the notion of sustainability as it applies to the food system. Through lectures, in-class discussions, reading seminars, written assignments, and field study, students examine a variety of farms and rural communities as case studies.
Have you ever harvested vegetables that fed Barack Obama? When was the last time you stood in a barn with 5,000 cows? Do you know how to navigate an electric fence? Can you milk a cow?

JOIN US and you too can have these unique experiences.

At the heart of the E & A program are intensive field experiences that include on-site study at research laboratories, and visits to:

agricultural policy institutes,

meat-packing plants,

creamery operations,

conventional farms,

small-scale community supported agriculture farms,

food co-operatives,

and restaurants in the Twin Cities.

In addition, each student will prepare for and conduct a three-day immersion experience on a sustainable farm outside the Twin Cities. Students will be integrated into the busy routine of farm life, helping with planting, milking, and caring for animals. During the farm stays students will use critical frameworks to observe and interview those on the farm about the environmental, economic, and quality of life issues that contribute to decision-making.

STUDENTS SAY...

“Every moment of the class is sharp and distinct, but seems too fantastic to have been real. I am so grateful for E & A because, at the risk of sounding overly dramatic and cliché, this short program changed my life. E & A stirred a powerful and deeper emotion in me that I’m now working to unpack.”

--Aj Zuzulin, Macalester College

“Expect to be tired, expect to work hard, expect to get dirty, and expect to love every minute of it. Working at my internship has given me more power and independence than anything I have ever done in my life up until now.”

--Philip Bottjen, University of St. Thomas

“The way this program allows for the synthesis of emotion, culture, and logic was incredibly impressive.”

--Karen Korslund, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities