

# UC Davis Global Tea Institute

## Professional Tea Certificate Program, 2023–2024



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The University of California at Davis’s Global Tea Institute for the Study of Tea Culture and Science launched its inaugural online course, the *UC Davis Global Tea Institute Professional Tea Certificate Program, 2023–2024*. This comprehensive course introducing key aspects of the tea industry was developed at the request of members of the international tea industry. These members realized that if their staff were better educated, then they would be better equipped to address a wide variety of issues in the tea industry, regardless of their role within it.

The participating industry leaders who helped develop the course were members of the Tea Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Global Tea Institute for the Study of Tea Culture and Science (GTI).<sup>1</sup> Working together with GTI leadership, this group coordinated with UC

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<sup>1</sup> GTI’s TAC is a philanthropic group. Member companies are listed at <https://globaltea.ucdavis.edu/tea-advisory-committee>.

Davis's office of Continuing and Professional Education (CPE), to develop and offer this professional tea course to the public.

With a well-established portfolio of online professional development programs, CPE was an ideal partner for this course.<sup>2</sup> Because their portfolio already included such beverage-study courses as beer brewing and wine making,<sup>3</sup> it was clear CPE also could provide suitable expertise with the world's most-prepared beverage of tea. And, because CPE courses are developed to help international working professionals gain new skills to advance their careers, and are designed to be engaging, interactive, and provide a UC Davis-quality education to learners wherever they may be, it was clear at the outset that CPE would dependably help to create a sound professional tea program for GTI.

The GTI Professional Tea program was long in the planning, made longer still due to delays relating to the COVID pandemic.

<b>UC Davis, Global Tea Institute - Professional Tea Program 2023/2024</b>			
Date	Week	(2021 Place) Topic	Speaker
<b>The Human Relationship with Tea: Culture, History, and Health</b>			
27-Sep	1	Tea 101 - History of Tea and Culture	Brendon Shah/Katharine
4-Oct	2	Tea 101 - Tea Drinking and Consumption	Will Battle
11-Oct	3	Social Justice/ Labor Laws/ Politics <i>(Ethical Tea Partnership, IDH Sustainable Trade)</i>	Raj Vable
<b>Science and Growth of Tea: Camellia sinensis, Sensory, Taste, Organics, and Sustainability</b>			
18-Oct	4	Tea: Camellia sinensis <i>(Plant Bio, Cultivars, Plant Chem, Pests/Disease)</i>	Dil Seneviratne
25-Oct	5	Tea Producing Countries	Eliot Jordan
1-Nov	6	Tea Tasting / Sensory/ Grading	Marcus Wulf
	7	Growing Tea /Terroir <i>(Horticulture, H2O, Topo, Microclimate, Harvest, Quality)</i>	Nigel Melican
8-Nov			
15-Nov	8	Supply Chain	Brendon Shah/Bhavin Shah
<b>Production of Tea for Sale: Manufacturing, Safety and Regulation, Social Justice, and Politics</b>			
22-Nov	9	Intro to Tea Production	Kevin Gascoyne
29-Nov	10	Manufacturing Tea - Deep Dive	Lalith Paranavitana
6-Dec	11	Food Safety/QA/ Regulatory Reqs/ Technical Factors	Scott Rimer
13-Dec	12	Tea and Health	Dr. Saziye Ilgaz
<b>Business of Tea: Marketing, Brand Management, Distribution, Supply Chain, and Value Adding</b>			
20-Dec	13	Sustainability / Organics <i>(Rainforest Alliance, UTZ = Rainforest)</i>	Manik Jayakumar
1/10/2024	14	Value Adding to Tea	Helen Hume/Paul Jefferies Paul Harney
1/17/2024	15	Distribution Chan./ Marketing/ Brand Management	Rona Tison

Figure 1 Schedule of GTI-CEP course lessons, 2023–2024

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the CPE, please see <https://cie.ucdavis.edu/>.

<sup>3</sup> Information about these UC Davis CPE courses is available at <https://cpe.ucdavis.edu/areas-study/brewing> and <https://cpe.ucdavis.edu/areas-study/winemaking>.

Happily, the course finally launched to the public in Fall 2023. Students who completed the course received a UC Davis CPE Certificate at the end.

Over 15 weekly sessions of live instruction via Zoom, the course offered a wide range of topics, from the history and culture of tea at the beginning to what the professional needs to consider for moving tea internationally from farm to consumer. More specifically, the topics were divided into 4 different categories (Figure 1). The categories and their topics were the following. In the first section on *The Human Relationship with Tea: History, Culture and Health*, topics focused on the “History of Tea and Culture,” “Tea Drinking and Consumption,” and “Social Justice/ Labor Laws/ Politics: Ethical Tea Partnership and Sustainable Trade.” In the category, *Science and Growth of Tea: Camellia sinensis, Sensory, Taste, Grading, Organics and Sustainability*, topics discussed were “Tea/*Camellia sinensis*: Plant Biology, Cultivars, Plant Chemistry, Pests and Diseases”; “Tea Producing Countries: Tea Tasting, Sensory, and Grading”; “Growing Tea /Terroir: Horticulture, H<sub>2</sub>O, Topo, Microclimate, Harvest, and Quality”; and issues surrounding “Supply Chains.” In the category, *Production of Tea for Sale: Manufacturing, Safety and Regulation, Social Justice, and Politics*, topics discussed were “Introduction to Tea Production,” “Manufacturing Tea: a Deep Dive,” “Food Safety, QA, Regulatory Requirements, Technical Factors,” and “Tea and Health.” In the section on the *Business of Tea: Marketing, Brand Management, Distribution, Supply Chain and Value Adding to Tea*, instructors focused on “Sustainability and Organics: Rainforest Alliance, UTZ = Rainforest,” “Adding Value to Tea,” and “Distribution Channels, Marketing, and Brand Management.”

Most of the instructors for the course were tea industry experts. These included Rona Tison, Executive Vice President Corporate Relations & PR, Ito En (North America) Inc; Helen Hume, Group Head of Leaf Tea at Finlays (UK); and Brendan Shah, CEO, and Bhavin Shah, COO, both of International Tea Importers (Los Angeles). A few professors (including this author) also offered instruction on the history and culture of tea in China. Each class meeting was supported by expert staff from CPE, Jon Hughes and Heather Ogle, and Teaching Assistant Hunter Kiley, each of whom helped the meetings run smoothly.

Instruction typically was organized around a short lecture followed by small group discussion in Zoom break-out rooms. People would return to the group as a whole for more group discussion, and then the process would repeat again throughout the 2-hour class meeting.

At the end of the course, an optional Capstone Experience day (January 24, 2024) was offered on the UC Davis campus (Figure 2) in conjunction with GTI's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Colloquium, *Tea in a Changing World*.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 2 Capstone Day itinerary, January 24, 2024

<sup>4</sup> For more information about GTI's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Colloquium, please see <https://globaltea.sf.ucdavis.edu/events/9th-annual-gti-colloquium-tea-changing-world-0>.

The Capstone Experience (\$500) was offered either as part of the GTI Professional Tea course (\$1500) or as a stand-alone course. Either way, the Capstone event provided the opportunity for students to apply their theoretical learning in designing, blending, evaluating, and marketing a new tea of their own creation. Other Capstone experiential events included a session on

*Sensory Evaluation & Tea Wheel*

*Experience* in the renowned RMI

Sensory Theater,<sup>5</sup> led by GTI

sensory scientist Jean-Xavier

Guinard. There, the group was

invited to taste different types of

teas and propose examples of the

lexicon used to describe teas as he updated the group on the forthcoming UC Davis GTI Tea

Flavor Wheel that he is developing (Figure 3). Later, a session in UC Davis's Special



Figure 3 GTI Professor Jean-Xavier Guinard, RMI Sensory Theater, UC Davis. Photograph by the author.

Flavor Wheel that he is developing (Figure 3). Later, a session in UC Davis's Special

Collections, Shields Library gave

students the opportunity to work with

archivists to view and handle rare

books on tea, including many early

works in Japanese (Figure 4). While

there, students also viewed the special

exhibition, *Heaven and Earth in a Small*



Figure 4 Rare book viewing, Special Collections, Shields Library, UC Davis. Photograph by Heather Ogle. Photograph by the author.

<sup>5</sup> RMI is the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science at UC Davis, <https://rmi.ucdavis.edu/>.

*Pot, Selections of Tea Ware from the GTI Collection of Art and Material Culture*, on view throughout Winter Quarter 2024. This exhibition featured Japanese ceramic tea ware and early illustrated Japanese books on tea.

The Capstone day was designed so that participating students would be on campus to attend the annual GTI Colloquium. There they had the opportunity to further expand their knowledge of tea on the theme of *Tea in a Changing World*, and from the perspectives of culture and society, science and health, and the industry.

As for the students, who were they? The GTI professional tea course was aimed at those with an interest in tea industry professions. Nonetheless, it was also open to the public at large, regardless of background or skill level. The course enrolled true beginners as well as seasoned professionals.

The target number of enrollees was 20; we surpassed the target, enrolling 26 students. To be sure, most students were from the US, but others were from Japan, France, and Mexico. English was the language of instruction.

Students were asked to rank themselves for various factors; 16 of the 26 responded. When asked to rank their knowledge of tea as a commodity, most respondents felt they were beginners (3 students) or had little experience (7 students). A smaller group believed they had some experience (3 students) or a good amount of experience (3 students). None felt they were experts. Most wanted either a fair amount of instruction (8 students) or very in-depth instruction (8 students). Surely modesty played a role in these responses, as at

least some of the students are known to be extremely knowledgeable about tea and its industry.

When asked about which topic they were most excited about, the group was split between the categories. The largest percent voted for the *Business of Tea: Marketing, Brand Management, Distribution, Supply Chain and Value Adding to Tea* (7 students). For the rest, 4 students chose the *Human Relationship with Tea: History, Culture and Health*. Two students chose the *Science and Growth of Tea: Camellia sinensis, Sensory, Taste, Grading, Organics and Sustainability*, and 2 again chose *Tea Production and Sales: Manufacturing, Safety and Regulation, Social Justice and Politics*.

As the class effectively has just ended, levels of satisfaction with it are still being assessed. Nonetheless, anecdotal evidence indicates that each group — students, instructors, and organizers — seemed satisfied with the course. No doubt improvements will be made for the next offering, but all participants seem to agree that this course should be offered again. It is anticipated that it will be offered again in Fall 2024. Information about the next offering of the course will be posted on the GTI and CPE websites.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Links to the 2023–2024 course are available at <https://globaltea.ucdavis.edu/gti-program-industry-professionals> and <https://cpe.ucdavis.edu/course/uc-davis-global-tea-initiative-program-industry-professionals>.