Course Overview

This course takes a critical look at the global agro-food system. In general terms, we will follow the food commodity chain, beginning with food production and agriculture; move on to processing, transport and marketing; and then finally to the politics of food consumption. This course does not aim merely to describe the current food system, nor does it adopt a neutral or ‘objective’ stance on it. Rather, the course puts forth a particular argument: it begins from the premise that the current globalized, industrial agro-food system creates profound problems for environmental degradation, animal welfare, worker safety, and consumer health. Moreover, the course takes as axiomatic that agro-food systems should promote social justice and environmental sustainability. As such, this course does not attempt to provide ‘both sides’ of the food system story – we will take a critical stance throughout. For the other side, you merely have to turn on the TV, go to the supermarket, or eat at McDonalds. We are inundated with this side of the story every day, often without even being aware of it. The goals of this course, then, are rather simple: to provide a clearer, more critical understanding of the global agro-food system, and to explore various alternatives and their viability.

The course will involve some field trips and ‘field assignments’ intended to get you out into the community, to examine agro-food issues in and around Syracuse. Upstate New York is a fantastic laboratory for food issues. It is one of the most important agricultural regions in the northeast and is dominated by relatively small family farms and diverse production systems that include dairy, apples, and wine. Cornell University in Ithaca is the state’s land-grand institution, and one of the leading agricultural and biotechnology research centers in the world. Syracuse’s huge regional farmer’s market attracts a diversity of people from across Upstate (both vendors and customers), and there are a large number of alternative food networks such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, community gardens, food justice organizations and the Syracuse Real Food Coop. But upstate New York is also relatively poor: about 1 in 8 people in Onondaga county are food insecure and rely on food assistance on a regular basis, and the Food Bank of Central New York annually provides over 20,000 free meals to people in an eight-county region. Obesity rates, closely tied to poor nutrition, are well above the national average. In the class, we will explore these issues on a first hand basis, in the context of broader national and international processes and relationships.
Course Readings
There is one required text for this class:


All other readings will be available on Blackboard. These are labeled in italics in the course schedule, below, listed by author’s last name and year of publication. Readings appear on Blackboard in the order in which you are to read them.

The reading load for this course is moderate to high. You are expected to keep up with readings each week, so plan to spend several hours a week reading. We will discuss the readings in class, and they will be incorporated into lectures. Your ability to discuss the readings thoughtfully will be assessed as part of your participation grade (see below).

Course Requirements and Grading
There are no exams in this class. Instead, you will have four smallish individual writing assignments, one larger group research paper (and presentation), and two readings response papers. The large group research paper is due at the end of the semester, and will be focused on a topic of the group’s choice, to be decided in class. Of the smallish writing assignments, two are ‘field assignments,’ for which you will be required to get out into the community and observe aspects of the food system first hand. The other two assignments involve mapping aspects of the food system – the ingredients and commodity chain of a meal and the geography of hunger (either regionally, nationally, or globally). You will receive detailed instructions for each assignment.

Finally, twice during the semester, you will be responsible for introducing the week’s readings in class and presenting a short list of questions and/or critiques of the readings. This introduction will be based on your 2-3 page critical response paper, which are due on the days you present the readings. These are worth 15 points each.

To recap, grades for the class are:

- Individual writing assignments: (4 x 25 points) = 100 points
- Group research paper = 50 points
- Readings introduction papers (2 x 15 points) = 30 points
- Class participation = 20 points

Total = 200 points

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty
Plagiarism on course assignments is a serious offense, and is not acceptable. The easiest way to think of plagiarism is the use of other peoples’ ideas or words without proper citation. The University defines plagiarism as:

"The submission of any work by a student is taken as a guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are the student’s own except when properly credited to another. Violations of this principle include giving or receiving aid in an exam or where otherwise prohibited, fraud, plagiarism, the falsification or forgery of any record, or any other deceptive act in connection with academic work. Plagiarism is the representation of another's words, ideas, programs,
formulae, opinions, or other products of work as one's own, either overtly or by failing to attribute them to their true source” (Section 1.0, Syracuse University Academic Rules and Regulations).

Plagiarism is a very serious breach of academic honesty, and will not be tolerated in this class. The first time a student is found to be plagiarizing, s/he will automatically receive a score of 0 for the plagiarized assignment. If the student is caught plagiarizing a second time, s/he will automatically receive an F for the course. There will be no exceptions.

Students are responsible for knowing University definitions and rules regarding academic honesty. For more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, please see: http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/content.php?pid=28194&sid=205457

Disability-Related Accommodations
Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 304 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to Dr. Perreault and review those accommodations with him. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/

Cell Phones and Laptops
Please be sure that your phones are turned off or silenced before coming to class. Text messaging during class will not be tolerated. Unless needed for a specific in-class activity, use of laptops or tablets is not allowed in class. You should take notes the old fashioned way: with pen and paper. If I see you using an electronic device inappropriately in class, I will deduct 10 points from your overall grade. I may or may not notify you. Persons repeatedly using electronic devices for inappropriate purposes during class will be asked to leave.

Important dates to be aware of:

- September 14: Mapping Assignment 1 due in Geography Dept. office (144 Eggers)
- October 11: Field Assignment 1 due in class
- October 25: Field Assignment 2 due in class
- November 15: Mapping Assignment 2 due in class
- December 7: Final group papers due by 4:00pm in Geography Dept. office
## COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Part I</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Agrarian Questions: Farming Systems, Labor and Land</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 28</td>
<td>Course introduction:</td>
<td>Mintz 1985</td>
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<td>Food as Politics, Food as Geography</td>
<td>Hungry (Overview)</td>
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<td>Aug 30</td>
<td>Food and power in history</td>
<td>Bobrow-Strain 2012</td>
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<td>Hungry (ch. 1)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 4</td>
<td>Peasant farming &amp; agrarian questions</td>
<td>Hungry (ch. 8)</td>
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<td>Sept 6</td>
<td>The rise of industrial farming</td>
<td>Hungry (ch. 4)</td>
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<td>Walker 2004 (Intro &amp; ch. 5)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 11</td>
<td>Food policy and the Farm Bill</td>
<td>Pollan 2008</td>
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<td>Holt-Giménez and Patel 2009</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Cook 2004 (ch. 5-6)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Also read:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Getting real about the high cost of cheap food,’</td>
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<td>(Time magazine)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1917458,00.html">www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1917458,00.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td><strong>No Class Today</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>(work on Mapping Assignment #1:)</em></td>
<td>read: Cook et al. 2004</td>
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<td><em>(The geography of dinner)</em></td>
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<td><strong>Mapping Assignment 1: The geography of dinner due in my mailbox,</strong></td>
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<td><em>(Geography Department office (144 Eggers Hall), Friday Sept. 14)</em></td>
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### Week 4

**Sept 18**  
Farm work and farm workers  
Hungry (ch. 9)  
Rodríguez et al. 2009  
Brown and Getz 2011

**Sept 20**  
Guest speaker:  
Eastern Farm Workers Association

### Week 5

**Sept 25**  
GMOs: OMG!  
From Green Revolution to Gene Revolution  
Fitting 2006  
Altieri 2001

**Sept 27**  
Debating organic agriculture:  
movement, industry, solution?  
Guthman 2004

### Week 6

**Oct 2**  
*Field trip: Syracuse urban farm*  
Mariola 2008

**Oct 4**  
The ones that didn’t get away:  
Seafood and is discontents  
Jackson 2008  
Friedberg 2009 (ch. 7)  
Film: ‘End of the Line’

**Read: ‘Aquacalypse now: the end of fish’ (The New Republic)  
www.tnr.com/article/environment-energy/aquacalypse-now**
Part II
Middle Men (and Women): The Making of the Global Food System

Week 7
Oct 9 Corporate consolidation: The global food system Hungry (ch. 3 & 6) Friedberg 2004 (ch. 2)
Oct 11 Film: Food Inc. (?) Griffin & Frongillo 2003

**Field Assignment 1: Farmer’s market write-up (due in class)**

Week 8
Oct 16 Food aid and development policies Cook 2004 (ch. 12)
Oct 18 ‘Free trade’ vs. fair trade Hungry (ch. 7) Film: “Life and Debt”

**Saturday, October 20: Field trip to Stone’s Throw farm and Beak & Skiff Apple orchard**

Week 9
Oct 23 CAFOs and the meat industry Pollan 2006 (ch. 4) Friedberg 2009 (ch. 2)
Oct 25 Fast food nation Schlosser 2001 (ch. 5, 6, 7) Pollan 2006 (ch. 7)

**Field Assignment 2: Supermarket scavenger hunt (due in class)**

Week 10
Oct 30 Supermarkets and super marketing Patel 2007 Friedberg 2004 (ch. 1)
Konefal et al. 2005
Nov 1 Food safety and health issues 1: Food scares Schlosser 2001 (ch. 8-9)
**Also read: www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/health/04meat.html**
# Part III: You Are What (and Where) you Eat: Hunger, Health, and the Politics of Consumption

## Week 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 6</td>
<td>Hunger and food insecurity 1: Malnutrition and famine</td>
<td>Hungry (ch. 11) NACLA 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Hunger and food insecurity 2: <em>Field trip to Samaritan Center</em></td>
<td>McClintock 2011 Hillengas 2010</td>
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## Week 12

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 13</td>
<td>Food safety and health issues 2: Obesity and body image</td>
<td>Pollan 2006 (ch. 6) Guthman 2011</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 15</td>
<td>Food as commodity, food as identity</td>
<td>Lind and Barham 2004 Benson and Fischer 2007</td>
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**Map Assignment 2: Mapping hunger (due in class)**

## Week 13

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 20-22</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break – no class</td>
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## Week 14

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 27</td>
<td>Food security, Food sovereignty, Food Justice</td>
<td>Holt-Giménez 2011 Food Sovereignty/Food Justice</td>
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**Also, read through: [www.justfood.org/food-justice](http://www.justfood.org/food-justice) and [‘The food justice movement: trying to break the food chains’](http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/communitydevelopment/20031218/20/808) (Gotham Gazette)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>Group presentations</td>
<td>no new readings</td>
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Week 15

Dec 4   Group presentations   no new readings
Dec 6   Group presentations   no new readings

**Final Group Papers Due no later than Friday, Dec. 7, at 4:00pm**

Bibliography


