People, Land, and Food

Geography/Environmental Studies 309
Summer 2017

Instructor:	Eric Nost, nost@wisc.edu
Dates:	MTWR, 6/19-7/16
Time:	9am-12pm
Location:	Helen C. White 4208
Office Hours:	MR, 12:30pm-2pm or by appointment, Science Hall Cartography Lab (M390)

Food is a part of our everyday lives, but it's rare to know who grows it, where, and how. It can be even more difficult to see agriculture's social and environmental costs. To better understand the global food system, we will take a geographical approach, using field trips, journalistic and scholarly articles, and thoughtful discussion to read landscapes and follow food through its production and consumption. Looking outward from Wisconsin, we will explore differences in how people cultivate food and fuel crops around the world, discover how farming affects and is affected by climate change, characterize what it means to be a farmer and an eater, and assess the promise of sustainable agriculture.

Objectives

This course provides you with opportunities to learn about the social and environmental dimensions of modern agriculture, to understand how institutions, economics, and ecology shape the modern food system differently around the world, and to evaluate the efficacy of sustainable agriculture. By the end of the course, you should know more about:

-How and why different kinds of food systems have developed in different parts of the world, including Wisconsin
-How agriculture shapes and is shaped by environmental factors, including climate change
- How policy decisions and economic forces inform farming practices
- Where food comes from in a modern globalized food system, and what steps carry it from where it is grown to the consumer
- What potential solutions have been proposed for making food systems more sustainable, as well as the limits to these solutions
- How farming and eating are cultural identities embedded in systems of meaning

A major aim of the course is to help you develop research and communication skills:
- *Critically evaluating* arguments and respond to different kinds of evidence
- C*onstructing* good arguments and where to look for sources to support your arguments
- Conversing intelligently and respectfully with your peers on complicated subjects
- Expressing your ideas through clear, persuasive writing

Structure of classes

We meet 15 times (we miss one session because of July 4th), each for three hours. This compression presents some unique challenges, since you are probably engaged in other activities this summer. You are expected to come to class having done the readings, taken close notes, and having completed any homework. Readings are meant to introduce key concepts and issues and we will usually begin class by checking-in on them. As you'll see below, you'll be asked to lead, with a partner, one of our conversations. Discussions will lead us into some exercises meant to deepen our understanding of the day's theme or topic. We'll often end each class with me giving a brief presentation that sets the stage for the next day – context that may be helpful as you read.

Laptops and cellphones are not allowed while class is in session unless we're doing something in class that requires computers, in which case I'll let you know in advance (in some cases we may go to a nearby computer lab). If you need special accommodations, please speak to me as soon as possible so we can arrange an exception.

Assignments

The assignments for the course are meant for you to assess what you've learned and as practical ways for you to explore and deepen your research and communication skills and knowledge about a specific food/environment topic that interests you. My hope is that these will not be burdensome or rote tasks for you. Instead, they should provide you with products that you can reference well after the semester is over.

Attendance and participation (25%)

- Come to class prepared to engage. Though I will present lectures, ultimately my job is to serve as a facilitator and moderator of our discussion. Thoughtful and active participation in class is worth 15% of your overall grade. There are many ways to demonstrate this, and we will determine together what constitutes good participation in the course on the first day of class. In general, participation

points should not be difficult to earn as long as you 1) keep up with the readings, 2) speak up during class (this doesn't have to be a brilliant, eloquent insight, but could be a question, opinion, connection to other readings, other coursework, your own experience, etc.), 3) respect others in section, and 4) make an honest effort to engage with the material whether by asking informed questions or helping your peers learn the material. Please come talk to me as soon as you can if you are concerned about engaging in group discussions.

- For each class, bring at least one word or concept from the reading you didn't understand the use of, and a couple of questions about the readings. This will help facilitate our conversation. I will also send out questions, the afternoon before class, to guide you through the readings.
- Since so much of class is oriented around discussion, exercises, and field trips, attendance is mandatory and 10% of your overall grade. If you anticipate that you must miss a class, or if you need any accommodations to attend field trips, *contact me before the trip and as soon as possible*. If you find you must miss class unexpectedly due to illness, family emergency, or other serious reason, let me know right away.

Discussion leadership (5%)

- You and a partner will help to lead discussion once. This is an excellent way to dig into a topic you're especially interested in and to enhance your communication and leadership skills. It is not meant to be intimidating, and it's on all of us to help whoever's leading the discussion by actively participating. You and your partner are expected to read the readings ahead of time in order to plan your discussion, and it'd be a good idea for us to meet in advance of when you are scheduled. You'll want to work through the reading's key points, facts, and questions. Use these as grist for your discussion but feel free to get creative – you might do more than just ask questions of your fellow students.

Papers and presentation (50%)

- You will write three papers throughout the course. You will need to conduct some original research for each paper, but I will help you narrow down the topic and identify appropriate sources.
- PAPER 1 (15%, 3 pages): pick a food and follow it. Where is it grown? By whom? Where is it consumed? The USDA and the UN FAO, among other organizations, maintain relevant databases. The paper should be more than just a summary of this information, however. As you trace the crop's journey from farm to plate (and, perhaps, beyond), you will need to identify the major economic or environmental challenges. You do not have to write in detail about why these

are challenges or how they came about (see paper 2) but you do need to weave them into the narrative.

- PAPER 2 (15%, 3 pages): For the second paper, you will need to take a different approach. Instead of starting with a food or crop, I will ask you to start from a particular place – it could be where you grew up, where you will study abroad, or anywhere really. You will need to "read the landscape" – start with a scene (it might help to have an actual photo, but you could narrate) and then, picking out elements of that scene, tell a story about the social and environmental costs of whatever is grown there. To do so, you will probably need to specify some of the history of your place and how farming has changed there over time.
- PAPER 3 (15%, 3 pages): Finally, take your food or place and write a policy memo directed at a government agency like the USDA or UN FAO, or a farming non-profit. I want this to be useful to your own interests and experience, so please try to find the time to discuss the project with me. You will first need to narrow in on a specific social or environmental issue in farming, and then you will need to draw on our discussions of sustainable agriculture to propose a potential solution. This should be thoughtful – you will need to assess the limitations of your proposed solution.
- PRESENTATION (5%): On the last day of class, you will deliver a 10-minute presentation (with an extra 5 minutes for Q & A) on your policy paper.
- Note: Late papers will experience a 10% grade reduction per day. If you anticipate that you'll need an extension or in the case of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or family emergency, please see me as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements.

Quizzes (10%)

- We will take three non-cumulative quizzes throughout the course. These are meant to help you assess how well you are keeping up with the material and prepare you for the final exam. They will be closed book, but open note, to encourage you to take good notes on the readings and discussion. They will include multiple choice as well as short answer questions.

Exam (10%)

- There will be a cumulative final exam in the last week of class.

Extra credit!

- You can earn up to 3% extra credit percentage points for sending me a complete draft of your papers and coming to office hours to discuss them.

Grading scheme
A: 93-100, AB: 88-92, B:83-88, BC: 80-82, C: 70-79, D: 60-69, F: < 60

What you can expect from me

- To help you understand the material, learning as much as possible about the social and environmental dimensions of agriculture. We're all coming from different disciplinary perspectives and starting points, meaning that it is everyone's responsibility, but especially mine, to work to provide a respectful and engaging learning environment. I'm here to work with you from where you are and build up your understanding of the course themes.
- To acknowledge your contributions and design ways for you to participate based on your learning style.
- To provide prompt feedback on assignments.
- To give you a sense of the flow of the semester – when the assignment load will be heavy, so that you can prepare appropriately.
- To assist in developing your critical listening, reading, arguing skills, through our discussions and assignments. These are skills that will be useful to you in both your chosen profession and as a citizen.
- To advise you on jobs, grad school, and/or volunteering opportunities. Before coming to graduate school, I worked for several conservation non-profits.

What I expect of you

- To treat each other with respect. Our classroom is a safe space for all students, regardless of political orientation, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, ability or disability. Every person is welcome here.
- To communicate with me about what you expect from the course, what you need, and your challenges.
- To put your best possible effort into this class.

Getting in touch

Email is the best way to contact me. I will check it frequently after class up to 6pm, and occasionally in the evenings and weekends. I will not be available Fridays during the day but I will respond to your requests and questions as soon as I can. Please do not count on an immediate response, especially for important last minute questions regarding assignments.

Schedule

Week 1: Growing

M: Introductions | how to follow food

Discussion:

1. Introducing ourselves – why are we here, what do we value, where do we come from?
2. What makes for good discussion?
3. Review syllabus
4. Exercise: Bring a food item or meal that's important to you and come prepared to say a word or two about why it matters to you…you don't actually have to bring the food - a picture or recipe will do!
5. Walk through the readings
6. A visit from the FH King farmers

Lecture: the broad arc of this course

Readings:

1. Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in Human History" *Discover.*
2. Cook, "Follow the thing: Papaya"
3. Watch: http://fhkingstudents.wixsite.com/fhking/about

T: What grows where | history of Wisconsin agriculture | how to read the landscape

Discussion:

1. Walk through the readings
2. Exercise: updating and adding to "Reading the Wisconsin Landscape"
3. Exercise: how to read and take notes

Lecture: introducing the modern food supply chain

Readings:

1. Selections from "Reading Landscapes" – Overview and The Rural Countryside
2. Selections from Apps, "Reading the Wisconsin Landscape"- The Landscape, The Farmstead, Crops, Farm Animals, Planting & Harvesting (pp. 8-139…lots of pages, but lots of illustrations!)

W: The modern food supply chain | food policy | farm labor

Discussion:

1. Report on the reading you chose
2. Walk through the other readings
3. Exercise: constructing and representing food chains

4. Exercise: tips on writing
5. Discuss what to ask about and what to learn on Thursday's field trip

Lecture: raising animals, here and there

Readings:

1. Dicken, "Ch. 9: 'We Are What We Eat': The Agro-food Industries," in *Global Shift: Mapping the Changing Contours of the World Economy*.
2. "A historical primer on the US Farm Bill," McGranahan et al.
3. PICK 1 of the following (they are all about the labor that goes into food production):

BEEF: Pollan, "Power steer" *The New York Times Magazine*

CHICKEN: Grabell, "Exploitation and abuse at the chicken plant" *The New Yorker*

PORK: Bacon, "How US Policies Fueled Mexico's Great Migration." *The Nation*.

DAIRY: "The New Immigrants" *Milwaukee Mag*.

TR: Subsistence and traditional production systems around the world | field trip to UW-Madison Dairy Cattle and Poultry Research Centers

We're due at the Dairy Cattle Center at 10am, so we'll leave class by 9:40. We'll spend the first half hour discussing the readings. If there's time afterwards, we'll debrief.

Readings:

1. "Introduction," *Wild Rice and the Ojibway People*
2. "As pastoralist land shrinks, Maasai women take livestock lead," *Reuters*
3. "5 reasons farms are getting bigger," DairyCarrie blog
4. Friedberg, "To Garden, to Market: gendered meanings of work on an African urban periphery" [discuss next Monday]

Week 2: Challenges

M: Climate change | biofuels

Quiz

Discussion:

1. Debrief from the field trip and discuss last Thursday's readings (especially Friedberg)
2. Student presentation
3. Exercise: reading technical papers and charts
4. Exercise: time to work on paper 1 (potentially peer review)

Readings:

1. Altieri and Nicholls, "The adaptation and mitigation potential of traditional agriculture in a changing climate"

3. Gibbs et al., "Carbon payback times for crop-based biofuel expansion in the tropics: the effects of changing yield and technology."

T: Biodiversity and deforestation

Discussion:

1. Exercise: report to the group on the six rainforest functions
2. Walk through the rest of the readings
3. Exercise: How to read policy and write policy memos

Readings:

1. Miracle of the *cerrado*, *The Economist*
2. Vandermeer and Perfecto, *Breakfast of Biodiversity* chapters 1-3

W: Water quality | [paper 1 due]

Discussion:

1. Walk through the readings
2. Exercise: discuss/debate the interests and values of different stakeholders in water quality challenges
3. Exercise: pair off and design a water quality policy

Readings:

1. Carpenter et al., "Plausible futures of a social-ecological system: Yahara watershed, Wisconsin, USA"
2. Paolisso and Maloney on farmer environmentalism

TR: Growing for 9 billion | genetics and other technical solutions [quiz]

Quiz

Discussion:

1. Student presentation
2. Walk through the readings
3. Exercise: What does it take to be a "smart" farmer?

Lecture: what about organic?

Readings:

1. "Feeding 9 billion," Foley, *National Geographic*
2. "Introduction," Kloppenberg, *First the Seed*.
3. "How I got converted to GMO food," Lynas, *New York Times*.

Week 3: Sustaining

M: Organic and other labelling schemes

Discussion:

1. Student presentation
2. Mid-course check-in [I will email you your participation grade to date].
3. Exercise: what are all the labels we can find at Fresh?
4. Exercise: create your own food label

Lecture: what is local food and what are some of the challenges?

Readings:

1. Guthman, "Agrarian Dreams," Chapter 1.
2. Shapin, "Paradise Sold," *The New Yorker*
3. PICK 1 of the following agroecology papers:
   - Organics and biodiversity
   - Organics and soil
   - Meta-analysis of organics' impacts on environment

T: 4th of July | NO CLASS

Optional reading: Noyce, "The Rise of the Picnic Hamper"

W: Local foods | Crossroads Community Farm field trip

We will meet as regularly scheduled to discuss what we see as some of the promises of local food endeavors (what is it meant to solve?), the differences between them, and some of the challenges. Ultimately, we'll come up with a list of things we want to find out from our field trip. We'll leave by 10am, get there at 10:30am, and leave by 11:30, getting back to campus by noon (tentative schedule).

Readings:

1. Wells et al., "Growing Food, Growing Community: Community Supported Agriculture in Rural Iowa
2. Davis, "Real Life CSAs," *Isthmus*

TR: Urban-rural connections | Dane County Manure Digester field trip [paper 2 due]

Again, we will meet as regularly scheduled. We will briefly recap our discussion from last week on water quality challenges and come up with a list of things we want to find out from our field trip. We'll leave by 9:30am, get there at 10am, and leave by 11am (tentative schedule).

Readings:

1. "Environmental racism," Food Empowerment Project
2. "The World Eats Bacon at Expense of North Carolina's Rural Poor," *Quartz*
3. "Break the Cycle: The Power of Food to Interrupt the Revolving Prison Door" YouTube video.

Week 4: Consuming

M: Food waste [quiz]

Quiz

Discussion:

1. Debrief from previous two field trips: what did we learn? What was surprising?
2. Student presentation
3. Exercise: measuring food waste
4. Exam review

Lecture: From food abundance and waste to food security and justice

Readings:

1. Parizeau et al. 2015. "Household-level dynamics of food waste production…"
2. Poppendieck, 2000. "Want Amid Plenty: from Hunger to Inequality."

T: Food security and justice [Exam]

Exam

Discussion:

1. Walk through the reading
2. Exercise: Fresh Market vs. 7-Eleven
3. Exercise: mapping food availability. Make a map of the grocery stores in your neighborhood or city.

Lecture: farming and eating as community

Readings:

1. White, "D-Town Farm: African American Resistance to Food Insecurity and the Transformation of Detroit."

W: Farming and eating as community | Field trip either to Eagle Heights Community Garden or Madison Farmers' Market

Discussion:

1. Walk through the readings
2. Exercise: survey at Eagle Heights (what are people growing and how?) or the Farmers' Market (who is here, why, what are they selling/buying?)

Readings:

1. Selections from Emma Schroeder's thesis on Eagle Heights - "Introduction" and "A walk through the gardens today"

2. Alkon, "From value to values: sustainable consumption at farmers' markets"

TR: Brunch! [paper presentations]

Saturday July 15th by 5pm: [paper 3 due]

Academic Misconduct

In the words of the UW-Madison Student Academic Misconduct Policy, academic misconduct is an act in which a student:

* seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
* uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
* forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
* intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
* engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance;
* assists other students in any of these acts.

Examples include but are not limited to: cutting and pasting text from the web without quotation marks or proper citation; paraphrasing from the web without crediting the source; using notes or electronic devices in an exam when such use is not allowed; using another person's ideas, words, or research and presenting it as one's own by not properly crediting the originator; stealing examinations or course materials; signing another person's name to an attendance sheet; or collaboration that is contrary to the stated rules of the course.

See Student Assistance and Judicial Affairs at http://students.wisc.edu/saja/index.html for more information, and if you'd like more clarification on proper citation and what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

A Brief Q&A

Q: I'm confused about the material--what should I do?
A: First off, don't feel embarrassed—few scholars, whether undergraduates or tenured professors, understand everything completely the first time! Please bring your questions to class! If you are confused, it's likely that your classmates are, too. If you bring me questions, it helps me evaluate how best to help you learn the material. If you are still confused, please come to my office hours. I am glad to help!

Q: I have to miss lecture/discussion for a family/personal/medical emergency. What should I do?
A: As soon as possible, get in touch with me. Remember that if the absence is due to a University-sponsored activity, you need to notify me within the first two weeks of the semester. In addition to alerting me ahead of time and finding out what you need to do, I recommend getting notes from a classmate (for lecture and/or discussion, depending on what you have missed). I will make lecture slides available, but there is often key material that is not spelled out in powerpoints. So get notes AND review the lecture slides.

Q: I'm not happy about my exam/paper grade. Will you change it?
A: For regrades, I reserve the right to either increase OR decrease your grade depending on what I find in regrading. For a regrade, wait 24 hours, then schedule a meeting with me and email a written description of why you deserve a better grade.

Additional Resources and Information

Writing: I highly recommend the Writing Center's services. They can assist you in all stages of writing from initial brainstorming to polishing. You can reach the Writing Center at 263-1992, or on the web at: http://www.wisc.edu/writing.

Geography Library (2nd floor Science Hall): Your papers will require additional research outside the sources I can provide. Please utilize all the resources available to you in our libraries. Librarians are very eager to help you, so please ask them questions and they can help point you to pertinent resources for your papers.

McBurney Resource Center: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me and the McBurney Resource Center located at 702 W. Johnson Street, Suite 2104 http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu , 608-263-2741 to discuss individual needs for accommodations.