EVST 594.01: Graduate Seminar - The Political Economy of Food and Agriculture

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University of Montana, Missoula
EVST 594 GRADUATE SEMINAR: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
Fall 2007

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Office Hours: After class each week for one hour or so. Please make an appointment.

“Farmers should be raising less corn and more hell”

-Mary Elizabeth Lease, 1853-1933

Overview of the Course
The contemporary food and agricultural system is a combination of political and economic debates that are hard to separate. The purpose of this graduate seminar is to study and analyze some of the recent debates regarding the current agricultural and industrial food system and attempts to improve this system for the public good. This course will bring together various points of view and will combine elements of the economic, political and environmental implications of our changing food and agriculture system.

Accessing the Readings
The required readings are listed on the attached schedule. Three texts are available at the Bookstore in the UC:


All of the other materials listed on this syllabus are on both traditional and electronic reserve in Mansfield Library. I suspect the easiest thing to do is to go to the library and copy all of the materials on traditional reserve at the start of the course so that you have them easily available to you. You will save printing costs and will probably get cleaner copies.

To access electronic reserve, go to: http://eres.lib.umt.edu If you have trouble accessing this from off campus, you may have to go to the library home page to set up a remote access account. Once in the electronic reserve page, search by my last name or for the course. The password is: foodies

Requirements and Opportunities

Readings and class participation: The course is organized as a seminar, which means its quality greatly depends upon the active participation and contributions of all members. My aim is to create a learning community in which we will seriously and critically review issues presented by the readings. Thus, it is essential that you read all materials carefully and thoughtfully prior to each class. Obviously, it is also essential that you attend class in order to participate. (20 % of grade)
Readings Short Essays: More or less each week I will assign you to write a short (one page) critical review of one of the readings. This will be handed in at the next class meeting. Only papers in 12 point font will be accepted. (20% of grade).

Student led discussion: To facilitate our discussions, each student will make at least one in class presentation of one of the readings. I will assign the presentations a week in advance. (20% of grade)

Final Term Paper- Each student will write a 15 page paper on a topic decided before the end of the third week of class. The topic will be of the students choosing, but must be approved by the instructor. Each student will present a 15 minute in-class overview of their work. (40% of grade)

Guest speakers: Several guest speakers will be added as appropriate.

Field Trip(s): I would like to organize one or two field trips depending on your level of interest. In particular, for those who are willing and able, I would like us to attend the Annual Meeting of the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO), one leading sustainable agriculture organization in Montana. Other options may open up and will be announced in class.

Grading: Please note the following grading procedures, and mark the due dates on your calendar so you can plan accordingly. I will use the plus/minus grading system (A, A-, B+, B, B-, and so on).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percent of final grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly short reflection papers</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student led discussion</td>
<td>at least once during semester</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Paper/presentation</td>
<td>Paper due first day of exam week</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Late papers: I strongly encourage you to prepare and turn assignments on time. I realize, however, sometimes we get sick or an emergency comes up, but I try to avoid getting into judging whether your excuse for a late paper is justifiable. Thus, I have a clear policy:

- If you are to lead a discussion and get sick or have an emergency, it is your responsibility to find someone to switch with you.
- I will not accept late weekly short reflection papers.
- For the final term paper, you can turn it in as late as the last day of exam week, (it can be delivered electronically to my email) – but no later than that – for 10% reduction in points than it would have received had it been on time.

Advising: If I can be of assistance, please come see me after class, but make appointment in advance if possible. If my office hours are impossible for you, contact me by email or phone.
COURSE MENU
(Subject to change, if necessary)

Friday, Aug. 31 – Introduction to the course

I.  Introduction-Core Concepts

Friday, Sept. 7 – Sustainability- Ikerd- Chapters 1-3; Pyle- pages xi-18
Friday, Sept. 14- Industrial Agriculture- Schlosser, pages 1-91.

II. The Current System

Friday, Sept. 21- Overproduction- Pyle, pages 19-78
Friday, Sept. 28- Over production continued- Pollan, pages 1- 119

Paper Topic Due

Friday, October 5- Fast Food Nation- Schlosser, pages 111-221
Friday, October 12- Fast Food Nation continued- Pyle 81-109

III. Economics of Sustainability and the Environment

Friday, October 19- limitations of economics- Ikerd- Chapters 4, 5, 7
Friday, October 26- the axes of weevil- Pyle- pages- 139-181

Outline of Paper Due

Friday, November 2- Globalization-Schlosser, pages 225-252; 182-192

IV. Alternatives to the Problems

Friday, November 2- Grass finished beef- Pollan- pages 123-286
Friday, November 9- Moral Economy- Ikerd, pages 139-158; Schlosser, pages 255-290
Friday, November 16- Wasps and Finches- Pyle, pages 193-199; Ikerd, pages 197-203

First Draft of Paper Due

Friday, November 23- NO Class Thanksgiving—What’s a Political Correct Meal?
Friday, November 30- Ominvore’ Dilemma- Pollan, pages 277-411- Class presentations of papers.
Friday, December 7- Class Presentation of Papers.

MERRY CHRISTMAS
Tues., Sept. 12 – Globalization and the political economy of food


Thurs., Sept. 14 – Economic concentration


Tues., Sept. 19 – Does technology know where it’s going?


Thurs., Sept. 21 – Questioning assumptions


Tues., Sept. 26 – Environment and health: A few issues


**Supplemental:**

**Thurs., Sept. 28 – To be determined**

**NOTE:** Friday, Sept. 29, Anna Lappé will meet informally for a conversation with graduate students during the early afternoon. Exact time and location to be announced.

**HARVEST FEST:** Keynote address also strongly recommended: “Eat Grub! Putting Politics on Your Plate” by Anna Lappé at 7 PM, North Underground Lecture Hall, UM. **Sat., Sept. 30 Festival** in Caras Park in the afternoon. Celebrate local food, farming, and community in downtown Missoula!

**Tues., Oct. 3 – ESSAY ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**

**II. What Should We Have for Dinner?**

**Thurs., Oct. 5 – Omnivore’s Dilemma**
Introduction and Chapters 1-5, Pp. 1-99 in *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*

**Tues., Oct. 10 – More omnivorous dilemmas…**
Chapters 6-10, Pp. 100-207 in *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*


**Thurs., Oct. 12 – And more…**
Chapters 11-16, Pp. 208-303 in *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*


**Tues., Oct. 17 – The perfect meal?**
Chapters 17-20, Pp. 304-411 in *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*

**Thurs., Oct. 19 – Organic food: Promises and perils**


**Tues., Oct. 24 – A glimpse at Montana agriculture**


**Thurs., Oct. 26 – To be determined**

Field trip to Central Montana for AERO Annual Meeting and more

**Tues., Oct. 31 – To be determined**

**Thurs., Nov. 2 – ESSAY ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE**

**III. Setting the Local Table**

**Tues., Nov. 7 – HOLIDAY. ELECTION DAY – PLEASE VOTE! Begin readings for Thursday.**

**Thurs., Nov. 9 – Foodshed thinking**


**Tues., Nov. 14 – Coming in to the Missoula Foodshed**


**Thurs., Nov. 16 – Together at the Table (TATT)**

Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-49 in TATT

**Tues., Nov. 21 – Together at the Table, Continued.**

Chapters 3 & 4, pp. 51-114 in TATT

**Thurs., Nov. 23 – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.**
Tues., Nov. 28 – *Together at the Table, Continued.*
Chapters 5 & 6, pp. 115-164 in *TATT*

Thurs., Nov. 30 – *Together at the Table, Continued.*
Chapters 7, 8 & 9, pp. 165-217 in *TATT*

Tues., Dec. 5 – To be determined

Thurs., Dec. 7 – ESSAY ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE

**EXAM WEEK:** Wrapping up the leftovers to take home at a gathering during exam week. Time and place to be determined. **FINAL REFLECTION ESSAY DUE at that time.**