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### ENST 430.01: Culture and Agriculture

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## UG ENST 430 Culture and Agriculture, Spring 2015

3 credits M,T,Th 3:40 – 5:00

Class runs 1/27 – 3/27

Instructor, Josh Slotnick

Office Hours: Call or email for appt. After the end of Feb. I am at the PEAS farm.

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Culture and Agriculture surveys the treatment of farmers and farming in the Humanities. The course is divided into three parts: specific crops and their effect on history, artistic commentary on agricultural life, and farmer philosophy. This year the first third of the course will focus on three crops linked to identity. In the second third of the course we will look at farmer poetry, the musical legacy of the great migration, literature and some visual art. In the last section of the course, Farmer Philosophy, we will consider classical academic philosophers, like Montana's Albert Borgmann, the iconic agrarian voice of Wendell Berry, as well as the work of authors and farmers not commonly termed "philosophical".

There will be three classes a week, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. **Mondays** I will lecture. The lectures should take half of the class time. Following the lecture we will have an activity to inspire questions and discussion.

**Tuesdays** We will discuss the readings. Three times during the course a small leadership group of students will design a guided discussion or activity based on the selected readings for the week (taken from the readings on reserve). The group has two options for how to structure the discussion. I will ask questions of the presenters and play an active role in both of the options described below.

### Option 1.) Activity

The group will design an activity where the class, in small groups, actively works with the material from the readings and then presents their creations to the class. The presentations should take the form of a contextually non-traditional presentation of academic material: a play, a song, a PSA, an advertisement, a piece of art, a campaign speech, a debate etc. The activity must require the students to understand the readings well enough to translate the information to another medium. *The leadership group must meet ahead of class to design the activity.*

### Option 2.) Small Group Discussion

Each person in the leadership group will individually write three questions to inspire discussion, then the group will meet, *before the class on Tuesday*, and talk through the readings, as per their questions. The Leadership group will combine redundant questions and possibly create new questions based on themes they identify in the readings. In class the leadership group will break everyone into small groups and the small groups will work through the questions the leadership group designed. The Leadership group will then guide a whole class discussion.

**Thursdays** I will speak briefly (20 minutes) on the book readings for the week, then I will guide a discussion/activity based on the reading.

The last day of class is March 27<sup>th</sup>, the Thursday before spring break.

## The Work

### THE BINDER

Students will put together a binder for the class, due the week after spring break (4/7). Included in the binder are Reading Responses and Lecture Reactions. The Binder is due 4/7, I will have a box for them in EVST.

### **Reading Responses**

For all the readings, both the selections from the reader and the books, all students will pull from each day's reading a quote they feel is especially compelling and write a paragraph about their choice. **Bring this to class** as I may ask you about your quote in discussion. Put the date of Reading Response on top of the page.

### **Lecture Reactions**

On Mondays we will have a presentation or performance. You should take notes and write a brief (2 paragraphs, no more than one single-spaced page) reaction. The reaction should be half re-cap (what happened, 1 paragraph), and half your conclusions (what you think about what you heard, 1 paragraph). Put the date on top of the page. Type these the evening after class if you can. It's a lot easier that way.

### **PAPERS**

#### **Topic Papers**

Undergraduates will write two 4 - page topic papers (2 pages, single-spaced, double-sided). You will choose two of the three assigned papers, due dates and details are in the class schedule. That means you can write a paper on a specific crop and its historical ramifications (pt.1), or you can analyze an artistic treatment of farmers and farming – this could be fine art, music, poetry, literature or film (pt.2), or you can take on a specific piece of farmer philosophy (pt.3). Whichever two of the three topics you choose, do not write about something or someone we have already discussed in class. That means you will take on a crop and a piece of art, or thought, that we have not talked about in class. I am happy to offer paper suggestions for any of these topics. Due date details are in the course schedule.

#### **Book papers**

Undergraduates will write two 4 page papers (2 pages, single-spaced, double-sided), one paper for each book. I will describe the specific nature of the assignment when the papers are formally assigned 2/27, and 3/27.

#### **Graduate Student Increment**

Graduate students will write a 5 page topic paper for each of the three parts of the class, and a 5 page paper on each of the two books (two papers total). These papers should link the books to historical themes discussed in lecture and demonstrate some original thought.

### **Grading**

#### **Undergraduates**

The papers: (20 points per paper x 2) 40 points

Weekly readings quote and responses: (2 readings/week, 2 points per response, X 9 weeks,) 36 points

Lecture/presentation recap/reaction: (1 per week, 4 points, X 9 weeks) 36 points

Book essays: (20 points per essay x 2) 40 points,

Class participation: 18 points.

Total points for the class: 170. Grading is in increments of 10%

#### **Graduate students**

The papers: (20 points per paper x 3) 60 points

Weekly readings quote and responses: (2 readings/week, 2 points per response, X 9 weeks,) 36 points

Lecture/presentation recap/reaction: (1 per week, 4 points, X 9 weeks) 36 points

Book essays: (20 points per essay x 2) 40 points,

Class participation: 18 points.

Total points for the class: 190. Grading is in increments of 10%

### **Participation**

There are a lot of points in this class for participation. Most days we will do some type of activity that requires you to talk with your peers in small groups and occasionally to the whole class. We will also have

a few opportunities to lead the Tuesday discussions of the readings. This semester there is one group presentation project as well.

Participation means your involvement in leading class discussions, your contribution to those discussions, and your ability to engage in the small group activities. If you are an extremely shy person, and feel you cannot do this, let me know and we will make other arrangements. In order to do well in class participation, you absolutely must come to class, pay attention to the lectures, do the readings and demonstrate, through commentary and action, that you have thought about what you have read and heard. Good comments will make connections between the readings, lectures, and your life. In small group activities the room should be noisy, and you should be part of that.

### **Readings**

You need to purchase two books *The American Way of Eating*, by Tracie McMillan, and *Eat the City*, by Robin Shulman. All of the other readings are on reserve available in hard copy and I will try for e res too. My suggestion is to copy a complete set of the reserve readings and put them in a binder. They can do this for you right there at the library. I understand that there is a cost associated with this, that's why I am hoping we can put the readings on e res as well. Bring the binder to class so you can reference the readings in discussion.

### **Expectations on Written Work**

Culture and Agriculture is a 400 level class. The workload may not be tremendous, but I expect a high level of quality in your writing! Best strategy, edit your work 2X before you hand it in, use active verbs, active voice, specific details and no rookie writing mistakes please. These types of mistakes will cause the grades on your papers to drop. I am including an important snippet here from the Provost's page:

## **IV. ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

Students must practice academic honesty.

### **A. Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. Academic misconduct is defined as all forms of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to:

- 1. Plagiarism:** Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own.

## Class Schedule

1/26: Lecture: Introduction, and A High Speed History of American Agriculture

1/27 : Readings: *Annihilation*, from Grassland, by Richard Manning, and *Triage*, from The Worst Hard Time, by Timothy Egan

Student Group Activity

1/29: Book discussion, Lentil Underground pp.

### Part 1: Crops, People and Identity (Cotton, Potatoes, Pineapple and the Modern Plantation)

2/2: Lecture: Cotton, The Rise and Fall of the South and the Great Migration

2/3: Readings: *Causes of Migration*; *Dallas Express, August 11, 1917*; *Exodus During the World War: American Hunger*: all from Up South, edited by Malaika Adero

2/5 Book discussion, Lentil Underground pp.

2/9 Lecture: Irish Potato Famine and the Beginning of the Immigrant Wave

2/10 Readings: From Butte Irish, Special Guest, Pat Williams

2/12 Book discussion, Lentil Underground pp.

2/16 Presidents Day!

2/19 Lecture: Hawaii: Colonialization, geopolitics and the hateful pineapple. W/ follow up on the central valley for the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

2/19 Readings: 1.) from The Farm Workers Journey, 2.) from Voices from the Field, 3.) *You Bring Out the Mexican in Me*, from Vintage Cisneros, 4.) *Complexion*, from *Hunger of Memory*

Student Group Activity

**PART 1 PAPER ASSIGNED: Write 4 pages on the historical ramifications of the cultivation of a specific crop. This treatment should be similar to our discussion of cotton, the potato and the pineapple. You pick the crop, then describe what happened because the crop was grown, used, irrigated, eaten etc., as it was. See general expectations on written work above. DUE 2/24**

### Part 2: Artistic Commentary on Agricultural Life

**NOTE The week of Feb 24<sup>th</sup> the schedule is different as we are accommodating the schedules of our guests! Readings you need to do the readings for Monday!**

2/23 Philip Burgess poems and stories

READINGS: Burgess, ...

2/24. Book Discussion, Lentil Underground pp Liz joins us to chat so BRING QUESTIONS FOR THE AUTHOR!

**Lentil Underground Paper ASSIGNED; DUE 3/3**

2/26 1000 years of Farmer Poems, w/Roger Dunsmore

**PART 1 PAPER DUE**

3/2 Serial Art of Jacob Lawrence, The Migration Series

We make art

## **Lentil Underground Paper DUE**

3/3 Lecture/performance, Marco Littig, from Blues to Jazz: The Great Migration in Music, from the Delta to Chicago. READINGS, from Deep Blues, pp. 12-20, 43-47

**PAPER 2 ASSIGNED: Write 4 pages on an artist who has taken on agriculture, farmers or agrarian life, describe her work, how it has been influential, and why you feel the work is compelling. If possible include samples.**

3/5 Book Discussion, Bad Luck Way, pp. 3-70 (Part 1, On the Sun)

### **Part 3: Farmer Philosophy**

3/9 Lecture: Localism, Amenities for the Creative Class, and the Rise of Missoula's Food Scene  
Your Town's Story

3/10

Readings: An Animals Place, by Michael Pollan, All Animals are Equal, by Peter Singer, Half the class will read Pollan's article, Half the class will read Singers, EVERYONE will read

[Oxen's Fate Is Embattled as the Abattoir Awaits](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/29/us/oxens-possible-slaughter-prompts-fight-in-vermont.html?_r=0)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/29/us/oxens-possible-slaughter-prompts-fight-in-vermont.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/29/us/oxens-possible-slaughter-prompts-fight-in-vermont.html?_r=0)

and

[Jones: Green Mountain College should openly debate oxen treatment issue](http://vtdigger.org/2012/11/18/jones-green-mountain-college-should-openly-debate-oxen-treatment-issue/)

<http://vtdigger.org/2012/11/18/jones-green-mountain-college-should-openly-debate-oxen-treatment-issue/>

Then we will discuss the Green Mountain College oxen debacle in light of Pollan and Singer.

### **PAPER 2 DUE**

3/12 Book Discussion: Bad Luck Way, pp. 71-120 (Part 2, The Work)

**ASSIGNED**, Divide into 6 groups, each representing one of the following cities:

New Orleans, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami. Prepare a 10 minute group presentation on the state of urban ag in your group's city. Describe the contextual background of the city, and 1 organization's work, (their challenges, successes and strategies). Your report must include a conversation from someone from the organization. Incorporate lessons from the documentary as well. **DUE**

**3/18:**

3/16 Documentary: Urban Roots; Detroit Urban Agriculture  
Look for underlying issues, present but not taken on boldly

3/17 Readings: Selections from: *The Five Borough Farm Project*

### **City Specific Presentations DUE**

3/19 Book Discussion, Bad Luck Way, pp. 121-186 (Part 3, Bones)

3/23 Focal Practices and Agricultural sustainability, derived from Albert Borgmann's Real American Ethics

3/24 Readings: Selections from, The Unsettling of America, by Wendell Berry and *The Whole Horse* by Wendell Berry from The Fatal Harvest Reader

Student activity

3/26 Book Discussion: Bad Luck Way, pp. 258 – 336 (Part 4, 187-232) Bryce comes to chat with us, so BRING QUESTIONS FOR THE AUTHOR

**Bad Luck Way Essay Assigned, DUE 4/10 IN MY BOX IN EVST**

**PART 3 PAPER ASSIGNED: Write 5 pages on a philosopher's take on farmers, agrarianism, or agricultural life. You choose the writer. She doesn't have to be a classical philosopher (but certainly can be), she can be a novelist, essayist, etc., so long as you can clearly describe her beliefs/arguments. The paper should detail your philosopher's position, and describe why this is important, to you and for the greater good. PAPER DUE 4/11 IN MY BOX IN EVST**