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ENST 480.01: Food, Agriculture, Environment

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EVST 480: FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT
SPRING 2018. TUES. AND THURS. AT 11:00-12:20
LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING, ROOM 138

Instructor:

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Office Hours:

I encourage you to come talk with me during my office hours if you have questions or if I can be of help in any way. Please **sign up for a meeting time** on the sheet posted across from my office door in Rankin. My office hours are: **Mondays 2:00 – 3:00; Wednesdays 10:00 – 12:00**. If these are impossible for you, please contact me to make an appointment.

Purpose of the Course

Food is central to our lives – a basic human need imbued with political, economic, ecological, and cultural meaning. Whether we think about it or not, one of the most fundamental ways that we interact with the natural and social world every day is through the food we eat. Accordingly, in this course, we will look at the historical and ecological conditions created by the dominant, industrial food and agricultural system. We will also investigate emerging alternatives and grassroots efforts to move toward an ecological and healthier agriculture.

The course will also demonstrate an approach to interdisciplinary study and practice. Organized as a seminar, we will read deeply, including three new books, and engage in meaningful discussion. You will have the opportunity to improve your critical thinking, writing, research, and oral communication skills through class discussions and a series of assignments aimed at encouraging you to engage with the readings, concepts, and other course materials.

Learning Objectives

1. To increase participants' knowledge of the development of US agriculture; the role of science and technology in agricultural industrialization; the major structural issues in the dominant food system (e.g., concentration of economic power); and questions surrounding sustainability of current food systems.
2. To introduce the broad field of agri-food studies, and develop participants' knowledge of the alternative agri-food movements; the strategies being pursued; and the potentials and limits of those strategies.
3. To develop analytical and critical thinking skills through discussion, careful reading, and analytic essay assignments.
4. To increase substantive and experiential knowledge through an exercise assignment
5. To improve presentation skills by sharing your learnings.

Requirements

Readings: In addition to articles and other material posted on our course Moodle site, three required books are available for purchase in the bookstore:

Ackerman-Leist, Philip. 2017. *A Precautionary Tale: How One Small Town Banned Pesticides, Preserved Its Food Heritage, and Inspired a Movement*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Estabrook, Barry. 2015. *Pig Tales: An Omnivore's Quest for Sustainable Meat*. New York: Norton.

Montgomery, David R. 2017. *Growing a Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life*. New York: Norton.

Class Participation and Attendance: My aim is to create a learning community in which we grapple seriously and critically with the issues presented by the readings. That means, one of your main tasks is to do each reading thoughtfully before class and then help us discuss it. As a seminar, the quality of the course greatly depends upon the active participation and contributions of all members. Accordingly, you must be prepared to read, think, and take responsibility for your learning. I understand that active participation in class discussions is not easy for everyone, so we will use various formats and processes for discussions. Give it a try. Please treat each other with respect when expressing your views and help us to create space so that everyone has a chance to speak and learn from one another.

I hope you will enjoy attending class, and I expect you to attend consistently. If you are not in class, you cannot benefit from hearing the discussion of the material, nor can you contribute to the group's learning together. I may choose to give you a little extra credit at the end if you have been an active and thoughtful participant in class.

Please always bring readings to class!

Discussion questions: To facilitate a level of participation and analysis appropriate to an upper-division seminar, twice during the term, each student will prepare discussion questions on the required set of readings for a particular day. I will ask you to sign up for these opportunities to help shape our group discussion.

In no more than one page, include the citation for the reading and two discussion questions for us to grapple with. You may want to:

- pose questions that help us clarify the key concepts or main argument(s) made in the readings;
- help us compare and contrast our readings for the day with other materials we have covered;
- state why you agree or disagree with an author, and ask our group to say where they stand on the question and why; and/or
- identify portions that were difficult for you to understand and why.

Although you will develop two questions, you will only pose one (the second one is in case someone else has the same question as you do). Why have people develop questions that they probably won't pose? Developing questions predisposes people to participate, leading to a more engaging experience for everyone.

Post your questions (no more than one page) to the Moodle site by 5 PM the night before the reading is due in class (so Monday by 5 for Tuesday class sessions; Wednesday by 5 for Thursday class sessions). You are encouraged to post them earlier than that if you can. You can simply email them to the class list via Moodle.

In class, you will briefly present your question and why you think it is important. We will use these to help us guide our discussion, with the person who posed the question playing a strong role in facilitation.

Essays: The course is divided into two major sections with an essay assignment due at the end of each one. The assignments will ask you to think critically about what you read, to synthesize the material covered, and perhaps do some extra research or activity. I will distribute the question(s) and specific guidance at least two weeks before it is due. Typically, these papers should be five to seven pages, typed, and double-spaced with normal margins and fonts. I expect these papers to be well organized, grammatically correct, and completely referenced.

Exercises: A list of possible exercises (or projects) will be distributed separately. These will involve doing some research, taking action, or exploring on your own. Presentations: At the end of the semester, each student will make a short presentation about the exercise you pursued. Presentations should be tight, well organized, and to the point. Students are encouraged to use visual aids or props.

Grading: Your final grades will be based upon the following:

- Class participation (20%) – i.e., consistent attendance, quality contributions to discussions, and engagement
- Discussion questions (10%) – twice for undergrads; four times for graduate students
- Two essays (50%)
- Final exercise (15%)
- Presentation (5%)

Late Papers: If you do not turn in an assignment on time for whatever reason, you can turn it in as much as one week later – but no later than that – for one less point than it would have otherwise received for each day it is late.

Graduate students: To receive graduate credit for this course, you will be expected to read the supplemental material when assigned and to share a summary and analysis of it orally with the rest of the class. You will contribute discussion questions four times during the semester. I will also expect greater sophistication in your analytical essays.

Guest Speakers: Several guest speakers may be added as appropriate.

Other Activities: If there is sufficient interest among the members of the class, we may want to organize a field trip, participate in a service project, and/or have a potluck.

A note on plagiarism: Academic honesty and integrity are essential. The student code of conduct expressly forbids plagiarism, which is the representation of another person's work as your own. It will not be tolerated in this course, and any student whom I suspect of plagiarizing will be subject to the procedures and consequences described in the student conduct code.

COURSE MENU
Subject to Change if Necessary

PART ONE: AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION

1. Tuesday, Jan. 23 – Introduction to the course and to each other

Wed. Jan. 24. Recommended: Public lecture by Dr. Fred Provenza on “Mending broken links: Soil and plants, herbivores and humans. 6:30 PM in North Underground Lecture Hall.

2. Thursday, Jan. 25 –Early agricultural development in the US

Lyson, Thomas. 2004. “From subsistence to production.” Pp. 8-29 in *Civic Agriculture: Reconnecting Farm, Food, and Community*. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press.

Berry, Wendell. 2001. “The whole horse.” Pp. 63-79 in *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture, and the Community of Life*, edited by Eric T. Freyfogle. Washington: Island Press.

3. Tuesday, Jan. 30 – Industrialization and agrarianism

Guptill, Amy, Denise A Copelton, and Betsy Lucal. 2017. “Industrialization: The high costs of cheap food.” Chapter 6 in *Food and Society: Principles and Paradoxes*. Second edition. Malden MA: Polity.

Manning, Richard. 2014. “Idaho’s sewer system: As big ag flourishes, the Snake River suffers.” *High Country News*, 46(13): 10-17.

In class video: Big River

4. Thursday, Feb. 1 – What’s keeping the industrial system in place?

Read Section Two (Pp. 45-59) regarding the eight “lock-ins” in the following report:

IPES-Food. 2016. *From Uniformity to Diversity: A Paradigm Shift from Industrial Agriculture to Diversified Agroecological Systems*. International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems.

5. Tuesday, Feb. 6 – Pig Tales Pp. 15-82

6. Thursday, Feb. 8 – Pig Tales Pp. 85-145

7. Tuesday, Feb. 13 – Pig Tales Pp. 146-216

8. Thursday, Feb. 15 – Pig Tales Pp. 217 - 278

9. Tuesday, Feb. 20 – Work Session

10. Thursday, Feb. 22 – ESSAY #1 DUE

PART TWO: TRANSFORMATIONS

11. Tuesday, Feb. 27 – Historical roots of sustainable agriculture and food movements

Allen, Patricia. 2004. “Perspectives of alternative agrifood movements.” Pp. 21-49 in *Together at the Table: Sustainability and Sustenance in the American Agrifood System*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

12. **Thursday, Mar. 1** – *A Precautionary Tale* Pp. ix – 44
13. **Tuesday, Mar. 6** – *A Precautionary Tale* Pp. 45 – 94
14. **Thursday, Mar. 8** – *A Precautionary Tale* Pp. 95 – 152
15. **Tuesday, Mar. 13** – *A Precautionary Tale*. Pp. 153 – 199

In class: Web Conference with Philip Ackerman-Leist.

16. **Thursday, Mar. 15** – TBD

WEEK OF MARCH 26 – SPRING BREAK

17. **Tuesday, Mar. 20** – *Growing a Revolution* Pp. 9-50
18. **Thursday, Mar. 22** – *Growing a Revolution* Pp. 51-114
19. **Tuesday, April 3** – *Growing a Revolution* Pp. 115 -165
20. **Thursday, April 5** – *Growing a Revolution* Pp. 166-219
21. **Tuesday, April 10** – *Growing a Revolution* Pp. 220-284
22. **Thursday, April 12** – Work Session
23. **Tuesday, April 17** – ESSAY #2 DUE
24. **Thursday, April 19** – TBD
25. **Tuesday, April 24** – Final presentations
26. **Thursday, April 26** – Final presentations
27. **Tuesday, May 1** – Final presentations
28. **Thursday, May 3** – FINAL EXERCISES DUE

Final: Our scheduled final exam period is Tuesday, May 10 at 8:00 – 10:00. We will NOT have a final exam. We will, however, schedule a **final potluck and gathering**.