

# SOCI 24603–01: Food, ecology and society

Semester: Fall 2013

Class Time: MWF 11-11:50 AM

Class Location: Williams Hall (WH) 218

Instructor: Dr. Marion Dixon

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Office Location & Hrs: WH 119H, M 12-1pm



## Course Description

Where does our food come from? In what ways has agriculture and the production and consumption of food changed in the modern era? How does the study of food help us understand what we call ‘society’? *This course will explore the issue of the relationship between food production and consumption and modern global society.*

Agriculture and the production and consumption of food have transformed drastically, although not uniformly, on a worldwide scale, particularly during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, these drastic changes took shape long before and reflect larger political, social and ecological processes of colonial conquest and rule and capitalist development. In this course we will explore the intersections of food systems, ecosystems and societies in four sections: 1) introductions to the global food system and its crises, 2) histories of industrial agriculture in the industrialized world, 3) the roots of a bifurcated system – of hunger and abundance, and 4) institutional and grassroots responses to the system’s failures.

We will begin unpacking the long histories of food transformations through an exploration of where our food comes from and how (and with what consequences) it reaches our plates. We will seek to define the ‘global food system’, and will ask how our food is a part of this system.

We will investigate the rise of industrial agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the implications of these changes in the industrialized world on family farming, the culture of food, plant and animal species diversity, contamination of waterways, soils and crops, and greenhouse gas emissions. Through a case study of McDonalds and larger processes that have been termed ‘McDonalidization’ in the US, we will examine the post-industrial production model and how it has transformed not only what we eat but labor systems within the transnational food industry and the culture of food in the US. Further, we will focus on the

prominent place of animal protein in the industry and the social and ecological consequences of industrial animal agriculture.

The topic of industrial agriculture will be a starting point for analyzing the global food system. We will follow the role of colonialism and industrial agriculture in developing this system. Then, we will investigate the role of food aid and Green Revolution technology transfers from the industrialized world to newly independent states in the postcolonial period. Finally, we will focus our study of the global food system on the liberalization of agriculture and food in the current era. Specific issues related to the liberalization of agriculture and food that we will address include: the growing gap in the quantity and quality of food consumption within countries and between the global North and the global South, deforestation, water stress, climate change vulnerabilities, the disappearance of pollinating bees, and the dispossession of smallholders from land and resources.

Lastly, we will explore the institutional and civil society responses to the global system that promise to offer a remedy or alternative to the system. We will discuss and debate the ‘global land grab’ as a response to the rising price of food and oil, as well as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. We will critique the ‘right eating’ movement in the US, including organics and fair trade. More broadly, we will address food justice movements and what a sustainable food system would look like.

This course includes active discussion, multimedia presentations, films, at least one guest speaker [date of visit to class TBA] and special events [TBA]. Regular written responses and exercises to class readings and to the three films shown in class are required. There will be two short essays on designated course subject matter, and one final essay that will be on a related subject of your choice. The final essay writing process will involve a peer review workshop and a final project presentation during the last week of classes. The midterm exam will be in class and in a short response format.

### **Required Materials**

There are two required texts for this course:

Millstone, E. and T. Lang. *The Atlas of Food: Who Eats What, Where, and Why* [University of California Press, 2008]

Weis, Tony. *The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming*. [Fernwood Publishing, 2007]

Additional readings (**AR**) will be available on the class website on Sakai under the Resources tab, or will be accessed directly online (with the web addresses provided in the schedule listed below).

### **Course Expectations**

*My responsibilities:* I will make expectations clear – for each assignment, in-class work, and exam. I will arrive on time and will facilitate discussion in class. I will make myself available for questions and consultations during office hours and by appointment. I will respond promptly to emails and to graded assignments. I will be respectful of you and of the class.

*Your responsibilities:* I expect that you arrive on time and are prepared to engage with the readings for each class. I expect that you have read and have attempted to think critically

about all the assigned readings. And I expect that you complete assignments on time, and be respectful of all those in this course.

*Course evaluation:* The final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Participation	8 points
Film worksheets (3 films, 4 points each)	12
In-class writings and homework	15
Short essays (2 essays, 10 points each)	15
Midterm exam – in class	20
Final exam – take home and in class	<u>30</u>
	<b>100 points total</b>

*Class participation:* I will assess your attendance and participation in class. Come to class prepared to discuss the course material. And be prepared to listen to and learn from others' contributions. **Bring texts with you to class when possible.**

*Film worksheets:* We will watch three films in this course, and you will be required to complete a worksheet that assesses your understanding of the film and how it relates to the course material. This worksheet will be due by the beginning of the class following the showing of the film.

*In-class writings and homework:* Most of these assignments will involve answering questions and some will involve analytical exercises on course material. I will assign them throughout the semester to evaluate your understanding of the readings and lectures. They will be marked as 'done' or 'undone'.

*Short essays:* Each essay will be no more than 2 pages, double spaced.

- Essay 1 – Take a food that you ate this week – e.g. an orange, a burrito. Investigate how it is part of the global food system. Address 2 of the 4 social categories in developing a global perspective of your food:
- Labor. For example, who labors on the farms that produce that food? Who is working in the supermarket or eatery where you bought the food?
  - Ecology. For example, what are the food's 'food miles' (i.e. how many miles did it take from farm to plate)? More broadly, what is the ecological footprint of that food's consumption?
  - Culture. For example, what is the history that brought that food to this part of the world at this present moment? Which socio-economic and/or generational groups generally eat this food?
  - Power. For example, who controls the farm-plate chain that made this food a commodity? Which company or individual extracts much of the value from that commodity's sale?
- Essay 2 – During a two to three week period examine the news media (e.g. editorial columns, magazine articles) that relate to food. What connections are drawn or assumptions made about the relationship between food and weight? Are there conflicting relationships drawn? What kinds of food do they promote? What images are drawn of the 'acceptable body'? How do these messages affect how you feel about what you eat and how you look?

*Midterm exam – in class:* The midterm will be a short answer essay that you will take and complete in class. You will also be required to define and/or use concepts that are addressed in the course and are central to the subject matter.

*Final essay – take home and in class:* The final exam assignment will also test your knowledge of concepts that have been focal points in the course. There will be a combination of take home and in class components of the exam that will total 30 points of your final grade.

*Note on Special Events:* During the semester there will be opportunities [TBA] to attend and reflect on related events outside of class. You will be required to attend and write reflections on two out of three of these special events. Your written reflections will be marked ‘done/undone’ and will be part of your in-class writing and homework grade.

**\*\* Submitting your assignments \*\*** All assignments completed out of the classroom will be submitted on Sakai. Each assignment will have a form on the course website in Sakai through which to submit/upload your completed assignment.

**Consequences for not meeting expectations**

- 1) Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed three unexcused absences from class during the semester. On the fourth, you will be dropped from the class. Tardiness (or early departures) result in deductions from the participation component of your final grade.
- 2) Late submissions: If you will not be able to submit an assignment on time, I advise that you seek permission for a late submission the day prior to the due date. I will then determine if I will accept your late submission with or without a penalty. Deductions for all unexcused late submissions are the following:

<u>Days late</u>	<u>Deduction</u>
Within the day of the deadline	½ grade
Next day	1 grade
3 <sup>rd</sup> day	<i>will not accept</i>

Final grades will be calculated using the following ranges:

100-97	A+	96.9-93	A	92.9-90	A-		
89.9-87	B+	86.9-84	B	83.9-80	B-		
79.9-77	C+	76.9-74	C	73.9-70	C-		
69.9-67	D+	66.9-64	D	63.9-60	D-	60 or below	F

**Academic Honesty** (*adapted from Dr. Rebecca Plante*): I believe that students do their own work and learn from their own mistakes and successes. Any form of dishonesty hurts the environment for learning. Rather than having you turn in work that involves cheating (using unauthorized assistance for an academic exercise), fabrication (inventing false citations), unauthorized academic recycling (submitting a paper already turned in for another class), or plagiarism (using other peoples words as your own), I would prefer to have a frank conversation with you, offer an extension or assistance, and find some other way for you to succeed. The consequences for engaging in academic dishonesty may include failing the course. If you have any doubts about this, please speak with me or consult section 7.1.4 in

Ithaca College's Policy Manual on Academic Honesty at <http://www.ithaca.edu/attorney/policies/vol7/index.htm>. Also, here is a link to a useful tutorial about plagiarism: [http://www.ithacalibrary.com/research/plag/plag.php?page\\_id=1](http://www.ithacalibrary.com/research/plag/plag.php?page_id=1)

**Getting the support you need:** Mental health troubles, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with your academic performance. The source of symptoms might be related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. Problems with relationships, family worries, loss, personal struggles or crises can also impact your academic performance. Ithaca College provides a Counseling Center to support the academic success of students. Its cost-free services can help you manage personal challenges that threaten your well-being. If I believe you need additional support, I will express my concerns and the reasons for them, and remind you of resources (e.g., Counseling Center, Health Center, chaplains, etc.) that might be helpful to you. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available.

**Services for Students with Disabilities:** "In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Students must register with Student Disability Services and provide appropriate documentation to Ithaca College before any academic adjustment will be provided."

## Course Schedule

*This schedule and readings may be modified if necessary.*

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### Part one. Studying and understanding food

By the end of this section of the course, you should be able to answer these questions:

- What are different ways of studying and understanding food and food systems from a sociological perspective?
  - How does food offer a lens on our society today and on social change generally?
  - How can the ‘global food system’ be defined? And how is the food that you eat a part of it?
  - What does it mean that the system is ‘in crisis’? How do we know?
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### Week 1. Introductions: Where does your food come from? Why is it on your plate? How did your food get there? And when did you begin consuming it?

Wednesday 8/28      *1<sup>st</sup> Day (no readings!)*

Friday 8/30            *Readings:*  
• Weis, Preface  
• Millstone and Lang, Introduction

### Week 2. The global food system

Monday 9/2            Labor Day – no class

Wednesday 9/4      *Readings:*  
• Weis, Ch. 1: The global food economy: contradictions and crises  
• Millstone and Lang, Part I: Contemporary Challenges (Maps: 1. Current Concerns, 2. Feeding the World, 3. Unequal Distribution)

Friday 9/6            *Readings*  
• (AR) Friedmann (1999), ‘Remaking “Traditions”’: How we eat, what we eat and the changing political economy of food’, in *Women Working the Nafta Food Chain: women, food and globalization*

### Week 3. A global food crisis?

Monday 9/9            *Readings:*  
• Millstone and Lang, Part I: Contemporary Challenges (Maps: 4. Environmental Challenges, 5. Water Pressure, 6. Nutritional Deficiencies, 7. Over-Nutrition, 8. Contamination)

Wednesday 9/11      **Short Essay 1 Assignment due**

*Readings:*  
• Wines (2013), ‘Mystery Malady Kills More Bees, Heightening Worry on Farms’, in *New York Times*, available here:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/29/science/earth/soaring-bee->

[deaths-in-2012-sound-alarm-on-malady.html?pagewanted=all&r=1](http://deaths-in-2012-sound-alarm-on-malady.html?pagewanted=all&r=1)

Watch in class: “Queen of the Sun”

Friday 9/13

Continue to watch: “Queen of the Sun”

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## **Part Two. Industrial agriculture, the environment, and culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

By the end of this section of the course, you should be able to answer these questions:

- What is the ‘Columbian Exchange’? How did it inform processes that industrialized agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries?
  - How, when, and why did agriculture become industrialized in North America and Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
  - What were the processes and institutions through which transnational corporations (TNCs) grew economically and politically within agriculture?
  - How are industrial agricultural systems constitutive of larger processes of ‘McDonaldization’?
  - In what ways have industrial agricultural systems contributed to environmental degradation and ecological crises?
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### **Week 4. The rise of industrial agriculture and a growing food industry**

Monday 9/16

**Film worksheet due**

*Readings:*

- (AR) Earle (2012), ‘The Columbian Exchange’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*

Wednesday 9/18

*Readings:*

- Weis, Ch. 2: ‘The temperate grain-livestock complex’ (*only pp. 47-70*)

Friday 9/20

*Readings:*

- Weis, Ch. 2: ‘The temperate grain-livestock complex’ (*finish ch. – pp. 70-88*)

### **Week 5. McDonaldization and Meatification**

Monday 9/23

*Readings:*

- (AR) Ritzer (2010), ‘An Introduction to McDonaldization’, in *McDonaldization: The Reader*, only pp. 3-19
- Millstone and Lang, Part II: Farming (Map: 9. Mechanization, 10. Industrial Livestock Production)

Wednesday 9/25

*Readings:*

- (AR) Barndt, Ch. 3: 'Arch Deluxe with a Smile: Women never stop at McDonalds', in *Tangled Routes: Women, Work, and Globalization on the Tomato Trail*, only pp. 82-100

Friday 9/27

*Readings:*

- Millstone and Lang, Part II: Farming (Maps: 11. Animal Feed, 12. Animal Diseases)
- Parker, 'How poultry producers are ravaging the rural South', grist.org, available here: <http://grist.org/article/parker1/>
- (AR) Pew Commission, *Putting Meat on the Table: Industrial Farm Animal Production in America: Executive Summary*

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### **Part Three. The global food system**

By the end of this section of the course, you should be able to answer these questions:

- How were both European colonial rule and the industrialization of agriculture in the industrialized world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries precursors to the system?
  - What has the liberalization of agriculture and food involved during the past three or more decades?
  - What are some of the effects of liberalization on smallholder farming systems? And how are smallholders responding to these changes?
  - How is the world divided into 'one of plenty' and 'one of want'? How are hunger and overabundance related?
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### **Week 6. Colonialism, the industrialization of agriculture, and the making of the Third World**

Monday 9/30

*Readings:*

- Weis, Ch. 3: 'From colonialism to global market integration in the South' (*only pp. 89-116*)

Wednesday 10/2

*Readings:*

- M. Davis (2002), 'Origins of the Third World,' *The Corner House*, 27, 'Introduction' through 'Bad Climate or Bad System?'. Available at: [www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/item.shtml?x=51983](http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/item.shtml?x=51983)

Friday 10/4

*Readings:*

- Weis, Ch. 3: 'From colonialism to global market integration in the South' (*finish rest of ch. – pp. 116-127*)

### **Week 7. Liberalization of agriculture and food**

Monday 10/7

**Mid-term exam – in class**

Wednesday 10/9

*Readings:*

- Millstone and Lang, Part 3: Trade (Maps: 24. Trade Flows, 26. Subsidized Trade, 28. Trade Dependency)
- Weis, Ch. 4: 'Entrenching an uneven playing field: the multilateral regulation of agriculture' (*only pp. 128-138*)

Friday 10/11                      *Watch in class:* The Dark Side of Chocolate

## **Week 8. The death of smallholder farming?**

Monday 10/14                      **Film worksheet due**

*Readings:*

- Millstone and Lang, Part II: Farming (Maps: 13. Agricultural R&D, 14. Genetically Modified Crops, 15. Pesticides, 16. Fertilizers)
- (AR) Rosset (2006), Introduction and Ch. 4 of *Food is Different: Why We Must Get the WTO Out of Agriculture*

Wednesday 10/16

*Readings:*

- Millstone and Lang, Part II: Farming (Maps: 17. Working the Land, 18. Land Ownership, 21. Agricultural Biodiversity)
- (AR) Via Campesina (2012), *Combatting Monsanto. Grassroots resistance to the corporate power of agribusiness in the era of the 'green economy' and a changing climate*

Friday 10/18

Fall Break – no class

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## **Week 9. 'Stuffed and starved': a world of plenty and a world of want**

Monday 10/21

*Readings:*

- Millstone and Lang, Part 4: Processing, Retailing and Consumption (Maps: 30. Staple Foods, 31. Changing Diets, 32. Processing Giants, 33. Retail Power)
- (AR) Mintz (2002), 'Eating American' in *Food in the USA*

Wednesday 10/23

*Readings:*

- (AR) FAO (2010), *The State of Food Insecurity in the World: Addressing food insecurity in protracted crises*, only pp. 4-24
- (AR) Shiva (2002), 'Food and Water' in *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit*

Friday 10/25

*Readings:*

- Weis, Ch. 4: 'Entrenching an uneven playing field: the multilateral regulation of agriculture' (*finish rest of ch. – pp. 138-160*)

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## **Part Four. Alternatives to the global food system?**

By the end of this section of the course, you should be able to answer these questions:

- What are some of the institutional responses to the crises of the global food system?
  - In what ways do these responses offer promise and in what ways do they perpetuate structural problems of the system?
  - What are some of the responses among civil society that offer an alternative to the system? What is 'alternative' about the programs and policies that they are promoting?
  - How could a sustainable food system be built? And what would it look like?
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## **Week 10. Responses to crises: part I**

Monday 10/28

*Readings:*

- (AR) McMichael (2012), 'The Sustainability Project', in *Development and Social Change*

Wednesday 10/30

*Readings:*

- (AR) Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) (2009), *AGRA: Early Accomplishments, Foundations for Growth*
- (AR) ActionAid (2009), *Assessing the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa*, only pp.11-22

Friday 11/1

*Readings:*

- GRAIN (2012), *Slideshow: Who's behind the land grabs?* Available at: <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4576-slideshow-who-s-behind-the-land-grabs>
- (AR) World Bank (2011), *Rising Global Interest in Farmland: Can It Yield Sustainable and Equitable Benefits?* (only 'Overview')

## **Week 11. Responses to crises: part II**

Monday 11/4

*Readings:*

- Millstone and Lang, Maps: 22. Organic Farming, 23. Greenhouse Gases, 29. Fair Trade
- (AR) Raynolds (2006), 'The Organic and Fair Trade Movements: Fostering Global Ecological Sustainability and Social Justice', *Optimist Magazine*, October

Wednesday 11/6

*Readings:*

- Levitt (2012), 'How Fairtrade bananas are failing migrant workers', *The Guardian*, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/may/28/fair-trade-food>
- Corporate Watch, 'From 'back to the land' to Corporate Organic', available at: <http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=4005>

Friday 11/8

*Readings:*

- Holt-Gimenez, 'Emergence: Mayan Roots, Mexican Branches, Nicaraguan Fruit', in *Campesina a Campesina: Voices from Latin America's Farmer to Farmer Movement for Sustainable Agriculture*, pp. 1-23

## **Week 12. The politics of obesity**

Monday 11/11

*Readings:*

- Millstone and Lang, Maps: 34. Organic Food, 35. Food Additives, 36. Eating Out, 37. Fast Food

- (AR) Nestle (2007), Introduction: ‘The Food Industry and “Eat More”’, in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*, pp. 1-30

Wednesday 11/13

*Readings:*

- (AR) Guthman (2011), ‘Whose Problem is Obesity?’ in *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism*

Friday 11/15

*Readings:*

- Wann (2013), ‘Big deal: You can be fat and fit’, *CNN.com*, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/03/opinion/wann-fat-and-fit-study>
- (Check out the website) Health at Every Size – <http://www.haescommunity.org/>

*Listen in class: NPR (2011), ‘Large Women in the Lens of Leonard Nimoy’*

### **Week 13. Food Justice Movements**

Monday 11/18

*Readings:*

- Millstone and Lang, Map 40. Citizens Bite Back
- (AR) ActionAid/Food First (2009), *Smallholder Solutions to Hunger, Poverty and Climate Change*, only pp. 7-25
- (Check out the website) Via Campesina – <http://viacampesina.org/en/>

Wednesday 11/20

**Short Essay 2 Assignment due**

*Readings:*

- (AR) Gottlieb and Joshi (2010), Ch. 9: ‘A New Food Politics’, in *Food Justice*

Friday 11/22

*Readings:*

- ‘The Local Food Movement’ (2006), in *Ithaca Blog*, available at: <http://ithaca-blog.blogspot.com/2006/11/local-food-movement.html>
- (AR) Halloran (2013), ‘From Field to Flour’, in *Edible Finger Lakes*, Winter

Thanksgiving Week – no classes

Monday 11/25 – Friday 11/29

### **Week 14. A sustainable food system – what would it look like?**

Monday 12/2

*Readings:*

- (AR) Lang et al (2009), ‘Defining food policy’ in *Food Policy: Integrating health, environment and society*, only pp. 253-278

*Watch in class: Growing Change: A Journey Inside Venezuela’s Food Revolution (2011)*

Wednesday 12/4

**Film worksheet due**

*Readings:*

- (AR) Lang et al (2009), 'Defining food policy' in *Food Policy: Integrating health, environment and society* (finish rest of chapter – pp. 278-295)

Friday 12/6

*Readings:*

- 'Sitopia: A new model for feeding the world's expanding cities', available from: <http://designmind.frogdesign.com/articles/the-substance-of-things-not-seen/sitopia.html>
- The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center virtual tour, <http://radixcenter.org/virtual-tours-of-sustainable-systems/>

**Week 15. Conclusions and evaluations**

Monday 12/9 – Friday 12/13