

Mt Allison University
Department of Geography and Environment

GENV 3991: GLOBALIZING FOOD SYSTEMS

Instructor: Dr. Kristen Lowitt

Class time: Monday 1:30-4:20 pm. Flemington 103. Office hours: 10:30-1:30 before class each Monday.

Email: klowitt@mta.ca

Office: Avard Dixon 311

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The geography of food has become a key area of research in the discipline of geography. Debates on the globalization of food, the role of supermarkets, the development potential of fair trade and the risks of genetically modified organisms have all made the topic of food geographies relevant. Globalization of Food is a course on the production and consumption of food at global and local scales. The course examines how food production has become increasingly globalised and industrialised. Recent alternatives to the industrialisation and globalization of food are explored through local food initiatives, fair trade, and organic food. The course will draw on an extensive and growing geographical literature on food in both developed and developing country contexts.

PREREQUISITES

Third year standing

COURSE FORMAT

The course is based on a combination of lectures, seminar-style discussion, and activities. The last week of the course will involve student presentations. It is important you attend all of the lectures. The course is designed in a way that if you miss one or more sessions you will lose the thread of the course.

COURSE TEXT

Koc, Sumner, & Winson, Eds. (2017). *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies: Second Edition*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. (Available for purchase in the bookstore).

The course text will be supplemented with relevant journal articles each week.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to globalizing food systems
September 11, 2017

This week provides an introduction to the concept of globalization and thinking about what this means for food systems.

Readings:

Course outline

Chapters 1 & 9 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies

Goodman, D. & Watt, M. Global appetite, local metabolism: nature, culture, and industry in *fin-de-siècle* agro-food systems. In *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*, edited by David Goodman and Michael J. Watts. Read pages 1-16. (Available as an e-book through the Mt Allison library)

Week 2: Understanding food through global value chain analysis September 18, 2017

Global value chain analysis has become an important methodological framework for understanding global food networks. Students will be introduced to how to do a value chain analysis. Within this discussion of value chains, particular attention will be paid to buyer-driven food chains and the role of supermarkets.

Readings:

Chapter 2 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies

Gereffi, G., Lee, J. & Christian, M. (2009). US-based food and agricultural value chains and their relevance to healthy diets. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 4, 357-374.

Week 3: Food localization September 25, 2017

The industrialisation and globalization of the food system is being challenged by the shift to local food systems. A key concern for consumers involves finding more about where and how their food was produced. The academic literature provides interesting insights on what the local means.

To take a look at food localization in New Brunswick **our class this week will be a trip to Nature's Route Farm**, where operator Kent Coates will give us a tour and speak to us about his farm business including Community Support Agriculture program. We will meet at our regular class time to catch the bus to the farm. A meeting location will be posted on Moodle.

Readings:

Chapters 21 & 22 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies

Feagan, R. (2007). The place of food: mapping out the 'local' in local food systems. *Progress in Human Geography* 31(1), 23-42, 33-42.

Week 4: Ethics and welfare in animal agriculture (guest lecture) October 2, 2017

This week will feature guest lecturer Kerrie Blaise, Legal Counsel with the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Professor, Animal Law at Durham College who will present on questions of ethics and welfare in animal agriculture. She will consider: what provincial and federal laws govern welfare for farm animals? Are these regulations sufficiently adapted to

support production practices at various scales? What is the impact of animal legislation on consumers? This class will be interactive involving a combination of lecture and hands-on activities.

Readings:

Chapter 11 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies

Week 5: No class - Thanksgiving
October 9, 2017

Week 6: Food and Culture
October 16, 2017

People use food to define themselves as individuals, groups and entire societies. This week, we will focus on food and culture from an Indigenous perspective. Our class will be hosted by Doreen Richards, Indigenous Affairs Coordinator in the Mawita'mkw in the WMSC Room 130.

Readings:

Chapters 3 & 14 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies

Week 7: Organic food – alternative or conventional?
October 23, 2017

This week we look at the debate over organic agriculture: Does it offer a real alternative to the current food system, or is it just being incorporated into and serve to perpetuate the industrial agri-food system?

Readings:

Chapter 16 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies

Guthman, J. (2004). The trouble with 'organic lite' in California: A rejoinder to the 'conventionalisation' debate. *Sociologia Ruralis* 44(3), 301-316.

Week 8: Fair trade and development
October 30, 2017

The fair trade movement represents an important challenge to the global food system by seeking to re-embed international commodity production and distribution in more equitable social relations. We will examine the origins of the fair trade movement, some fair trade initiatives, and consider the extent to which this movement constitutes a real solution to some of the problems posed by the global food system.

Readings:

Renard, M. (1999). The interstices of globalization: The example of fair coffee. *Sociologia Ruralis* 39(4), 484-99.

Week 9: No class – Fall Break
November 6, 2017

Week 10: Farming and fishing livelihoods
November 13, 2017

Agriculture and fisheries are vital to rural and coastal livelihoods. We will look at trends in farming and fishing livelihoods in Canada and beyond, and consider some of the challenges facing small-scale producers and harvesters in the context of a globalizing food system.

Readings:
Chapters 10 & 12 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies

Week 11: Food environments and the cultural politics of food and eating
November 20, 2017

With concerns mounting about diet-related chronic diseases and obesity, a growing body of research is emphasizing a shift from an individual focus on health to the structural constraints influencing eating. At the same time, more work is critically examining the cultural politics surrounding food and eating. This week we think about the different types of food environments we encounter in our daily lives and the politics of eating.

Readings:
Chapters 5 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies
Guthman, J. & Dupuis, M. (2006). Embodying neoliberalism: economy, culture, and the politics of fat. *Environment and Planning D* 24(3), 427-448.

Week 12: Food security in developing and developed world contexts
November 27, 2017

Food security has become a pressing social and public issue relevant to all governments, sectors, and citizens both in Canada and globally. We will examine the concept of food security and different approaches to food security in developed and developing country contexts. We will also look at the rise of the more recent idea of food sovereignty.

Readings:
Chapters 15, 18, & 24 Critical Perspectives in Food Studies

Week 13: GMOs- solution to food insecurity or Frankenfoods?
December 4, 2017

Genetically modified foods have given rise to a contested arena in which governments, citizens, and corporations contend with conflicting scientific findings and ethical dilemmas. We will look at biotechnology as it has been applied to food production and the controversies it has generated.

Readings:

Chapter 17 Critical Perspective in Food Studies

Krimsky, S. (2002). Ethical issues involving the production, planting, and distribution of genetically modified crops. In B. Bailey and M. Lappe (Eds.), *Engineering the Farm: Ethical and social aspects of agricultural biotechnology* (pp.11-26). London, UK: Island Press. (Posted on Moodle).

Week 13 continued: In-class Presentations
Tuesday December 5, 2017

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Students will receive 20% of their grade by Friday October 27th.

Final exam (25%): 3 hour exam, 5-7 questions, answer three. Will take place during the scheduled examination period.

Research paper (30%): Students will prepare a research paper on an aspect of food geographies. There are three ways you may approach the paper:

- Research a food: Undertake a value chain analysis, or explore changing cultural meanings/politics surrounding the food.
- Research a food policy: Assess its implications for the production and consumption of food in one or more case studies.
- Research a food issue: Look at the debate surrounding it and how it is playing out in a particular place(s) (e.g. GMOs in Europe, food localism in Canada).

There are two evaluation components to the research paper:

1. A paper outline is due **October 16** (10%). The outline should include a research question, your main argument, and the key sources you plan to draw on to support your argument. The outline should be approximately 1000 words and include a bibliography of at least ten sources. These can be drawn from a variety of sources: books, academic journals, popular magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, government documents and data, archival material, etc. (please avoid citations from Wikipedia and encyclopedias). **At least half of these** should be scholarly books and articles.
2. The final paper is due **December 5** (20%). It should be approximately 3000 words (plus bibliography). It should have an **expanded bibliography** of at least fifteen sources, with at least half of these being academic sources. The paper will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- Problem Definition and Argument
 - The Introduction should clearly state the thesis (or pose a clear thesis question) and indicate how the thesis will be explored in the paper
- Research and Analysis
 - Selection of appropriate research sources
 - Good analysis of research sources used to address the research problem
 - Discusses the implications of the analysis and its relationship to the research problem
- Structure and Writing
 - Paper is well-organized
 - Jargon is not used
 - Avoids spelling and grammar errors
 - Correct attribution of sources through in-text citations with references listed in a bibliography at the end of the paper

During the last day of class on December 5th, students will deliver a 5-minute presentation on their research paper. The presentation is not assigned a grade but is a **mandatory** part of the assignment.

Written responses (10% x 3 = 30%): Three written responses (approximately 500 words each) are due throughout the term. Each response is worth 10%. You will be evaluated on your ability to communicate your ideas and perspectives on the questions asked, drawing on relevant class material.

Instructions and due dates:

1. **October 2:** This written response is due at the **start of class** on October 2. For this assignment, you are asked to respond to each of the following questions pertaining to the field trip to Nature’s Route Farm on September 25th:
 - a. What ideas from this field trip did you find most helpful to your thinking about global and local food systems?
 - b. What did you learn about agriculture in the Sackville area that you didn’t know before?
 - c. Drawing on the reading by Feagan (2004), how did you see the “local” represented in the farm we visited?

2. **Two times throughout the term:** You are responsible for submitting response papers that communicate your thoughts and position about the material covered in class (lecture/discussions/readings). The response papers are based on **two weeks of your choosing** (from September 11 – December 4, excluding the field trip on September 25th which is the topic of the response paper due on October 2). Each response paper is due at the **start of the following week’s class**. For example, if you want to submit a written response about food security on November 20th, this is due by the start of class on November 27th.

To assist you in developing your response, you may consider the following questions: what ideas did you find most helpful to your thinking about global and local food systems? Did the materials make you think about issues in a new way? How so? Did they reinforce your existing ideas? How so? What information did you disagree with and why?

Participation (15%): Your participation grade is based on regular class attendance / participation in class discussions (5%), being a reading discussant one time during the term (5%), and contributions to the 'food systems news and events' forum on Moodle (5%). In terms of this last component, I am asking you post and/or comment on a post at least 3 times throughout the term. I will be regularly updating this forum with food-related news and content.

COURSE POLICIES

(To be read in conjunction with the regulations in the Academic Calendar).

Readings

- You are expected to come to class having completed the weekly readings. All readings are clearly indicated in the course schedule.

Submitting work

- All class work is due via Moodle by the due dates indicated in the course schedule.
- You will receive feedback on written responses within two weeks of submission.
- Late submissions will not be accepted.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please approach me and/or the Meighen Centre for Learning Assistance and Research (62 York Street, 506-364-2527) as soon as possible. I will work with you and the Meighen Centre to ensure you can meet your learning goals.

Grade Conversion Table

The University operates an evaluation system that is based on letter grades (A, B, C, etc.) and a Grade Point Average System (GPA). All grades during the term will be marked on a percentage basis and only the final grade will be converted to a letter grade. For this course, the breakdown of final letter grades will be as follows:

Percentage Letter Grade
90-100 A+
85-89 A
80-84 A-
77-79 B+
73-76 B
70-72 B-

67-69 C+
63-66 C
60-62 C-
57-59 D+
53-56 D
50-52 D-
0-49 F

Withdrawal Date

The final date for withdrawal from this course is Tuesday, September 26th. Beyond this date, a “w” will appear on your academic record up until the start of the exam period.