

FS 345: Food Systems, Society and Policy

Tuesdays

10am-12:45pm

Marsh-Life Sciences 357/231

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Office hours: Thursdays 1-2:30pm and Fridays by appointment

This course examines key questions being asked about our contemporary food system through the lens of scholarship in the social sciences. After close consideration of how these questions are framed, researched and analyzed by social scientists (as well as some consideration of humanities scholarship), the class will go on to understand the implications for developing public policy that seeks to develop answers. The course will also involve a systematic investigation of the form and content of transdisciplinary research. This seminar style course will involve discussion, presentations, and collaborations with community partners. Requirements for the course include weekly short papers, a book review, class presentations and a group project and report.

Course Objectives:

1. To have students identify the structure of the contemporary food system, both as a set of parts and as a whole, as interconnected and interdependent.
2. To have students develop a systems thinking framework for analyzing our contemporary food system.
3. To have students understand the long term processes of globalization and the consequences for the food system.
4. To have students identify the primary assumptions of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities when considering food systems.
5. To have students consider the implications of these assumptions on research and analysis.
6. To be able to evaluate the rigor and effectiveness of social science and humanities research by considering such issues as breadth, depth, accuracy, appropriateness and relevance.
7. To have students work on a food systems issue integrating the perspectives and methods of the social sciences and humanities with systems thinking. This work will involve investigating leverage points for change in the context of the University of Vermont's food system.

Course Evaluation and Expectations:

I expect professional standards of behavior in the classroom. Cell phones and pagers should be turned off. Chronic tardiness is not acceptable. You are expected to come to class every week, and if you are sick you need to contact me directly. I will take attendance.

I expect participation from every student. The class is organized to promote dialogue and interaction. Seize the day.

All readings must be read completely before class. This is a graduate level seminar course. We will have much better and more meaningful discussions if everyone comes in prepared. If you don't understand a reading, bring in a list of questions – we can use them to begin our discussions.

I do not accept late assignments. Assignments need to be posted on Blackboard. The weekly papers are due by 10am on Tuesdays EXCEPT for the first paper. This paper is due on Friday, September 2 by 5pm.

All writing assignments should be typed and submitted in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with 1" margins.

All assignments need to satisfy the standards of academic integrity. *Plagiarism* (not attributing other people's ideas, arguments or phrases properly) and *cheating* will result in a failing grade.

Absences

If you will be missing a class due to the religious holiday, you should submit in writing by the end of the second full week of classes your documented religious holiday schedule for the semester. We will work out a means for you to complete the required work.

Required Course Texts:

Globalization: A Very Short Introduction by Manfred Steger
Oxford University Press: 2009, 2nd edition

Globalization and Food Sovereignty: Global and Local Change in the New Politics of Food Edited by Andree, Ayres, Bosia and Massicotte

Packet of course articles available on Blackboard.

Suggested Background Text:

Balancing on a Planet: The Future of Food and Agriculture by David A. Cleveland
[These books are also on Reserve at Bailey-Howe Library]

Course Assessment:

Class participation and attendance: 10%

Eight 2 page reading response papers on disciplinary approaches to food systems: 45%

Book review and presentation: 20%

Lunch Organization and Discussion: 5%

Final Presentation: UVM Dining Group Projects: 15%

Final Reflection Essay: 5%

Weekly Response Papers

Reading Responses due by class time on Tuesday, submitted through Blackboard.

There will be weekly reading-response papers. The reading-response papers must do the following:

1. Explain the main research question proposed by the author.
2. Summarize the main argument and/or conclusions of the author(s) in regards to the research question.
3. Summarize the main methods used to marshal claims to support and/or create the argument (certain types of data collection, qualitative or quantitative methods, use of primary sources, use of secondary sources, etc.).
4. Analysis:
 - a. Tell me the theories (or hypotheses) used to explain aspects of food or food systems more broadly.
 - b. Tell me where you find weaknesses or difficulty understanding the theories.
 - c. Tell me how the methods work or do not work in regards to the research question.
 - d. Tell me what would make the article more robust and/or more compelling.
 - e. You may do the above by comparing this author's theory, method and content with another food systems scholar from the curriculum or outside of it.

Book Review

You can submit the final version of your book review any time between November 1-21.

In this assignment, we will use your analysis of a monograph on a topic related to food, food systems and health to build a series of class discussions. You will continue the types of analysis used in the short papers and also add a specific disciplinary analysis and commentary.

Part One: Disciplinary Approaches to Globalization of the Food System

During the first part of the course, we will look closely and carefully consider the following broad questions about food, humans and the environment. We will consider these questions in two ways: one, we will all read short texts that will provide general background and/or help you develop a theory or method for understanding the question; two, we will read scholarly articles that attempt to answer the question. After the first three weeks, students will lead a discussion about the assigned articles. Group A leads discussion and writes a short analysis of those marked as A; Group B leads discussion and writes a short analysis of those marked as B.

Week One 8/30 What makes a food system (from production to consumption) interconnected and interdependent? What assumptions do we have about the food system and why?

Donella Meadows essay on leverage points in a system A and B

Berman and Johnson, *The Unintended Consequences of Changes in Beverage Options*, American Journal of Public Health **A and B**

First paper due by Friday, September 2 on the Berman and Johnson article

Lunch One with Rachel Johnson and Caylin McKee

Week Two 9/6: What is globalization? Why is it so important to a contemporary understanding of the food system? What is transdisciplinary research? How does writing reflect thinking?

Steger *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction Chapters 1-6 A and B Background and class close reading exercise*

Gehlert et.al. *The Importance of Transdisciplinary Research A and B*

Everyone writes a paper by Gehlert et.al. on Transdisciplinary Research due by 10am on September 6

Week Three 9/13: What is the Neolithic Revolution and why is it important? What is the Columbian Exchange and why is it important? How has movement and migration of plants, animals and people made an impact on the development of a global food system?

Case Study: Domestication, The Columbian Exchange, and Colonialism

Disciplinary Focus: History

Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Voyage, The Columbian Exchange and Their Historians A and B*

Columbian Exchange Primary Sources **A and B**

New York Times piece on Charles Mann and the Columbian Exchange

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/30/science/30tierney.html?_r=0

Everyone writes a paper on Crosby and the Columbian Exchange.

Week Four 9/20: What are global commodity food chains and why are they important?

Case Study: Coffee, Sugar and Chocolate

Disciplinary Focus: Anthropology

Sidney Mintz, *Introduction to Sweetness and Power A and B*

Catherine Tucker, Article on studying commodity chains by **A and B Background**

Anthropology in Practice web articles **A and B**

Infographics on coffee

Everyone writes a paper on Mintz, sugar, commodities and systems

Week Five 9/27: Why are the globalization of the food system and the capitalist economic system so interconnected? How are they interconnected? What is the difference between peasant food systems and commodity food systems?
Case Study: Peasant versus Commodity Production Systems
Disciplinary Focus: Economics

Hendrickson and Heffernan, *Consolidation Report for Oxfam* **A**
Scott, Chapter 1, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* **B**

Week Six 10/4 What are sustainable food systems? How do they get determined? Who gets to decide? How does sustainability function in a globalized food system?
Case Study: Local Foods
Disciplinary Focus: Geography
Born and Purcell, "*Food Systems and the Local Trap*" in *Food and Globalization* **B**
Leitch, *Slow Food and the Politics of Virtuous Globalization* **A**
Lunch One

Week Seven 10/11: What makes a food system sovereign and secure? How are local and global systems interdependent?
Case Study: Food Sovereignty
Disciplinary Focus: Political Science
Watch Eric Holt-Jimenez presentation at the Food Summit – **A AND B**
BACKGROUND
Introduction to *Globalization and Food Sovereignty* **A and B**
Each student picks one article from the edited volume to review and write an essay.
Lunch Discussion Two with Michael Bosia

Part Two: Disciplinary Approaches to Food and Health

During the second part of the course, we will look closely and carefully consider the following broad questions about food, humans and health. For one week we will use the article and short analysis paper format to explore these issues. For the next two weeks, we will use your individually chosen monographs as the base of our discussion. You will all give a Prezi presentation that combines an overview of the book with an investigation of specific food systems related questions.

Week Eight 10/18: How do we define healthy foods and who gets to decide? What is the relationship between inequality, health and food systems? What does it mean to have a healthy food system?
Case Study: Food Choice and Preparation
Disciplinary Focus: Public Health Nutrition and Anthropology

Shaefer et.al. *Healthy, Vague: Exploring Health as a Priority in Food Choice* **A**
Wolfson, et.al. *What Does Cooking Mean to You?* **B**

Hammer, et.al. *Perceptions of healthy eating in four Alberta communities: a photovoice project*
Hammer, B.A., Vallianatos, H., Nykiforuk, C.I.J. et al. *Agric Hum Values* (2015) 32:
649. C

Lunch Discussion Three with PhD students

Week Nine 10/25: Social Science, Humanities and Determining healthy foods and food systems – Book reviews and discussions of food systems and health

Review American Public Health position paper:

<https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/29/12/34/toward-a-healthy-sustainable-food-system>

Week Ten 11/1: Social Science, Humanities and Determining healthy foods and food systems – Book reviews and discussions of food systems and health

Book reviews are due any time between 11/1 and 11/21

Lunch Discussion Four with Meredith Niles about food, health and UVM policies

Part Three: Stakeholder Engagement and University Policy

Then we will begin a more focused inquiry into the possibilities for using the relationship between food systems values and food systems action to be integrated for systems change with a case of UVM Dining, the new residence hall, and food systems education across campus. You will work in groups to meet with stakeholders and design recommendations for successful integration of aims, goals, and actions.

Week Eleven 11/8 Project Review and Discussion – small group themes

Overview of University of Vermont policies related to food systems in terms of production versus consumption: Real Food Challenge, UVM Dining Innovation, Wellness Environment, Slow Food,

Review of New Dining Hall plans, propositions, organization, etc.

Meeting with Dennis DePaul, Alison Nihart and Melissa Zelazny

Week Twelve 11/15 Group Project Work

Building a strategy for reaching out to stakeholders; focus group scripts; intro to systems diagramming, etc.

Dining Hall research

Week Thirteen 11/29 Group Project Work

Stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

Week Fourteen 12/6 Final Presentations of Dining Hall Propositions

Final Reflections due Monday, December 12

Books for Book Review:

Melanie Dupuis, *Dangerous Digestion: The Politics of Dietary Advice*

Throughout American history, ingestion (eating) has functioned as a metaphor for interpreting and imagining this society and its political systems. Discussions of American freedom itself are pervaded with ingestive metaphors of choice (what to put in) and control (what to keep out). From the country's founders to the abolitionists to the social activists of today, those seeking to form and reform American society have cast their social-change goals in ingestive terms of choice and control. But they have realized their metaphors in concrete terms as well, purveying specific advice to the public about what to eat or not. These conversations about "social change as eating" reflect American ideals of freedom, purity, and virtue.

Drawing on social and political history as well as the history of science and popular culture, *Dangerous Digestion* examines how American ideas about dietary reform mirror broader thinking about social reform. Inspired by new scientific studies of the human body as a metabiome – a collaboration of species rather than an isolated, intact, protected, and bounded individual – E. Melanie DuPuis invokes a new metaphor – digestion – to reimagine the American body politic, opening social transformations to ideas of mixing, fermentation, and collaboration. In doing so, the author explores how social activists can rethink politics as inclusive processes that involve the inherently risky mixing of cultures, standpoints, and ideas.

Katherine Leonard, *How the Other Half Ate*

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, working-class Americans had eating habits that were distinctly shaped by jobs, families, neighborhoods, and the tools, utilities, and size of their kitchens – along with their cultural heritage. *How the Other Half Ate* is a deep exploration by historian and lecturer Katherine Turner that delivers an unprecedented and thoroughly researched study of the changing food landscape in American working-class families from industrialization through the 1950s.

Relevant to readers across a range of disciplines – history, economics, sociology, urban studies, women's studies, and food studies – this work fills an important gap in historical literature by illustrating how families experienced food and cooking during the so-called age of abundance. Turner delivers an engaging portrait that shows how America's working class, in a multitude of ways, has shaped the foods we eat today.

Alice Julier *Eating Together: Food, Friendship, and Inequality*

Sharing and enjoying food together is a basic human expression of friendship, pleasure, and community, and in *Eating Together: Food, Friendship, and Inequality*, sociologist Alice P. Julier argues that the ways in which Americans eat together play a central role in social life in the United States. Focusing on the experiences of African American and non-ethnic white hosts and guests, she explores the concrete pleasures of cooking as well as the discourses of food and sociability that shape the experience of shared meals. Delving into a wide range of research, Julier analyzes etiquette and entertaining books from the past century and conducts interviews and observations of dozens of dinner parties, potlucks, and buffets.

Kima Cargill, *The Psychology of Overeating*

Drawing on empirical research, clinical case material and vivid examples from modern culture, *The Psychology of Overeating* demonstrates that overeating must be understood as part of the wider cultural problem of consumption and materialism. Highlighting modern society's pathological need to consume, Kima Cargill explores how our limitless consumer culture offers an endless array of delicious food as well as easy money whilst obscuring the long-term effects of overconsumption.

The book investigates how developments in food science, branding and marketing have transformed Western diets and how the food industry employs psychology to trick us into eating more and more –

and why we let them. Drawing striking parallels between 'Big Food' and 'Big Pharma', Cargill shows how both industries use similar tactics to manufacture desire, resist regulation and convince us that the solution to overconsumption is further consumption. Real-life examples illustrate how loneliness, depression and lack of purpose help to drive consumption, and how this is attributed to individual failure rather than wider culture.

Rebecca O'Connell and Julia Brannen *Food, Families and Work*

With dual-working households now the norm, *Food, Families and Work* is the first comprehensive study to explore how families negotiate everyday food practices in the context of paid employment.

As the working hours of British parents are among the highest in Europe, the United Kingdom provides a key case study for investigating the relationship between parental employment and family food practices. Focusing on issues such as the gender division of foodwork, the impact of family income on diet, family meals, and the power children wield over the food they eat, the book offers a longitudinal view of family routines. It explores how the everyday meanings of food change as children grow older and negotiate changes in their own lives and those of their family members. Drawing on extensive quantitative data from large-scale surveys of food and diet – as well as qualitative evidence – to emphasise the larger global context of social and economic change and shifting patterns of family life, Rebecca O'Connell and Julia Brannen present a holistic overview of food practices within busy contemporary family lives.

Peter Jackson, *Anxious Appetites*

Despite government claims that food is safer and more readily available today than ever before, recent survey evidence demonstrates high levels of food-related anxiety among Western consumers. While chronic hunger and malnutrition are relatively rare in the West, food scares relating to individual products, concerns about global food security and other expressions of consumer anxiety about food remain widespread.

Anxious Appetites explores the causes of these present-day anxieties. Looking at fears over provenance and regulation in a world of lengthening supply chains and greater concentration of corporate power, Peter Jackson investigates how anxieties about food circulate and how they act as a channel for broader social issues. Drawing on case studies such as the 2013 horsemeat scandal and fears about the contamination of infant formula in China in 2008, he examines how and why these concerns emerge. Comparing survey results with ethnographic observation of consumer practice, he explores the gap between official advice about food safety and people's everyday experience of food, including a critique of ideological notions of 'consumer choice'.

Shelley Koch, *A Theory of Grocery Shopping*

A Theory of Grocery Shopping explores the social organization of grocery shopping by linking the lived experience of grocery shoppers and retail managers in the US with information transmitted by nutritionists, government employees, financial advisors, journalists, health care providers and marketers, who influence the way we think about and perform the work of shopping for a household's food.

The author provides insight into the contradictory messages that shape how consumers provision their households, and details how consumers respond to these messages. The book challenges the consumer choice model that places responsibility on the shopper for making the "right" choice at the grocery store, thereby ignoring the larger social forces at work, which determine what products are available and how they get to the shelves.

Julie Guthman, *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism*

Weighing In takes on the "obesity epidemic," challenging many widely held assumptions about its causes and consequences. Julie Guthman examines fatness and its relationship to health outcomes to ask if our efforts to prevent "obesity" are sensible, efficacious, or ethical. She also focuses the lens of obesity on the broader food system to understand why we produce cheap, over-processed food, as well as why we eat

it. Guthman takes issue with the currently touted remedy to obesity--promoting food that is local, organic, and farm fresh. While such fare may be tastier and grown in more ecologically sustainable ways, this approach can also reinforce class and race inequalities and neglect other possible explanations for the rise in obesity, including environmental toxins. Arguing that ours is a political economy of bulimia--one that promotes consumption while also insisting upon thinness--Guthman offers a complex analysis of our entire economic system.

Megan Carney, *The Unending Hunger*

Based on ethnographic fieldwork from Santa Barbara, California, this book sheds light on the ways that food insecurity prevails in women's experiences of migration from Mexico and Central America to the United States. As women grapple with the pervasive conditions of poverty that hinder efforts at getting enough to eat, they find few options for alleviating the various forms of suffering that accompany food insecurity. Examining how constraints on eating and feeding translate to the uneven distribution of life chances across borders and how "food security" comes to dominate national policy in the United States, this book argues for understanding women's relations to these processes as inherently biopolitical.

Emily Yates-Doerr, *The Weight of Obesity*

A woman with hypertension refuses vegetables. A man with diabetes adds iron-fortified sugar to his coffee. As death rates from heart attacks, strokes, and diabetes in Latin America escalate, global health interventions increasingly emphasize nutrition, exercise, and weight loss – but much goes awry as ideas move from policy boardrooms and clinics into everyday life. Based on years of intensive fieldwork, *The Weight of Obesity* offers poignant stories of how obesity is lived and experienced by Guatemalans who have recently found their diets – and their bodies – radically transformed. Anthropologist Emily Yates-Doerr challenges the widespread view that health can be measured in calories and pounds, offering an innovative understanding of what it means to be healthy in postcolonial Latin America. Through vivid descriptions of how people reject global standards and embrace fatness as desirable, this book interferes with contemporary biomedicine, adding depth to how we theorize structural violence. It is essential reading for anyone who cares about the politics of healthy eating.

Amy Bentley, *Inventing Baby Food*

Food consumption is a significant and complex social activity – and what a society chooses to feed its children reveals much about its tastes and ideas regarding health. In this groundbreaking historical work, Amy Bentley explores how the invention of commercial baby food shaped American notions of infancy and influenced the evolution of parental and pediatric care.

Until the late nineteenth century, infants were almost exclusively fed breast milk. But over the course of a few short decades, Americans began feeding their babies formula and solid foods, frequently as early as a few weeks after birth. By the 1950s, commercial baby food had become emblematic of all things modern in postwar America.

Today, baby food continues to be shaped by medical, commercial, and parenting trends. Baby food producers now contend with health and nutrition problems as well as the rise of alternative food movements. All of this matters because, as the author suggests, it's during infancy that American palates become acclimated to tastes and textures, including those of highly processed, minimally nutritious, and calorie-dense industrial food products.

Vaclav Smil, and Kazuhiko Kobayashi, *Japan's Dietary Transition*

In a little more than a century, the Japanese diet has undergone a dramatic transformation. In 1900, a plant-based, near-subsistence diet was prevalent, with virtually no consumption of animal protein. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Japan's consumption of meat, fish, and dairy had increased markedly (although it remained below that of high-income Western countries). This dietary transition was a key aspect of the modernization that made Japan the world's second largest economic power by the end of the twentieth century, and it has helped Japan achieve an enviable demographic primacy, with the world's highest life expectancy and a population that is generally healthier (and thinner) than that of other modern affluent countries. In this book, Vaclav Smil and Kazuhiko Kobayashi examine Japan's

gradual but profound dietary change and investigate its consequences for health, longevity, and the environment.

Smil and Kobayashi point out that the gains in the quality of Japan's diet have exacted a price in terms of land use changes, water requirements, and marine resource depletion; and because Japan imports so much of its food, this price is paid globally as well as domestically. The book's systematic analysis of these diverse consequences offers the most detailed account of Japan's dietary transition available in English.

Gottlieb and Joshi, Food Justice

In today's food system, farm workers face difficult and hazardous conditions, low-income neighborhoods lack supermarkets but abound in fast-food restaurants and liquor stores, food products emphasize convenience rather than wholesomeness, and the international reach of American fast-food franchises has been a major contributor to an epidemic of "globesity." To combat these inequities and excesses, a movement for food justice has emerged in recent years seeking to transform the food system from seed to table. In *Food Justice*, Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi tell the story of this emerging movement.

A food justice framework ensures that the benefits and risks of how food is grown and processed, transported, distributed, and consumed are shared equitably. Gottlieb and Joshi recount the history of food injustices and describe current efforts to change the system, including community gardens and farmer training in Holyoke, Massachusetts, youth empowerment through the Rethinkers in New Orleans, farm-to-school programs across the country, and the Los Angeles school system's elimination of sugary soft drinks from its cafeterias. And they tell how food activism has succeeded at the highest level: advocates waged a grassroots campaign that convinced the Obama White House to plant a vegetable garden. The first comprehensive inquiry into this emerging movement, *Food Justice* addresses the increasing disconnect between food and culture that has resulted from our highly industrialized food system.

Carolyn Mahoney, Health, Food and Social Inequality

Health, Food and Social Inequality investigates how vast amounts of consumer data are used by the food industry to enable the social ranking of products, food outlets and consumers themselves, and how this influences food consumption patterns.

This book supplies a fresh social scientific perspective on the health consequences of poor diet. Shifting the focus from individual behaviour to the food supply and the way it is developed and marketed, it discusses what is known about the shaping of food behaviours by both social theory and psychology. Exploring how knowledge of social identities and health beliefs and behaviours are used by the food industry, *Health, Food and Social Inequality* outlines, for example, how commercial marketing firms supply food companies with information on where to locate snack and fast foods whilst also advising governments on where to site health services for those consuming such foods disproportionately. Giving a sociological underpinning to Nudge theory while simultaneously critiquing it in the context of diet and health, this book explores how social class is an often overlooked factor mediating both individual dietary practice and food marketing strategies.

Jessica Hayes-Conroy, Savoring Alternative Food

Advocates of the alternative food movement often insist that food is our "common ground" – that through the very basic human need to eat, we all become entwined in a network of mutual solidarity. In this challenging book, the author explores the contradictions and shortcomings of alternative food activism by examining specific endeavours of the movement through various lenses of social difference – including class, race, gender, and age. While the solidarity adage has inspired many, it is shown that this has also had the unfortunate effect of promoting sameness over difference, eschewing inequities in an effort to focus on being "together at the table". The author explores questions of who belongs at the table

of alternative food, and who gets to decide what is eaten there; and what is at stake when alternative food practices become the model for what is right to eat? Case studies are presented based on fieldwork in two distinct loci of alternative food organizing: school gardens and slow food movements in Berkeley, California and rural Nova Scotia. The stories take social difference as a starting point, but they also focus specifically on the complexities of sensory experience – how material bodies take up social difference, both confirming and disrupting it, in the visceral processes of eating.

Kendra Smith-Howard, *Pure and Modern Milk, An Environmental History*

Dairy farm families, health officials, and food manufacturers have simultaneously stoked human desires for an all-natural product and intervened to ensure milk's safety and profitability," writes Kendra Smith-Howard. In *Pure and Modern Milk*, she tells the history of a nearly universal consumer product, and sheds light on America's food industry. Today, she notes, milk reaches supermarkets in an entirely different state than it had at its creation. Cows march into milking parlors, where tubes are attached to their teats, and the product of their lactation is mechanically pumped into tanks. Enormous, expensive machines pasteurize it, fortify it with vitamins, remove fat, and store it at government-regulated temperatures. It reaches consumers in a host of forms: as fluid milk, butter, ice cream, and in apparently non-dairy foods such as whey solids or milk proteins. Smith-Howard examines the cultural, political, and social context, discussing the attempts to reform the production and distribution of this once-perilous product in the Progressive Era, the history of butter between the world wars, dairy waste at mid-century, and the postwar landscape of mass production.