

## Getting from Field to Fork

ECON 3010 (4 credits / 60 hours)

International Honors Program (IHP)  
**Food Systems: Agriculture, Sustainability and Justice**

PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus represents a recent term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from term to term.

### Course Description

Throughout history, 'economy' has meant different things. Aristotle used the term to describe a household's social reproduction. Adam Smith used it to describe frugality, or the prudent use of resources. The modern use of the term to represent the relations of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services within a country did not arise until the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. But each of these conceptualizations of economy has something in common: they necessarily require thinking about interdependency in human and natural systems. Following Smith and other political economists, we often think of economic-ecological relations as being mediated by markets, but this wasn't always the case. How did markets – for land, labor, water, and crops, among other things – come into being? What extra-economic factors facilitated the creation and prominence of markets in agriculture and food systems?

In this course we will answer these questions, examining specific historical periods and economic practices that shape relations among countries, landowners and tenants, growers and manufacturers, producers and consumers, and subsistence and communal means of production. To understand these relationships, we will pay special attention to capitalist processes of enclosure, accumulation, commodification, and privatization. We'll examine the benefits of these processes as well as how people passively and actively resist them. And we will situate these processes in their colonial, neoliberal, and global contexts.

Our explorations of 'economy' are centered around agrifood systems: What economic factors contribute to food in/security? What economic models offer hope? And, for whom? Thus, we will pay close attention to how capitalist processes impact the daily lives of farm laborers, smallholder farmers, artisans, market vendors, city-dwellers, restaurant workers, cooks, and more. By considering economic questions from the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, this course will combine broad explanatory frameworks with economic processes that are unique to specific geographic locations and social positions.

## Course Goals

- Cultivate a community of respect, curiosity, and mutual support.
- Honor every member of our learning community as a whole human.
- Realize the ways in which we are all teachers *and* learners.
- Introduce students to capitalist processes which shape agrifood systems.
- Encourage students to embrace and grapple with uncertainty and complexity.
- Promote empathy, self-reflection, and critical thinking as complementary and mutually reinforcing learning skills.

## Learning Outcomes

- Identify, describe, and analyze major capitalist processes at work in global food systems.
- Explore the relationship between food systems, exploitation and the gendered division of labor.
- Develop methods for understanding the economics of food systems and food security that combine broad explanatory frameworks and unique lived experiences.
- Distinguish and compare ways in which economic processes play out in different geographical locations, social positions and across time.

## Course Requirements

### COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

#### Module 1: California (16 hours)

##### **SESSION 1: DO WE HAVE A “FARM POLICY”?**

Lehrer, Nadine (2018) U.S. Farm Bills and the ‘National Interest’: An Historical Research Paper, *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 1-9.

Holt-Gimenez, E. and H. Kleiner. (2019). What is parity? (And why you should care). Food First. <https://foodfirst.org/what-is-parity-and-why-you-should-care/>

##### **SESSION 2: WHO MAKES THE FARM WORK?**

Holmes, S. (2013). *Fresh fruit, broken bodies: Migrant farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 1: “Introduction: Worth Risking Your Life?” pp. 1-27. And Chapter 3: “Segregation on the Farm: Ethnic Hierarchies at Work” pp. 45-87.

##### **SESSION 3: SUBSIDIES AND SUPPORT**

Carlisle, L. et al. (2019). Transitioning to Sustainable Agriculture Requires Growing and Sustaining an Ecologically Skilled Workforce. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* Vol. 3, article 96.

\*Prep for GMO debate in class

*Recommended Additional Reading for USA Sessions:*

Pechlaner, G. and G. Otero (2015) “The Political Economy of Agriculture and Food in North America: Toward Convergence or Divergence?” in Alessandro Bonanno and

- Lawrence Busch (eds.) *Handbook of the International Political Economy of Agriculture and Food*, Northampton: Edward Elgar. pp. 131-155.
- Chepeliev, M. et al. (2018) How U.S. Agriculture Will Fare Under the USMCA and Retaliatory Tariffs, GTAP Working Paper No. 84. Available at SSRN: <https://www.gtap.agecon.purdue.edu/resources/download/9147.pdf>

## Module 2: Georgia (16 hours)

### **PRE-DEPARTURE: GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOR PROJECT (READ AT LEAST ONE)**

- Bernstein, Jennifer (2017) On Mother Earth and Earth Mothers: Why Environmentalism Has a Gender Problem, *Breakthrough Journal*, No. 7.
- Christie, Maria Elisa (2008) *Kitchenspace*, Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 27-41.
- Mies, Maria (2007) Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale – Revisited, *International Journal of Green Economics*, Vol. 1, No.3/4, pp. pp.268-275.

### **SESSION 1: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FAMILY FARM?**

- Daniel, P. (2013). Farmland blues: The legacy of USDA discrimination. *Southern Spaces*, October 30. <https://southernspaces.org/2013/farmland-blues-legacy-usda-discrimination>

\*TO LISTEN TO BEFORE SITE VISIT TO RESORA: Southern Foodways Alliance [podcast]. (2015). Fighting for the promised land: A story of farming and racism. Gravy, episode 29. <https://www.southernfoodways.org/gravy/fighting-for-the-promised-land-a-story-of-farming-and-racism-gravy-ep-29/>

\*TO WATCH BEFORE SITE VISIT TO RESORA: Arc of Justice FILM (20 min) <https://www.arcofjusticefilm.com/>

### **SESSION 2: CORPORATE CONSOLIDATION**

- Clapp, J. (2018) Mega-Mergers on the Menu: Corporate Concentration and the Politics of Sustainability in the Global Food System, *Global Environmental Politics*, 18:2, pp.12-33.
- Scott, C. (2018) Sustainably Sourced Junk Food? Big Food and the Challenge of Sustainable Diets, *Global Environmental Politics*, 18:2, pp. 93-113.

### **SESSION 3: GMO DEBATE: TRADE, AID AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- Zerbe, Noah (2004) Feeding the Famine? American Food Aid and the GMO Debate in Southern Africa, *Food Policy*, 29:6, pp. 593-608.
- Paarlberg, Robert (2014) A Dubious Success: The NGO Campaign Against GMOs, *GM & Food*, 5:3, pp. 223-228.
- \*Read the Team Position Papers

## Module 3: Ecuador (16 hours)

### **PRE-DEPARTURE: GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOR PROJECT (READ AT LEAST ONE)**

- Gibson-Graham, J.K. (1996) *The End of Capitalism (as We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Chapter 1: Strategies pp. 1-23.
- Collins, Jane (2013) "A Feminist Approach to Overcoming the Closed Boxes of the Commodity Chain," in Wilma A Dunaway (ed.) *Gendered Commodity Chains: Seeing*

*Women's Work and Households in Global Production*, Stanford University Press, pp. 27-37.

### **SESSION 1: INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Patel, R. (2013). The Long Green Revolution. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 40(1): 1-63.  
(Pages 1-26, 30-37 and 48-52 are required; you are encouraged to scan the full article available in Dropbox)

### **SESSION 2: WHO ARE SMALLHOLDER FARMERS?**

Popkin, S. (1979) *The Rational Peasant*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 1: pp.1-31.

### **SESSION 3: NEOLIBERALISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**

Ferguson, J. (2010). The Uses of Neoliberalism. *Antipode* 41(1): 166-184.  
Duggan, L. (2003). *The Twilight of Equality*. Introduction: p. ix-xxii.

## **Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

### **ASSESSMENT TASKS**

#### **Reading, preparation, and participation**

This course depends on you being prepared for class discussion. For each class, you should read the assigned readings, prepare one or two questions, and raise them in class. These may be clarifying, reflective, or provocative questions about the readings, and can relate to your experiences outside the classroom. You will be assessed based on your contribution to group discussions, including your questions and responses to peers' questions, as well as your active listening and sharing of air-time.

#### **Class writing**

These are writing exercises that I will use at the beginning of each class to assess reading comprehension. You will be asked to define concepts and/or connect the readings to larger class themes expressed in site visits and lectures. Each exercise will be no longer than 10 minutes.

#### **Project on the Gendered Division of Labor**

As we travel throughout the semester, note the gender dynamics that you see playing out in local economies. These can relate to power, privilege, family, etc. Try to identify the assumptions you made in noting these relations. As we move through each location, we will apply readings from feminist critical theory to provide conceptual and analytical frameworks to the gender dynamics that we are observing. You are expected to read at least one of the pre-departure readings for Georgia and Ecuador that will allow you to respond to the questions below. In Ecuador, we will take time to consider the gender dynamics observed across all three sites and the ways in which our own assumptions have been challenged through a final reflective project.

#### **Essay on Gender and Power:**

Identify a current, relevant issue with gender and food globally. Write a paper (at least 1000 words) analyzing the issue. What is the issue? How does it fit into current debates on food systems? Why look at this issue through the lens of gender? Why pick this issue?

**Due date: TBD**

**Ecuador Essay – Gender and the International System:**

Read at least two of the articles provided. How do global systems of production and trade relate to the social relationships that we see within families and communities? Explain how the argument of the author(s) that you chose applies to your observations of gendered relationships within Ecuador. Support your arguments with evidence from site visits, lectures and your own observations of the people you have encountered while traveling. Please use parenthetical citations and follow the citation guide provided in the course materials in Dropbox. Approximate length: 750 words.

**Due date: TBD**

**Final Gender Project:**

Cooking shows have become increasingly popular in the past fifty years. Although they first aired on public television in educational formats, today they often romanticize kitchen work, fetishize and professionalize food and eating, or cater to changing dietary needs. These needs might be medical (i.e. gluten-free diets) or social (i.e. pickling things at home in vintage jars makes me cool). Cooking shows are set in private homes, on the road, in industrial kitchens, etc., and the sets provide important clues as to who the audience might or should be (meat-eating men, working parents, people concerned about their weight, people who throw lots of dinner parties, etc.) Cooking shows frequently tell viewers about the inspiration for a food, dish, or entire meal, the stages and methods of preparation, and how to serve or consume it. All of these components comprise a medium that converts something situated, personal, cultural, and political, into a normative act (something we “should” do). Let us consider this normativity as a convention that characterizes food systems more generally. Your assignment is to use this medium to conduct a feminist analysis of food systems.

Create a 5-minute (approximately) video that highlights a symbolic/cultural/material aspect of feminist thought as it relates to food, eating, or food systems. Please use the readings on gender in your syllabus to help inform your ideas.

Examples of lines of analysis: knowledge and identity politics (Christie), labor (Mies), commodity chains (Collins), environmental politics (Bernstein), heritage (i.e. Michael Twitty: <https://www.monticello.org/site/blog-and-community/look-cooking-gene-michael-twitty>), etc.

Feel free to use friends and family members in your video.

**Due Date: TBD**

Provocations/inspirations:

Julia Child: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9AITdJBTnQ>

Semiotics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vm5vZaE8Ysc>

**GMO Debate: Trade, Aid and Sustainability**

We will hold an in-class structured debate in Georgia in which students will explore the multitude of controversies and perspectives around the use of GMOs. Students will be assigned to take on a particular role, such as a representative of a biotechnology corporation such as Bayer, a philanthropic organization such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, or a smallholder farmer in Malawi. Students may be working in teams depending on the class size. Each student or team will be expected to conduct research to

learn more about the policy position of their assigned role and to prepare a position paper that will be posted online ahead of the debate. The position paper should address questions that will come up in the debate such as: Are GMOs safe to consume, or should the precautionary principle apply? Are GMOs harmful to the environment? What are the socio-economic impacts of GMOs? Should GMO products be labeled? Should countries be able to restrict imports of GMO products? Should GMOs be used for emergency humanitarian relief?

**Position Paper:**

Position papers should be no more than 500 words, not including the bibliography/citations. They do not need to be a comprehensive response to all of the questions listed above but should accurately reflect the key interests of your assigned role. (The position papers are public documents that will be circulated to the other teams, so you may also wish to prepare a more comprehensive “cheat sheet” for yourself ahead of the debate that you can refer to in order to rebut the arguments raised by others.) Suggested resources to get you started will be provided, but position papers should also draw from your own independent research and include parenthetical citations and a bibliography. **Due date: TBD**

**Debate:**

The in-class debate will last for approximately one hour. Each team will be expected to make an opening statement of up to 2 minutes that highlights their key arguments. Once completed, the floor will be open for rebuttals and crossfire questioning. The topics of the debate may be guided by the faculty moderator to ensure sufficient coverage of topics. Shortly before the close of the debate, each team will be allowed to present a 2-minute closing statement. The remaining class time, approximately 30 minutes, will be spent on reflection. Did you agree with the arguments that you made while “in character”? Why or why not? What are the ethical, cultural and scientific questions that merit further consideration? How do you feel about the same set of questions listed above, in your own opinion? **Due Date: TBD**

ASSESSMENT

50% Reading, Preparation, Participation

Class participation 25%

Class writing 25%

20% GMO Debate

10% Position paper

10% In class debate participation

30% Project on the Gendered Division of Labor

Gender and Power Essay 10%

Ecuador Essay 10%

Cooking Show 10%

Grading Scale

94–100%	A
90–93%	A-
87–89%	B+
84–86%	B

80–83%	B-
77–79%	C+
74–76%	C
70–73%	C-
67–69%	D+
64–66%	D
below 64%	F

## Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared.
- Complete assignments on time. Late assignments will receive a deduction of 5 percent per day.
- Be attentive, engaged, and respectful with hosts, lecturers, and everyone else you meet.
- Do not cheat or plagiarize.
- Respect difference.
- Take ownership of your own learning as an individual and as a group.

**Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

**Disability Services:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [disability\\_services@sit.edu](mailto:disability_services@sit.edu) for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at: [www.studyabroad.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.studyabroad.edu/disabilityservices).