



## People, Ethics, and Food Security

POLI 3010 (4 credits / 60 hours)

International Honors Program (IHP)

**Food Systems: Agriculture, Sustainability, and Justice**

**PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester. In addition, considerations of student safety may change some course**

## Course Description

What does “food security” mean and why do we need to rethink it? In doing so, can we identify the kinds of politics that are required and enabled by the concept of food security, and whether they are democratic and fair?

Along the same lines: What makes an agrifood system sustainable and just? Why do we eat what we eat? And how do the answers to these questions relate to global inequality, struggles for power and self-determination, use of natural resources, and cultural expression? What do racism, patriarchy, and capitalism have to do with it all? As we seek answers to these questions, we are sure to encounter contradictions that will challenge our ideas, both individually and collectively, about food, land, and justice around the globe.

These concerns invite us into a semester-long exploration of the role of food in historical and contemporary geopolitics. Throughout this inquiry, we will focus on understanding what comprises an agrifood system – from land and seed to table and bathroom. Using a variety of frameworks, this course will explore the systems of governance, modes of production, and cultural politics that shape these agrifood systems. This includes such topics as food security, settler colonialism, aid and development, pastoralism, knowledge politics, enclosure, food safety, and food policy.

These concepts are complex and entangled, requiring an examination of *the social* and *the natural* as integrated phenomena. These topics also attract diverse academic interpretations, activist interventions, and business interests that interface with the daily experience of people whose livelihoods are at stake in global agrifood systems. This class will use required readings; classroom lectures/activities; field-based, experiential learning; written and creative assignments; and group and self-reflection to develop historical and theoretical understandings of the course themes. Empathy will be an especially important skill throughout this journey to understand food and agricultural systems as sites of self-expression, political contestation, and survival.

## 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 different disciplinary and theoretical frameworks/approaches to 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.
- Ask questions that genuinely interest you.

## Learning Outcomes

- Identify, describe, and analyze major components of agrifood systems and how they relate to food security.
- Identify ways in which racism, patriarchy, and other systems of power and oppression shape food security in diverse contexts.
- Analyze the role of states, multinational institutions, the private sector and civil society in the politics of agrifood systems.
- Integrate experiences, literature, class concepts, and self-reflection into original ideas and arguments about major themes related to food security.
- Build your self-assessment and self-awareness capabilities.

## Course Requirements

### COURSE SCHEDULE

#### Module 1: USA (12 hours)

In our first session, we will discuss what political analysis of agrifood systems might entail and situate ourselves within the context of US settler colonialism. Please review pre-departure materials before coming to Berkeley.

#### PRE-DEPARTURE: WHAT IS 'THE POLITICAL'?

Young, I.M. (2011) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.  
Selected Chapter: "Five Faces of Oppression" pp. 39-65.

#### SESSION 1: WHO SHOULD EAT WHAT?

Allen, P. (2007). The disappearance of hunger in America. *Gastronomica* 7(3): 19-23.

DuPuis, M. (2007). Angels and Vegetables: A Brief History of Food Advice in America. *Gastronomica* 7(2): 34-44.

#### SESSION 2: WHAT IS FOOD JUSTICE?

Alkon, A., and J. Agyeman (eds.) (2011) *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class and Sustainability*.  
Selected pages in Chapter 1: "Introduction: The Food Movement as Polyculture" and Chapter 13: "Just Food?" pp.1-13 and pp. 283-302.

Ahmadi, B. (excerpted interviews) (2017). Land, ownership, and West Oakland's struggle for Food Justice, in *Land Justice: Re-imagining land, food, and the commons in the United States*. p. 192-201.

## **Module 2: Ecuador (16 hours)**

To read before arrival:

Nehring, Ryan (2012). Politics and Policies of Food Sovereignty in Ecuador: New Directions or Broken Promises? [<http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCPolicyResearchBrief31.pdf>]

### **SESSION 1: THE 'FEED THE WORLD' NARRATIVE: WHY FAMINES PERSIST**

Sen, Amartya. (2001). Development as freedom. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Selected pages: Intro (pp. 1-11), Chapter 7 (pp.160-188).

### **SESSION 2: COOPERATION AND FRAGMENTATION IN GLOBAL FOOD GOVERNANCE**

McKeon, N. (2015). *Food Security Governance: Empowering Communities, Regulating Corporations*. Chapter 4: "Reactions to the Food Price Crisis and the Challenge of Rethinking Global Food Governance," pp. 89-111.

### **SESSION 3: IS SCIENCE REAL? KNOWLEDGE AND POWER IN FOOD SYSTEMS**

Antweiler, C. (1998). Local Knowledge and Local Knowing: An Anthropological Analysis of Contested 'Cultural Products' in the Context of Development. *Anthropos* 93 pp. 469-494.

Martin, E. (1991). The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles, *Signs* 16:3, pp. 485-501.

## **Module 3: Malawi (16 hours)**

To read before arrival:

Wainaina, B. (2006). How to write about Africa. *Granta* 92: The View from Africa. [<https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>]

### **SESSION 1: FOOD AND COLONIALISM**

(ACB) African Centre for Biodiversity (2014). Running to Stand Still: Small-Scale Farmers and the Green Revolution in Malawi. Melville, South Africa, ACB: vi-xviii.

Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Bolge L'Ouverture Publications and Tanzania Publishing House: London, Dar es Salaam. Selected pages: pp. 149-161, pp. 164-173.

### **SESSION 2: SEED POLICY AND POLITICS**

De Jonge, B. (2014). Plant variety protection in Sub-Saharan Africa: Balancing commercial and smallholder farmers' interests. *Journal of Politics and Law* 7(3): 100-111.

Wise, T. (2017). Did Monsanto write Malawi's seed policy? Foodtank op-ed: [<https://foodtank.com/news/2017/08/monsanto-malawis-seed-policy/>]

### **SESSION 3: ON WHAT GROUND? ENCLOSURE, LAND REFORM, AND LAND GRABS**

White, B. et al. (2012). The new enclosures: Critical perspectives on corporate land deals. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39(3-4): 619-647.

Ostrom, E., et al. (1999). Revisiting the commons: Local lessons, global challenges. *Science* 284(5412): 278-282.

Siakor, Silas Kpanan'AYoung. (2013) "The Real Price of Europe Going Green," AfricAvenir International. [[http://www.africavenir.org/news-details/archive/2013/february/article/silas-kpananayoung-siakor-the-real-price-of-europe-going-green.html?tx\\_ttnews%5Bday%5D=05&cHash=671f5f6a554cdc989f1d1bbe50d07586](http://www.africavenir.org/news-details/archive/2013/february/article/silas-kpananayoung-siakor-the-real-price-of-europe-going-green.html?tx_ttnews%5Bday%5D=05&cHash=671f5f6a554cdc989f1d1bbe50d07586)]

## **Module 4: Italy (16 hours)**

### **SESSION 1: ACTIVISM AND RESISTANCE**

Alkon, A. (2014). Food Justice and the Challenge to Neoliberalism. *Gastronomica* 14(2): 27-40.

Scott, J.C. (1987) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Selected Subsection: "Rethinking the Concept of Hegemony," pp. 314-350.

### **SESSION 2-3: RTTP FINAL PROJECT**

Readings to be handed out upon arrival in Torino.

## **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.

#### **Short responses**

Write two: each one no more than 750 words

1. What have 'development' and 'globalization' meant for agriculture in Ecuador? Using a specific example, describe the opportunities and challenges that economic connectivity presents for individuals. Your response should include parenthetical citations and follow the citation guide provided in the course materials in Dropbox. **Due date: TBD**
2. Identify two of the most important processes that have shaped the current agricultural situation in Malawi. Define and explain how each has impacted a specific agricultural issue. Your response should include parenthetical citations and follow the citation guide provided in the course materials in Dropbox. **Due date: TBD**

## **Feminist cooking show**

### **Reflection memos:**

As we travel throughout the semester, note where you see feminism in action. What are people using feminism to contest and how? What resistance do they face? How could you represent this using the medium of a cooking show? Consider how a cooking show, through a variety of functions and formats, might look different in each of our settings, as well as how it might be perceived by audiences in each place we visit. Write two short memos (400 words) in response to these prompts. Additionally, provide a list of two or three absurd ☺ ideas for a feminist cooking demonstration/show. **Due dates: TBD**

### **Video:**

Design a feminist cooking demonstration/show that is about 7 minutes long. You should create a video that links class readings and daily activities to broader themes related to feminism and food systems. You will be assigned to groups based on your homestay locations. Each group will be assigned a specific analytical focus that must inform your cooking show. You will be graded on your ability to connect theory and daily life through representation of your analytical focus; the quality of your video; and the ability to answer questions and discuss your and your peers' videos during class. I will provide more information about this when we arrive in Torino. **Due date: TBD**

## **Reacting to the Past debate: Feeding Africa (2002)**

*Reacting to the Past* is a historical role-playing game. In Italy, students will be given elaborate game books which place them in a moment of historical controversy and intellectual ferment – the 2002 debate over the use of GM maize as food aid for famine relief in Southern Africa. The classroom will become the setting of a meeting that took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, at the time. Students will be assigned the role of a specific attendee and try to advance that attendee's policy agenda in order to achieve their victory objectives. To do so, they will undertake research, write speeches and position papers, give formal speeches, participate in informal debates and negotiations, and otherwise work to win the game. More information about the game will be given in Torino.

## **ASSESSMENT**

40% Reading, preparation, and participation

    Class participation 20%

    Class writing 20%

20% Short responses

15% Feminist cooking show

    Memos 5%

    Video 10%

25% RTTP debate

## **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.
- 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).