

## **Global Food Security and Food Sovereignty** SDIS-3000 (3 credits)

### **Italy: Global Food Security and Sustainability**

*This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.*

#### **Course Description**

This course explores the intersectionality of neoliberal agendas, food sovereignty, and food in/security. Neoliberalism has engendered new and emerging forms of food production, and an agro-industrial complex, that have unleashed hitherto unseen vulnerabilities among diverse communities. At the same time civil society groups and small-scale farmers movements and urban food consumer associations are pushing back the neoliberal agenda and creating and articulating new and radical epistemic formations and knowledges in regard to food systems. Food sovereignty has become the mantra around which these vulnerable communities mobilize resistance against an agro-industrial complex. This course examines relations of capital that, historically, have engendered the commodification of nature and the commodification of food, the concept of multifunctionality and its implications for food sovereignty epistemologies, agrobiodiversity and agroecological approaches, the impact of geopolitics, with a special focus on the Russian/Ukraine war, on food security in Italy, the impacts of climate change and food insecurity on forced migration, and the potential and limits of alternative food systems in delivering safe and sufficient food.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Assess the impact of neoliberal policies on the structure and form of the contemporary food system;
- Analyse the tools and strategies that food justice advocates and movements deploy as they promote equitable and environmentally justice food systems;
- Describe the impacts of geopolitics and war on food insecurity in Italy;
- Describe the impact of climate change and food insecurity on forced migration.

#### **Language of Instruction**

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to global food security and food sovereignty through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

## Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

## Assignments and Evaluation

### Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

#### 1) Response Papers (25%)

Each student submits five response papers to questions formulated by, and on a schedule established by the Academic Director. The response papers are generally 400 to 600 words in length.

#### 2) Project. (25%) Students will write a project paper that assess either:

- (i) The potential and limits of alternative food systems in achieving food security and food sovereignty

Or

- (ii) Agroecological and agrobiodiversity approaches and their potential for food security/sovereignty

The project paper should have one clear objective, an introduction, the main body and a set of conclusions. The project paper should be between 1000 to 1500 words.

#### 4) Final Essay (40%)

The students will write a final end of term paper responding to questions and structure set by the Academic Director.

#### 5) Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

#### Assessment

Response Papers – 25%

Project Paper-25%

Final Essay – 40%

Participation - 10%

#### Attendance and Participation

Sample text below comes straight from the Student Handbook:

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

#### Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to be cumulative leading up to the completion of the Independent Study Project (ISP). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at

that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

### 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

### **Program Expectations**

In this space, Instructors should include course-specific individual and community standards that apply to students and their interactions within the course. Sample examples are provided below as possible policies.

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a

broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.

- **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Classroom recording policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

## **SIT Policies and Resources**

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

## **Course Schedule**

*\*Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs*

### **Module One: Introduction: Neoliberalism, Food Insecurity, and Food Sovereignty**

This module sets the theoretical and conceptual framework for the course. Using assigned readings and through student led group discussions, students explore the emergence of the neoliberal agenda, its forms and its impacts on food insecurity in the Mediterranean. The course situates food insecurity in Europe's recent socio-political history and examines the emergence

of alternative epistemologies in response. Lectures and sites visits to food banks, farmers markets, and community level farmers organizations form the core of the module and course.

Sessions in this module may include:

- A brief history of neoliberalism
- Impacts of neoliberalism on food security in Europe
- The meanings and implication of food sovereignty movements
- Food activism in Italy
- The role of food banks and farmers markets in transforming food systems.

Assigned reading:

*Amy Trauger (2014) Toward a political geography of food sovereignty: transforming territory, exchange and power in the liberal sovereign state, The Journal of Peasant Studies, 41:6, 1131-1152, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2014.937339.*

*Borras AM, Mohamed FA. (2020) Health Inequities and the Shifting Paradigms of Food Security, Food Insecurity, and Food Sovereignty. International Journal of Health Services. 50(3):299-313. doi:10.1177/0020731420913184*

*Alexander Koensler. (2020). Prefigurative Politics In Practice: Concrete Utopias In Italy's Food Sovereignty Activism. Mobilization: An International Quarterly 1 March 2020; 25 (1): 133–150. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671-25-1-133>*

## **Module Two: Neoliberalism: Exploring the intersectionality of commodification of nature and commodification of food**

This course explores, and centers, the relationship between commodification of nature and the commodification of food, as a recent emergence of contemporary capitalism's architecture. We employ the Marxist concept of the metabolic rift to critically examine the nature, structures, and dynamics inherent in the food system today. Students explore the tensions, contradictions, failures, and opportunities rendered present, through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with local farmer communities and food consumers.

Sessions in this module may include:

- Capitalism and the commodification of nature
- Capitalism and the commodification of food
- The metabolic rift and its implications

Assigned reading:

Hannah Wittman (2009) *Reworking the metabolic rift: La Vía Campesina, agrarian citizenship, and food sovereignty*, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36:4, 805-826, DOI: 10.1080/03066150903353991

Nathan McClintock, *Why farm the city? Theorizing urban agriculture through a lens of metabolic rift*, *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, Volume 3, Issue 2, July 2010, Pages 191–207, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsq005>

Porcheddu, Federica. (2022). *Nature and food commodification. Food sovereignty: Rethinking the relation between human and nature. Filozofija i drustvo*. 33. 189-217. 10.2298/FID2201189P.

### **Module Three: The concept of multifunctionality and its implications for food security/sovereignty and global sustainability**

The concept of multifunctionality signals diverse meanings, from roles of farming systems, and their implications of ecological health and global environmental sustainability. After examining the meaning and implications of the concept, students will critically review the contemporary food system, and how food sovereignty advocates have employed the concept to center the epistemological implications of food sovereignty.

Sessions in this module may include:

- Meanings and implications of the concept of multifunctionality to food security
- Farming systems and ecological health
- Multifunctionality and food sovereignty movements

Assigned reading:

Arru, B., Furesi, R., Madau, F. A., & Pulina, P. (2019). "Value portfolio", value creation and multifunctionality: the case study of an Italian wine agritourism farm. *Aestimum*, 163-181.

Newell Price, J. P., Bufe, C., Frewer, L., Hejduk, S., Hunter, E., Klopčič, L. F., ... & Williams, J. R. (2022). *An overview of European permanent grasslands: SUPER-G proposals to improve their sustainability and multifunctionality. Grassland at the heart of circular and sustainable food systems*, 781-790.

Gullino, P., Battisti, L., & Larcher, F. (2018). *Linking multifunctionality and sustainability for valuing peri-urban farming: A case study in the Turin Metropolitan Area (Italy)*. *Sustainability*, 10(5), 1625.

### **Module Four: Exploring the potential and limits of alternative food systems in achieving food security and food sovereignty**

Food systems, some complementary to, and others at odds with, the contemporary agro-industrial complex have emerged at many levels in different contexts and communities. These include, for example, food banks, farmers' organizations, food movements, etc. This module asks, to what extent are these alternative food movements articulating epistemologies that challenge capitalism's contemporary agro-industrial complex? Are they sufficient? What else needs to be done?

Sessions in this module may include:

- Assessing the potential of alternative food movements challenging the contemporary agro-industrial complex
- Assessing the potential of alternative food systems in providing food security.

Assigned reading:

*Mancini, M. C., Arfini, F., Antonioli, F., & Guareschi, M. (2021). Alternative agri-food systems under a market agencements approach: The case of multifunctional farming activity in a peri-urban area. Environments, 8(7), 61.*

*Tregear, A. Progressing knowledge in alternative and local food networks: Critical reflections and a research agenda. J. Rural Stud. 2011, 27, 419–430.*

*Renting, H.; Marsden, T.K.; Banks, J. Understanding alternative food networks: Exploring the role of short food supply chains in rural development. Environ. Plan. A 2003, 35, 393–411.*

### **Module Five: Agroecological and agrobiodiversity approaches and their potential for food security/sovereignty**

The concepts and practice of agroecology and agrobiodiversity articulate agriculture systems that are an alternative to large-scale commercial farming and bring attention both to the environment and nutritional benefits. As a consequence, advocates of food sovereignty have drawn on these concepts to further their food justice agendas.

Session in the module may include:

- Introduction to agroecology and agrobiodiversity
- The role of agroecology in achieving food sovereignty and food security
- The role of agrobiodiversity in promoting food sovereignty and food security.

Assigned reading:

*Gargano, G., Licciardo, F., Verrascina, M., & Zanetti, B. (2021). The agroecological approach as a model for multifunctional agriculture and farming towards the European*



*Green Deal 2030—some evidence from the Italian experience. Sustainability, 13(4), 2215.*

*Scaramuzzi, S., Gabellini, S., Belletti, G., & Marescotti, A. (2021). Agrobiodiversity-Oriented Food Systems between Public Policies and Private Action: A Socio-Ecological Model for Sustainable Territorial Development. Sustainability, 13(21), 12192.*

### **Module Six: Geopolitics, regional conflicts, and food insecurity**

This module examines the nexus of geopolitics, regional conflicts, and food insecurity, with a special focus on the Russian/Ukraine war, and, how responses to this have emerged at a multiscale level, from the European Union, to national governments to the community and household level.

Sessions in this module may include:

- Geopolitics and way and food security: the case of the Russia/Ukraine war
- National responses to war induced food insecurity
- Community level response to war induced food insecurity

*Meijl, Hans van; Bartelings, Heleen; Berkum, Siemen van; Cui, David; Smeets-Kristkova, Zuzana; Zeist, Willem Jan van (2022) Impacts of the conflict in Ukraine on global food security. Wageningen Economic Research (Report / Wageningen Economic Research 2022-052) - ISBN 9789464472417 - 43*

*Hellegers, P. (2022). Food security vulnerability due to trade dependencies on Russia and Ukraine. Food Sec. 14, 1503–1510. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-022-01306-8>*

*Ben Hassen, T.; El Bilali, H. (2022) Impacts of the Russia-Ukraine War on Global Food Security: Towards More Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems? Foods 11, 2301. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11152301>*

### **Module Seven: Climate change, food insecurity and forced migration**

This module examines the ways in which the twin crises of climate change and food insecurity trigger international migration and local food insecurity.

Sessions in this module may include:

- Climate change: trends and impacts
- Climate change, food insecurity and forced migration
- Local responses to climate change food insecurity

McMichael, C. (2014). *Climate Change and Migration: Food Insecurity as a Driver and Outcome of Climate Change-Related Migration*. In: Malik, A., Grohmann, E., Akhtar, R. (eds) *Environmental Deterioration and Human Health*. Springer, Dordrecht. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7890-0\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7890-0_12)

Morales-Muñoz, H.; Jha, S.; Bonatti, M.; Alff, H.; Kurtenbach, S.; Sieber, S. (2020). *Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security and Violence as Drivers of Migration—A Critical Review of Research*. *Sustainability* 12, 5702. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12145702>