

Food Security, Nutrition, and Sustainable Development IPBH-3000 (3 credits)

Italy: Food Security and Nutrition

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 seminar examines food security and nutrition in the perspective of sustainable development and social stability, considering the role of financial markets, agri-business industries and international food-, land-, and commodity trading, while connecting these factors to broader global challenges such as food sovereignty, public health, climate change, complex emergencies, and forced migration.

In this course, we will delve into the seminal concept of "the three ecologies" as proposed by the philosopher Félix Guattari. Guattari's framework extends the traditional ecological focus beyond the environmental dimension to include two additional, equally crucial spheres: the social and the mental. He posits that to address the crises facing our planet effectively, we must understand and intervene in the interconnected realms of environmental ecology (natural surroundings), social ecology (the systems and structures of human society), and mental ecology (the realm of human subjectivity and wellbeing). This triadic approach allows for a more holistic understanding of sustainable development, emphasizing the necessity to integrate environmental sustainability, social justice, and psychological well-being.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Critically analyze the interconnections between environmental, social, and mental ecologies, and articulate how these dimensions influence one another in the context of contemporary sustainability challenges.
- Consider and address the complexities of environmental sustainability and social justice.
- Engage in informed and constructive interdisciplinary dialogue on sustainability issues, demonstrating the ability to integrate perspectives from environmental science, social theory, and gastronomy as part of cultural heritage.
- Analyze strategic goals of food security and nutrition, alongside the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and global health, in times of fast urbanization, and dynamic changes in people's lifestyles in both developed and developing countries;

- Understand the impact of financial and commodity markets on food, nutrition, water, and arable land, and explain ways of sustainable agricultural development for current and future generations;
- Produce an independent research project on a theme discussed in this course.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content 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.

Required Texts

See the course schedule for a full listing.

Potential Site Visits and Excursions

- Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- Local organizations, urban gardens, and farms working on food sustainability
- *La Giunta Regionale Toscana*: One hundred thousand gardens in Tuscany

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

- 1) Individual Research Paper (40%)

Based on required readings, lectures, field visits, and conversations with local experts, students will write an 8-10-page individual research paper analyzing sustainable development in food, security, and nutrition.

2) Quizzes (30%)

There will be one quiz after the completion of each module. Each quiz will be worth 10% of the final grade.

3) Podcast (20%)

Students will create a podcast about sustainability, divided into different chapters. Readings, interviews, and other types of materials that reflect the experience of the course will be used.

4) 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 do not, 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

Individual Research Paper – 40%

Podcast - 20%

Three Quizzes – 30%

Participation – 10%

Attendance and Participation

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 build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). 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

- 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.
- 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.

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 1: Sustainable Development: the three ecologies

This module introduces the idea of three ecologies focus on of food security in a global perspective, taking into account nutrition, development, and agricultural policies, and the role of modern and alternative technologies as a means to contributing to the alleviation of hunger and food insecurity.

Session 1: Exploring Culinary Dimensions: Cuisine, Nutrition, and Gastronomy

In discussions related to culinary matters, three interconnected concepts stand out: cuisine, nutrition, and gastronomy. Cuisine focuses on cooking practices and techniques, nutrition delves into dietary science and food security, and gastronomy. It is the cultural, social, and aesthetic aspects of food. Cuisine highlights practical cooking skills, nutrition examines physiological impacts, while gastronomy offers a comprehensive perspective on the diverse realm of food. Students initiate their exploration of these concepts through a historical lens, comprehending their importance in societies and cultures, and engaging in discussions on key themes.

Readings:

Félix Guattari. (1989). *The three ecologies*. Bloomsbury Academic.

https://monoskop.org/images/4/44/Guattari_Felix_The_Three_Ecologies.pdf

Brillant-Savarin, J. A. 'Meditation III, IV, V"; at *Physiology of Taste. Transcendental Gastronomy* (1825)

Stipram, Turgarini; "Culinary Versus Gastronomy", E-Journal of Tourism Vol.7. No.2. (2020): 193-204.

Navarro, V., Serrano, G., Lasa, D., Luis Aduriz, A., & Ayo, J. (2012). Cooking and nutritional science: Gastronomy goes further. *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*, 1(1), 37–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgfs.2011.11.004>

Recommended Readings:

Second International Conference on Nutrition. (2014). Outcome Document, *Rome Declaration on Nutrition*. Rome, 19-21. Retrieved from: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

World Health Assembly. (2014). Food and Nutrition Security in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Pingali, P., Alinovi, L., & Sutton, J. (2005). Food security in complex emergencies: enhancing food system resilience. *Disasters*, 29(s1), 5-24.

World Food Programme (WFP): *Emergency Field Operations Pocketbook*, Retrieved from: http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/WFP_manual.pdf

Session 2: Global Challenges: 'Food Sovereignty' and Socio-Political Stability

This session takes stock of the Second International Conference on Nutrition of 2014 in Rome and explores ways of achieving food and nutrition security in the post-2015 development framework.

This module elaborates on the multifaceted meaning of green revolution and examines how the liberalization of food markets and international trading has affected both food sovereignty and socio-political stability, with special attention to developing countries.

Required Readings:

Barrett, C. B. (Ed.). (2016). *Food security and sociopolitical stability* (pp. 1–34). Oxford University Press.

Carolan, M. S. (2013). *Reclaiming Food Security* (pp. 1–35). Routledge.

Recommended Readings:

El-Zein, A., Jabbour, S., Tekce, B., Zurayk, H., Nuwayhid, I., Khawaja, M., Tell, T., Mooji, Y. A., De-Jong, J., Yassin, N., & Hogan, D. (2014). Health and ecological sustainability in the Arab world: a matter of survival. *The Lancet*, 383(9915), 458–476. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(13\)62338-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(13)62338-7)

Rydin, Y., Bleahu, A., Davies, M., Dávila, J. D., Friel, S., De Grandis, G., Groce, N., Hallal, P. C., Hamilton, I., Howden-Chapman, P., Lai, K.-M., Lim, C., Martins, J., Osrin, D., Ridley, I., Scott, I., Taylor, M., Wilkinson, P., & Wilson, J. (2012). Shaping cities for health: complexity and the planning of urban environments in the 21st century. *The Lancet*, 379(9831), 2079–2108. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(12\)60435-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(12)60435-8)

Session 3: Sustainable Development and the Right to Food

This session critically evaluates the post-2015 sustainable development goals, taking into account environmental sustainability, equitable development, and further elaborating on the human right to food and adequate nutrition.

Required Reading:

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Perspectives. (2013). *Towards a Framework of Universal Sustainability Goals as Part of a Post-2015 Agenda.*

De Schutter, O. (2014). UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food. *Report on agroecology and the right to food.*

Recommended Readings:

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). (2012). *Summary of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD).* Negotiations Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 51, 25. Retrieved from: <http://www.iisd.ca/download/pdf/enb2751e.pdf>

United Nations. (2015). *Future We Want - Outcome document - Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.* Un.org. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html>

Module 2: Food markets & ethically and environmentally conscious tourism

Students learn how to identify the health benefits of a Mediterranean Diet and how this diet has evolved in Italy society. Students begin their exploration of Slow Food movement In Italy by looking at the origins of cooking, conceptualizing the notion of a national cuisine and discuss the application of such notion to the case of Tuscany.

At the same time, it examines the impact of international trade and financial- and commodity markets on global and local food systems, as well as the role of modern technology in agricultural development and in the perspective of the need to feed an ever-growing world population.

Session 1: Olive oil and wine as cultural heritage

In this session, students focus on Italian wine and “liquid gold”, and assess the olive production process, its history, characteristics, and influence on the Italian gastronomy. Is grape and olive cultivation sustainable in the 21st century?

Required Readings:

Inforesources. (2009). When food markets do not provide enough food: Lessons from the recent food price crisis. In *Focus.*

https://web.inforesources.bfh.science/pdf/focus09_1_e.pdf

Margulis, M. E. (2014). Trading Out of the Global Food Crisis? The World Trade Organization and the Geopolitics of Food Security. *Geopolitics*, 19(2), 322–350.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2014.920233>

Recommended Readings:

Video on olive oil production.

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy . (2019). *Commodities Market Speculation: The Risk to Food Security and Agriculture*.

https://www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/451_2_104414.pdf

Von Braun, J. (2023). *Food and financial crises: Implications for agriculture and the poor*.

ifpri.org. <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/food-and-financial-crises>

Session 2: Embracing Zero Waste Practices: Sustainable mixology and vermouth

“Solid and liquid gastronomy”, as the well-known chef Ferran Adrià has called it, is one of the main drivers of the food as well as the tourism industry.

In these classes the focus will be on "liquid gastronomy", observing new trends in sustainability and ways to fight against food waste. In addition, students will be introduced to the origin of a drink born as medicine: vermouth.

Required Reading:

Greenfield, E. (2024). *Zero Waste Living: A Comprehensive Guide to Sustainable Living*. Independently published.

Byrne, S., & Lapalus, G. (2018). *The book of vermouth : a bartender and a winemaker celebrate the world’s greatest aperitif*. Hardie Grant Books.

Bevan, J. A. (2019). *A Spirited Guide to Vermouth: An aromatic journey with botanical notes, classic cocktails and elegant recipes*. Headline Home.

Session 3: Impact of Land Grabbing on Food Security

This session evaluates the complex interconnection between agriculture, land, and renewable energy such as biofuels and its implication on food security.

Required Reading:

Cotula, L. (2012). The international political economy of the global land rush: A critical appraisal of trends, scale, geography and drivers. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(3-4), 649–680. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2012.674940>

Cotula, L., Dyer, N., & Vermeulen, S. (2008). *Fuelling exclusion? The biofuels boom and poor people’s access to land*. <https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/12551IIED.pdf>

Cotula, L. (2009). Land grab or development opportunity?: Agricultural investment and international land deals in Africa. IIED. <https://www.iied.org/12561iied>

Food & Agriculture Organization. (2008). *The state of food and agriculture: biofuels, prospects, risks and opportunities*. United Nations.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/599c639d-2f02-4847-aa6d-02b7e841f7d4/content>

Module 3: From Tradition to Innovation: Diversity and Slow Food

This module examines the idea of diversity not as merely a buzzword but as an ethos that enriches cultural, gastronomic, and ecological experience, fostering a variety of perspectives. Our future depends on defending a diversity of people, plants, and animals.

Without biodiversity, life as we know it cannot exist, but the current dominant industrial food system is not committed to maintaining biodiversity. Around the world, 75% of edible plant species have now become extinct while three cereals— wheat, rice, and corn—make up 60% of our food production.

Session 1: Diversity and sustainable consumption choices

In this session we will discuss food biodiversity by promoting agroecological practices and sustainable consumption choices as a motto of Slow Food Movement. In the other hand, according to Guattari's idea of ecology, we also focus on an ethically imperative for a global approach, and to talk about how we can foster an environment that values and promotes the diversity in the social field: gender inclusion, equally, transformative mind and affordable, and culturally significant foods.

Required Reading:

Promoting Women as Protagonists of Gastronomy in Mar del Plata, Argentina. (2023, December 19). Slow Food. <https://www.slowfood.com/blog-and-news/promoting-women-as-protagonists-of-gastronomy-in-mar-del-plata-argentina/>

Macdonald, C. (2020). *Diversity and inclusion in the food sector: an interview with Elles Sont Food!* Global Insights ; FI Global Insights . <https://insights.figlobal.com/women-food/diversity-and-inclusion-food-sector-interview-elles-sont-food>

Niethammer, C. (2020, September). *Finding A Recipe For A More Equitable Food And Restaurant Industry*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carmenniethammer/2020/09/27/finding-a-recipe-for-a-more-equitable-food-and-restaurant-industry/>

FAO. (2024, June 13). *Gender and inclusive food systems and value chains*. Gender. <https://www.fao.org/gender/learning-center/thematic-areas/gender-and-inclusive-food-systems-and-value-chains/1/#:~:text=The%20work%20of%20FAO%20focuses%20on%20the%20adoption>

Recommended Readings:

WHO. (2000). *Nutrition for Health and Development: A global agenda for combating malnutrition*. World Health Organization.
https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/66509/WHO_NHD_00.6.pdf?sequence=1

Greiner, T (ed.). (2014). The Advantages, Disadvantages and Risks of Ready-to-Use Foods. Breastfeeding Briefs, No. 56757.

Lhotska, L. (2008, January 1). Whatever Happened To Health For All? Ups And Downs Of Protection Of Breastfeeding, Regulation Of Transnational Corporations And Health For All. World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action. <https://waba.org.my/whatever-happened-to-health-for-all-ups-and-downs-of-protection-of-breastfeeding-regulation-of-transnational-corporations-and-health-for-all/>

Session 2: Nutrition and food Origins (NCDs)

This session examines the relationship between nutrition, diet, lifestyle, and the growing global problems constituted by non-communicable diseases. It addresses opportunities and challenges of nutrition and food preferences as a means of preventing the spread of chronic and non-infectious diseases.

Required Reading:

Darnton-Hill, I., Nishida, C., & James, W. P. T. (2004). A life course approach to diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases. *Public health nutrition*, 7(1A; SPI), 101-122.

Popkin, B. M., Adair, L. S., & Ng, S. W. (2012). Global nutrition transition and the pandemic of obesity in developing countries. *Nutrition reviews*, 70(1), 3-21.

Recommended Readings:

Bloom, D., Cafiero, E., Jané-Llopis, E., Abrahams-Gessel, S., Bloom, L., Fathima, S., ... & O'Farrell, D. (2012). *The global economic burden of noncommunicable diseases*. Program on the Global Demography of Aging.

El Rhazi, K., Nejari, C., Zidouh, A., Bakkali, R., Berraho, M., & Gateau, P. B. (2011). Prevalence of obesity and associated sociodemographic and lifestyle factors in Morocco. *Public health nutrition*, 14(01), 160-167.

Kain, J., Cordero, S. H., Pineda, D., de Moraes, A. F., Antiporta, D., Collese, T., ... & Rivera, J. (2014). Obesity prevention in Latin America. *Current obesity reports*, 3(2), 150-155.

Session 3: Nutrition and Infectious Disease

This session evaluates the interplays between malnutrition and infectious disease.

Required Reading:

Katona, P., & Katona-Apte, J. (2008). The interaction between nutrition and infection. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 46(10), 1582-1588.

Dora, C., Haines, A., Balbus, J., Fletcher, E., Adair-Rohani, H., Alabaster, G., Hossain, R., de Onis, M., Branca, F., & Neira, M. (2015). Indicators linking health and sustainability in the post-2015 development agenda. *The Lancet*, 385(9965), 380–391.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(14\)60605-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(14)60605-x)

Recommended Readings:

Tulchinsky, T. H., & Varavikova, E. A. (2010). What is the “New Public Health”? *Public Health Reviews*, 32(1), 25–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03391592>

Module 4: Individual Research Project

Students will complete an individual research project addressing the themes discussed in this course and building on site visits, class discussions, and course readings.