

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF GLOBAL & SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES

PROFESSOR GAIL HOLLANDER  
FALL 2015

### **GEO 4354: GEOGRAPHY OF THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM**

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#### *About the Course*

Food is the universal commodity and our most direct link to the natural environment. Today this link is increasingly mediated by transnational corporations, which control much of the production process from the patenting of seeds to the transcontinental shipment of agricultural commodities to the delivery of ready-to-eat products to our tables. This course explores how the spatial organization of the global food system is critical to our understanding of the development of the world economy, from the first New World sugar plantations to NAFTA and the WTO. Ranging in scale from the level of the individual to national and global levels, the course will examine issues of food security, food sovereignty, trade, and environmental sustainability. We will trace the historical development of food production and distribution on a global scale, marking important developments such as the petrochemical revolution, the Green Revolution, genetic modification, and fast food marketing. We will consider how, at the global level, hunger is now increasing while climate change, oil prices and the diversion of food crops to fuel production point toward worsening crisis. Finally, we will look at proposals and initiatives to improve the food system in terms of sustainability, nutrition and affordability, from the local scale to the international system.

#### *Learning Goals:*

Students will learn about the central importance of food and agriculture in structuring human relationships to one another, to other species, and to the natural environment at multiple geographic scales, from the individual to the global level. By looking at the food system in terms of its historical development, its political economic structure, its environmental impacts, and the social and geographic differences that characterize it, students' ability to analyze the food system, including their own participation in it, will be enhanced. We will also examine alternatives to globalizing trends so that students, as informed citizens, will become aware of choices and options and possibilities for change.

#### *Learning Outcomes:*

Students will develop awareness of the significance of food and agriculture to processes of globalization and the impacts of globalization in transforming agrarian relations and food systems.

Students will acquire global perspective in analyzing their place in the global food system, in historical and geographical context.

Students will demonstrate global engagement by analyzing the relationship between national and global agendas in potentially competing visions for food security and food sovereignty.

### *Course Grading and Requirements*

1) Participation & Assignments	40%
2) Exam 1	25%
3) Final Exam	<u>35%</u>
	100%

### *Required Texts*

Millstone, Eric and Lang, Tim. (2008) *The Penguin Atlas of Food*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mintz, Sidney. (1985) *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Viking Penguin.

Schlosser, Eric. (2001) *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Harper Collins.

Young, E.M. (2012) *Food and Development*. London: Routledge.

*Recommended Text:* Nestle, Marion. (2003) *Safe Food: Bacteria, Biotechnology, and Bioterrorism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

We will make extensive use of readings posted on Blackboard, articles accessed via the FIU library and newspapers available on-line. Therefore, make sure that your FIU library card is activated!!

### *Important Dates*

Due: Personal Food Essay	January 23
First Exam	February 6
Due: Food Security Brief	March 4
Due: Topical Research Paper	April 15
Final Exam	April 24

### Weekly Schedule of Topics & Readings

#### **Part I: The modern food system: how did we get here?**

##### **WEEK 1: JANUARY 7/9 THE WORLD FOOD SYSTEM: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

**READING:** Sidney Mintz, 1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Viking Penguin, Introduction and Chapters 1 & 2.

January 7: Introduction: as a class, we construct a **top ten list** of reasons to study food.

January 9: Lecture: making the modern food system...the 20,000 year road to the Oreo.

##### **WEEK 2: JANUARY 14/16: DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD FOOD SYSTEM: THE CASE OF SUGAR**

**READING:** Sidney Mintz, 1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Viking Penguin, Chapters 3, 4 & 5.

January 14: Lecture: the historical geography of sugarcane in the Americas and the rise of its competitor, the sugar beet.

January 16: Discussion of *Sweetness and Power*. In-class activity: in small groups, link Mintz's theoretical framework to historical details and compare the historical and contemporary experiences of sugar consumption. We will reconvene as a class to discuss how our contemporary levels of sugar consumption came about, that is, the power behind sweetness.

### **WEEK 3: JANUARY 21/23: THE RISE OF THE INDUSTRIAL MEAT SYSTEM**

**READINGS:** Richard H. Robbins, 1999. "The Story of Beef" from his book, *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon; William Cronon, 1991. "Annihilating Space: Meat" from his book, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: Norton; Michael Pollan, 2002, Power Steer. *New York Times*, March 31, *The Penguin Atlas of Food* (Topics 25 & 32)

January 21: Lecture and discussion on the environmental transformation of the U.S. West with the rise of the industrial meat system, linking historical development to contemporary meat production.

January 23: Class activity based on student essay assignment *Personal Food Essay: Placing Yourself in the Global Food System*. In class small group activity identifying, through individuals' experiences, the myriad ways our relationship to food is shaped and structured, from levels ranging from personal choice to global political economic structures. Regroup and discuss as an entire class, using students' life experiences to illustrate national and regional differences in the global food system.

### **WEEK 4: JANUARY 28/30: GLOBALIZATION & THE GEOPOLITICS OF FOOD**

**READINGS:** Harriet Friedmann, 1994. "The International Relations of Food: The Unfolding Crisis of National Regulation," pp. 174-204 in B. Harriss-White and R. Hoffenberg, eds. *Food: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Oxford: Blackwell, Harriet Friedmann, 2000. What on Earth is the Modern World System? Foodgetting and Territory in the Modern Era and Beyond. *Journal of World-Systems Research* 11(2): 480-515, Philip McMichael, 2000. "Global Food Politics" in *Hungry for Profit*. New York: Monthly Review; *The Penguin Atlas of Food* (Foreword, Introduction & topics 24, 26, 27, 28, & 33)

January 28: In class viewing of film, Food Inc.

January 30: Lecture on the global political economy of food, agriculture, and aquaculture.

### **WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 4/6: REVIEW/EXAM 1**

February 4: In class small groups review study guide; reconvene as a class to discuss.

February 6: Exam 1

## **Part II: Whose food system is it? Who wins, who loses? How do we change it?**

### **WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 11/13: HUNGER & MALNUTRITION/FAMINE & OBESITY**

**READINGS:** E.M. Young, 2012. *Food and Development*. London: Routledge. Chapters 1 through 3; *The Penguin Atlas of Food* (topics 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 30 & 31)

February 11: Lecture on the politics of hunger and malnutrition, Malthusian perspectives, the “nutritional transition” and “obesogenic environments.”

February 13: Discussion: how do we explain inequalities in access to food? Why do differences in explanation matter? How do differences in ideology shape explanation? What are the proximate and structural determinants of food security?

### **WEEK 7: FEBRUARY 18/20: FOOD & POWER AT MULTIPLE SCALES OF ANALYSIS**

**READING:** E.M. Young, 2012. *Food and Development*. London: Routledge. Chapters 4 through 6;

February 18: In class film and discussion: *King Korn*

February 20: Discussion linking film and readings. How does corporate globalization impact agricultural production and food consumption?

### **WEEK 8: FEB. 25/27: GENDER/CONFLICT/ALTERNATIVES**

**READING:** E.M. Young, 2012. *Food and Development*. London: Routledge. Chapters 7 through 9.

February 25: Lecture on 1) the role of gender relations in the food system; 2) on the impact of conflict situations on access to food and 3) the relation between food aid and food security.

February 27: In small groups, students work through assigned portions of study guide for *Food and Development*. We reconvene as a class to discuss.

### **WEEK 9: MARCH 4/6: WHAT WOULD A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?**

**READINGS:** Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, United Nations General Assembly, Distributed December 20, 2010. A/HRC/16/49; Brian Halweil. Farming in the Public Interest. *State of the World 2002*. New York: Norton; *The Penguin Atlas of Food* (Topic 4 & Part 2, all (topics 9-23)) & selected news articles TBA.

March 4: Lecture on sustainable agriculture and class visit from FIU Agroecology Program Coordinator. Students learn about opportunities at FIU and within the Miami-Dade community.

March 6: In class activity based on assignment, Food Security/Food Sovereignty Brief. In small groups, students compare their case studies and develop a framework for analyzing national food security and food sovereignty. Then as entire class we discuss each of the small groups' analyses.

### **WEEK 10: SPRING BREAK!! MARCH 10-15**

**WEEK 11: MARCH 18/20: WE ARE WHAT WE EAT?!**

**READING:** Eric Schlosser, 2001. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*.

March 18: In class film, *Supersize Me*.

March 20: Lecture based on Dr. Hollander's research on US sugar industry's activities to promote consumption.

**WEEK 12: MARCH 25/27: SUPERSIZE PROFITS!**

**READINGS:** Finish Eric Schlosser, 2001. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*; Michael Moss, The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food. *New York Times*, February 20, 2013.

March 25: Plastic People: after reading blog, in class viewing of video and discussion: <http://aeon.co/magazine/science/have-we-drawn-the-wrong-lessons-from-epigenetics/>

March 27: In class debate on the ethical responsibilities of food producers. Are junk food corporations comparable to cigarette companies?

**WEEK 13: APRIL 1/3: SAFE FOOD?**

**READINGS:** Begin selected chapters from Marion Nestle, (2003) *Safe Food: Bacteria, Biotechnology, and Bioterrorism*. Berkeley: University of California Press; *The Penguin Atlas of Food* (topics 8, 14, 34, 35, & 40) & selected news articles TBA.

April 1: Presentation on opportunities for community engagement in the local food system. Discussion of topics for the final assignment: we brainstorm as a class about how to come up with a compelling question and how to go about conducting primary research (for example, interviewing several people, or mapping a neighborhood's foodscape, or participant observation at an urban garden or food bank) if the topic warrants it.

April 3: In class film, *The World According to Monsanto*

**WEEK 14: APRIL 8/10: GM FOOD: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY?**

**READINGS:** Finish selected chapters from Marion Nestle, *Safe Food: Bacteria, Biotechnology, and Bioterrorism*; Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, 2008. Monsanto's Harvest of Fear. *Vanity Fair*. <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/05/monsanto200805> ; Mark Shapiro, 2002. Sowing Disaster? How Genetically Engineered American Corn Has Altered the Global Landscape. *The Nation*, October 28. <http://www.thenation.com/article/sowing-disaster> ; Atkins and Bowler, "From the Green Revolution to the Gene Revolution" in *Food in Society*.

April 8: Lecture on the history, politics, and terminology of genetically modified foods and the differing national and international responses to GMOs.

April 10: In class debate on labeling genetically modified organisms in the US food system: to label or not to label, that is the question.

### **WEEK 15: APRIL 15/17:**

April 15: In class exercise, in small groups, students answer various sample exam questions and then we reconvene as a class to discuss.

April 17: On the menu: Topical Papers! Each student has a chance to present the question that drove their topical paper exploration and their most interesting, surprising, and/or important finding.

### **FINALS WEEK: APRIL 24 @ NOON!!! FINAL EXAM FROM 12:00 TO 2 P.M.**

#### *Assignments*

##### **1) Personal Food Essay:** Placing Yourself in the Global Food System.

Three pages typed, double-spaced. This is not a food diary but rather an essay reflecting on your relationship to the global food system. **First:** Refer to key concepts from readings, lecture and class discussion that shed light on your food habits, such as, for example, Sidney Mintz's ideas regarding the relationship between the historical rise of the modern food system and changes in food culture and consumption. **Possible themes:** You might discuss how your culinary habits are shaped by family structure, culture, geography, and/or lifestyle. How do you get your food? What do you know about it? Who prepares it? What are your concerns or fears with regard to food? How have your food habits changed over time? How does your diet reflect the globalization of the food system? Where do you get information regarding food issues and how does this affect your choices?

**2) Food Security/Food Sovereignty Brief:** Prepare a five page (double-spaced) brief on the critical food security/sovereignty issues facing a single country of your choice. **First:** provide a definition of each term ("food security" and "food sovereignty"), identifying your sources, and explain the difference between them. **Second:** use ideas from lectures and class readings to outline the critical food security and food sovereignty issues facing the country you have chosen. Use international agency websites, government documents, academic texts, and journalistic reports as data sources. You need to include in-text citations and a bibliography to document your sources. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

[http://www.fao.org/spfs/faq\\_en.stm](http://www.fao.org/spfs/faq_en.stm)

<http://www.foodsecurity.net/gateway.html>

<http://www.developmentgateway.org/node/130622/>

<http://www.eldis.org/food/>

<http://www.worldhungeryear.org>

<http://www.foodfirst.org/>

<http://www.foodsovereignty.org/new/>

<http://viacampesina.org/en/>

<http://www.grain.org/>

As you write your brief, think of it as a concise report that you might be preparing for a nongovernmental organization, a policymaker or an activist who is interested in the food problems of a particular country. Therefore you need to outline the scope of the problem. For example, who in the country is suffering from food insecurity? Is there a geographic dimension, a particular region

or a distinct rural/urban pattern? You also need to discuss the proximate and structural causes of food shortages. How does access to food reflect and intensify patterns of inequality? How does food sovereignty enter into the power relations within the country and also between it and the international system? In your brief, you may address issues relating to food production, distribution, exports and imports. You might discuss previous attempts at solving the problem and potential remedies. In the case of a country that is making progress on alleviating hunger, you can document their successes.

**3) Topical Research Paper on the Global/Local Food System:** 5 to 7 pages (double-spaced) plus bibliography. **This paper begins with a question that you pose.** The final paper gives you a chance to explore further an issue raised in class or address an aspect of the food system that we did not cover. One strategy is to look at an aspect of the local food system. If you choose to do this you can use primary material such as an interview or site visits as a significant component of your research. The **main requirement is that you choose a topic that you find compelling** and that the paper you produce is scholarly and original. This means that you can use popular sources but you also **MUST** refer to some scholarly sources. We will discuss potential topics in class.

Here are a few of the many interesting and useful food-related websites:

<http://www.foodtank.org/>

<http://www.foodroutes.org/>

<http://www.growingpower.org/blog/>

<http://foodshed.greatereverglades.org/>

<http://www.urban oasisproject.org/>

#### *A Note on Requirements*

All of the assigned readings are mandatory. You are responsible for all information, materials, and instructions disseminated during the class period. Lectures, films and readings are complementary but not identical, and the exams will be based on all sources. Therefore, attendance is essential to doing well in this class. At various times throughout the semester I will take attendance at the beginning of class.

#### *Electronic Devices*

Cell phones must be off for the duration of the class. Laptop use is permitted **ONLY** for the purpose of taking notes.

#### *Make-Up Policy*

No make up exams without either 1) a note from a doctor that a student was incapable of attending for medical reasons or 2) documentation of a death in the immediate family.

#### *Policy on Plagiarism*

Plagiarism is cheating. Don't do it. The disciplinary action that will be taken in the case of plagiarism is explained in the section on "Academic Misconduct" in the *Student Handbook*.

If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, check out the FIU library website:

<http://library.fiu.edu/assistance/plagiarism>. In addition, we will spend time in class demonstrating and discussing proper use and citation of sources.