

## Food Systems: Food and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century

E33.1033: 3 credits

Professor Christy Spackman  
Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health  
Class Room: Bobst, LL139  
Mondays, 9:30-12:15

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### **Course Description:**

Food Systems: Food and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century focuses on a variety of issues surrounding food production from an agricultural and processing perspective. Working from a historical perspective, students will gain an understanding of the ideological underpinnings of American Agriculture, as well as the forces that have transformed food production from a regional to a national system. During this class, students will use a variety of approaches to examine the food system, looking at the historical, political, economical, social and cultural dimensions that shape food production.

### **Evaluation:**

#### *Oral Exam*

Based on the readings from Weeks 5-11, outline the key issues surrounding urbanization and industrial food processing. What are the advantages and disadvantages? How can we understand our current food system based on past practices? 15 minutes; time to be scheduled with instructor via [signupgenius.com](http://signupgenius.com) (30%). **Week of April 28 – May 2**

#### *Papers*

Paper 1: Based on readings from Weeks 1-3, analyze the evolution of agricultural thought in America. How did the process of industrialization shape the food system? (3 pages, 20%) **Due in class, March 3, 9:30 am**

Paper 2: You are a policy analyst for President Obama and you are charged with developing his vision for **Food in America**. Based on the readings from Weeks 12-15, develop a “workable” policy that considers economic, social and cultural aspects of a new vision of American agriculture and the food industry. What would you keep? Change? (5 pages, 25%) **Due in class, May 12, 9:30 am**

A note on papers: These are not research papers, so please only use the assigned readings. Nor are these summaries of the readings, but rather analytical essays that reflect your critical thinking on the topic. Use examples from the readings to support your arguments (be certain to properly cite). Late papers will receive a 10% grade reduction for each day late. Please use Times New Roman 11 point font, 1.5-spacing, with 1” margins.

### *Presentations*

The class will be divided into six groups of four students. Each group will be assigned a specific day/ topic and additional readings. Students will meet with the instructor to develop a case study presentation and analysis activity of contemporary applications of the historical topic discussed on their assigned day. (10%).

### *Participation*

As this is a seminar, you are expected to do all the reading and be prepared to discuss the material in depth. Your preparation before class ensures that we have thought-provoking discussions. For full credit, you must post one to two questions the reading raised on the class discussion board by 7:00 p.m the Sunday evening before class **five times** throughout the semester; at least one post must occur during section 1 of the class. Postings are graded on a scale of 0-3; zero credit will be given not only for failure to post, but also for posts that lack thought or show that you failed to read the required material. If for some reason NYU Classes fails to accept your post, you may email it to me as long as it is time stamped by 7:01 p.m. (10%)

Additionally, you will be evaluated on in-class participation in discussions, either instructor or student-led. (5%)

### **Attendance:**

I allow a maximum of two absences per student over the course of the semester; more than two absences for any reason will result in a 5% final grade deduction for each additional absence, unless you provide a doctor's notice, in which case you will be assigned additional work to make up for the missed class time. Please notify me in advance if you will not be in attendance prior to class. You are required to attend the Freegan tour on ( ). Adjust your schedules accordingly.

Week 1, Jan. 27: Introduction: Agricultural Ideology, Jefferson's Legacy

- Steven Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002). Introduction, Chapter 1, pgs 69-74; 173-178

Week 2, Feb. 3: Deconstructing Regions: Railroads, Agriculture and Manifest Destiny

- William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* (New York: Norton, 1991). Preface, Chapters 1-3 and 5.

Week 3, Feb. 10: Remaking the soil, remaking plants

- Vaclav Smil, *Enriching the Earth: Fritz Haber, Carl Bosch, and the Transformation of World Food Production* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004). Selections from introduction, Chapters 2-3 and 7. (NYU Classes)
- Jane S. Smith, *The Garden of Invention: Luther Burbank and the Business of Breeding Plants* (New York: Penguin, 2009). Selections. (Prologue, 26-32; 40-45; 62-67; 79-93) **Group 1**

Week 4, Feb. 17: No class

*Section 2: What's on your plate? Following food through space, place and time*

Week 5, Feb. 24: The Farm Meets the City: Industrializing Milk

- E. Melanie DuPuis, *Nature's Perfect Food: How Milk Became America's Drink* (New York: New York University Press, 2002). Introduction, Chapters 1-2; 4-5. **Group 2**

Week 6, March 3: Stopping and Shelving Time: Canning and Supermarkets

*Class Field Trip to a Local Supermarket*

- Gabriella Petrick, "An Ambivalent Diet: The industrialization of canning," *Magazine of History* (July 2010): 35-38.
- Gabriella Petrick, "Feeding the Masses: HJ Heinz and the creation of industrial food," *Endeavour*, 33, 1 (March 2009): 29-34.
- Tracey Deutsch, *Building a Housewife's Paradise: gender, politics, and American grocery stores in the twentieth century*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). Introduction; Chapter 1 and 5.

Week 7, March 10: Uniformity

- William Panschar, *Baking in America*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1956), Required: Part 3 (pg 93-183); Optional: Part 2; Available online at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015058341309>
- Aaron Bobrow-Strain, *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012) **Group 3**

Week 8, March 17: No class, Spring Break

Week 9, March 24: Carnivore Nation(s)

- Roger Horowitz, *Putting Meat on the American Table: Taste, Technology, Transformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), Ch. 1-4; Epilogue
- Rosamond Naylor, Henning Steinfeld, Walter Falcon, James Galloway, Vaclav Smil, Eric Bradford, Jackie Alder and Harold Mooney, "Losing the Links Between Livestock and Land," *Science*, 310 (9 December 2005): 1621-1622. **Group 4**

Week 10, March 31: Going Global: transnational foods

- Robert John Foster, *Coca-globalization: Following soft drinks from New York to New Guinea* (New York: Palgrave-McMillin, 2008). Introduction, Chapter 1-2 and 7. **Group 5**

Week 11, April 7: Waste not, want not?

- **Readings tbd/ awaiting confirmation of date**

*Section 3: Remaking a system: Contemporary Agriculture*

Week 12, April 14: The Farm Bill, 1: Rewriting Policy

- *Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013*

Week 12, April 21: TA review session to prepare for midterm exam/ group practice

Week 13, April 28: De-Industrializing Agriculture?

- Julie Guthman, *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). **Group 6**

Week 14, May 5: The Farm Bill, 2: Food aid and agricultural policy—from local to global

- Julie Guthman, "Excess Consumption or Over Production?: US farm policy, global warming, and the bizarre attribution of obesity," in Richard Peet, Paul Robins, and Michael Watts, eds, *Global Political Ecology* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 51-66.

- Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Chapters 4 and 6.
- Ron Nixon, "Typhoon Revives Debate about US Food Policy, *NY Times*, 21 Nov. 2013. Available online at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/22/us/politics/typhoon-reignites-debate-over-how-us-supplies-food-aid.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/22/us/politics/typhoon-reignites-debate-over-how-us-supplies-food-aid.html?_r=0)

Week 15, May 12: Wrap up